

Democrats Rally Behind Trump



AP



AP; U.S. Navy (right)

Trump's Tomahawk missile strikes against Syria on April 7 were welcomed by leading Democrats, including Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi.



Defend North Korea! U.S. Out of Syria!

The U.S. imperialist rulers are on the warpath. On April 6, the Trump administration launched 59 Tomahawk missiles at Al Shayrat air base in Syria, directly targeting the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The attack served as a warning to Putin's Russia that the U.S. is top dog in the Near East. Launched while Trump was dining with

Chinese president Xi Jinping, the attack was also a signal to China that its leadership must back the U.S. against North Korea. Within days, the White House announced that the aircraft carrier strike group led by the USS *Carl Vinson* was being redirected to the Korean Peninsula, where Japanese warships are scheduled to join it in a dis-

play of naked imperialist aggression. Then on April 13, in anticipation of a North Korean missile test, the U.S. dropped a 22,000-pound Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb—the world's most powerful non-nuclear bomb—on Afghanistan.

The North Korean nuclear nightmare conjured up by the U.S. government and

parroted by the capitalist media serves to obscure the biggest danger to the world's masses: U.S. imperialism. Not only is the U.S. the only country to have ever used atomic weapons, incinerating 200,000 Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, but it also came close to

continued on page 5

Students Battle Colonial Austerity

Since March 28, students have been on strike at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), the island's main public university system with a total of 70,000 students. UPR has been the target of \$348 million in budget cuts over the past three years and it faces more austerity demanded by the American colonial masters. The students' main demands are no budget cuts and no tuition increases. The strike is being actively supported by the unions of teachers and campus workers, who have themselves experienced union-busting attacks, wage reductions and shrinking pensions over the past decade. The students' battle gives voice to the anguish and anger of Puerto Ricans enduring a desperate economic situation—a direct consequence of imperialist colonial domination. **Victory to the student strike!**

Many strikers today remember the two-month student strike at UPR in 2010, when the students fought against attempts by the bourgeoisie and campus administration to implement tuition hikes and budget cuts. That strike was met with bloody police repression, but it success-



EFE

San Juan, Puerto Rico: Students protest against budget cuts decreed by the Financial Oversight board, March 31.

fully beat back the worst of the government's and UPR administration's attacks.

We stand for free, quality public edu-

cation for all, including open admissions and a state-paid living stipend for all students! But under capitalism, the provision

of education and other social services is subordinated to the ruling class's drive for profit. Our Marxist perspective is for a free, egalitarian society based on material abundance, where education is an actual right. This can only be achieved through a socialist revolution that sweeps away the decaying capitalist system and establishes workers rule in the oppressed colonies and neocolonies as well as in the U.S.

In 2016, the Obama administration imposed a Financial Oversight and Management Board, known as the "junta," to ensure that Puerto Rico's debt of over \$70 billion is paid to the hedge fund parasites and financial institutions. The capitalist investors claim that Puerto Ricans, almost half of whom subsist below the poverty line, have been living "beyond their means" and must pay. These vultures sucked the blood of Puerto Rico's economy and for decades enjoyed a tax haven with low-wage labor. The junta's task is to oversee implementation by the island's government of the bipartisan bill passed by the U.S. Congress, grotesquely dubbed

continued on page 4



For the Right of Independence!



Leo Brodaty (inset); Archive Service of Urdmurtia
Russian Civil War poster exhorts: “Women Workers, Take Up Your Rifles!” Zhenotdel *delegatki* (women workplace delegates) in Glazov, 1924.

The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women

Continuing our commemoration of the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution, we reprint below the third part of an article that originally appeared in the Women and Revolution pages of Spartacist (English-language edition) No. 59, Spring 2006. Parts One and Two (see WV Nos. 1108 and 1109 [24 March and 7 April]) explained how the early Russian workers state attempted to implement the promise of women’s emancipation, which is intrinsic to the fight for liberation of the working class as a whole. As part of this struggle, the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) established the Zhenotdel, a party department to address women’s needs.

PART THREE

The Zhenotdel, founded in 1919, infused energy into the party’s frail and disparate women’s commissions. It played a major part in the mobilization of women behind the struggle for socialism in Russia. In 1920 [Konkordiiia] Samoilova reported that people were describing a “second October Revolution” among women (quoted in Carol Eubanks Hayden, *Feminism and Bolshevism: The Zhenotdel and the Politics of Women’s Emancipation in Russia, 1917-1930*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979). The Zhenotdel’s fundamental organizing precept was “agitation by the deed.” Historian Richard Stites described it as “the deliberate, painstaking effort of hundreds of already ‘released’ women

injecting their beliefs and programs and their self-confidence into the bloodstream of rural and proletarian Russia” (Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia*). That so many women became members of the Soviet government and of the party illustrates the extraordinary social mobility the party was encouraging.

A major vehicle for this work was the system of “delegate meetings” developed by the Zhenotdel and designed as a school in politics and liberation. Elections would be held in a factory for women workers to choose one of their ranks as delegate to the Zhenotdel for a period of three to six months. The election itself was a step forward in consciousness. The *delegatka*, wearing a red scarf as her badge of office, served as an observer-apprentice in various branches of public activity such as the factory, soviet, trade union, schools, hospital or catering center. After her sojourn in the world of practical politics, she would report back to the Zhenotdel and to her co-workers about what she had learned in the process of acting as an elected politician, administrator, propagandist and critic. One observer described the *delegatki* as “a menace to bureaucrats, drunkards, kulaks [rich peasants], sub-kulaks, and all who opposed Soviet laws” (quoted in *ibid.*).

In addition to the journal *Kommunistka*, which carried articles on major theoretical and practical aspects of the woman question, the Zhenotdel published women’s pages (*stranichki*) in many national and local party newspapers. Working-class women were encouraged to become cor-

respondents, sending reports and letters to the press. Conferences and congresses brought women of different regions together in great number and variety. The last important meeting was the 1927 Congress of Women Deputies to the Soviets, a massive witness to the work that had been done in the preceding ten years where women displayed “a sense of power and achievement” (*ibid.*).

Communal Living: Replacing the Household Pot

Early measures to institute communal living in Soviet Russia were heavily influenced by the Civil War. In the effort to mobilize the population to fight the war, the Bolsheviks instituted “war communism,” which included state rationing, public dining halls, free food for children and wages in kind. By January 1920 Petrograd was serving one million people in public cafeterias; in Moscow, 93 percent of the population was served in this way. Meals were of poor quality, but in the revolutionary optimism of the time this was seen as a temporary problem. In later years, many expressed nostalgia for the idealistic future promised by communal living under “war communism” as opposed to the harsh reality that was to come. Party leader I. Stepanov captured it:

“All we adults were insanely and dreadfully hungry, but we could justly say to the whole world: The children are the first privileged citizens of our republic. We could say that we were moving toward the realization of freeing love... from economics and women from household slavery.”

—quoted in [Wendy] Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*

A key component of freeing women from the household prison was the socialization of child rearing. The Bolshevik program rested on a concept that all individuals should have full access to all the cultural and social benefits of society, as opposed to restrictions dictated by social and economic status. An All-Russian Congress for the Protection of Childhood was convened in 1919. The delegates debated theories of childcare and the degree of state vs. parental involvement with the upbringing of the very young. The words of one of the members of the Presidium of the Congress, Anna Elizarova, captured the general understanding of the majority: “There must be no wretched children who don’t belong to anyone. All children are

the children of the state” (quoted in *ibid.*).

A provision of the Family Code put forward the year before had banned adoption altogether in favor of the state’s assuming care for orphans. This measure was especially important because adoption in Russia was notoriously used by peasants as a source of cheap labor. Instead, the government would take on the task of a quality upbringing for all children.

But the enormous contradiction between aspiration and reality remained. The state was unable to care for the millions of homeless orphans in Russia, the *besprizorniki*. This problem predated the revolution, and seven years of war followed by famine brought the numbers up to an estimated 7.5 million by 1922. The government authorized free food for all children under 16; kitchens and homes were set up, and the estates of the ex-nobility were turned into homes for orphans, with partial success. Goldman caught the vicious circle caused by the lack of resources to meet the need: “Without daycare, many single mothers were unable to search for work, and without work, they were unable to support their children, who in turn ran away from impoverished homes to join the *besprizorniki* on the streets” (*ibid.*). Although the numbers shrank in the decade after the famine of 1921, the *besprizorniki* remained a problem for the Soviet government well into the 1930s.

Temporary Retreat: the New Economic Policy

As the Civil War drew to a close in late 1920, the limits of the policy of “war communism” became clear. Industry had virtually collapsed. The most politically advanced workers had been killed in the Civil War or drawn into state and party administration; many of the remaining workers had gone back to the countryside to eke out a living from the land. Peasants

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 April 18.

No. 1110

21 April 2017

CLARIFICATION

The article “Britain Out of the European Union Now!” (WV No. 1108, 24 March) referred to recent strikes in Britain, including by “drivers and guards on the railways.” We would like to clarify that “guards” is a British term for train conductors. The strikers were not security guards.

in the south began rebelling against forcible requisitioning of grain (see “Kronstadt 1921: Bolshevism vs. Counterrevolution,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 59, Spring 2006).

To revive production and maintain the alliance with the peasantry, in early 1921 Lenin proposed the New Economic Policy (NEP), in which the forcible requisitioning of grain was replaced by a tax on agricultural products, with the peasantry now allowed to sell much of their grain on the open market. The government sought to stabilize the currency; rationing of food and scarce consumer goods was ended and small-scale production and distribution of consumer goods for profit was allowed. While these concessions to market forces revived the economy to a great extent, they also tended to exacerbate the existing imbalances, with heavy industry getting little or no investment, and the pre-existing layer of better-off peasants (kulaks) becoming richer at the expense of the poorer layers in the villages. A tier of newly rich small producers and traders (NEPmen) flourished.

As would be expected, the NEP had a negative impact on conditions for women and children. Women suffered a general rise in unemployment through 1927, and were pushed back into “traditional” sectors such as textiles and light industry. “Free market” practices meant discrimination against women in hiring and firing—especially given the expenses of paid maternity leave and on-the-job protection for pregnant and nursing mothers. Charges were instituted for previously free public services, such as communal meals. Half the childcare centers and homes for single mothers were forced to close, undermining any attempt to liber-

and Revolution). Delegates stressed that women’s problems were “closely connected to the overall position of the working class and under no condition should be considered apart from the proletarian state.” The government tried to replace the lost resources through voluntary contributions and labor, and the commissariats issued decrees aimed at stopping anti-woman discrimination.

But these measures had little effect. In early 1923 a debate over whether further measures should be taken to address these problems broke out among leading women cadre, including Vera Golubeva and Alexandra Kollontai, who argued that the scope of the party’s work among women should be widened. Golubeva, the deputy director of the Zhenotdel, argued that with the increasing unemployment among women, the party had to extend its reach into sectors of the population beyond the working class, drawing unemployed and peasant women into special (“transitional”) bodies of work linked to the party. The question was discussed at the April 1923 party congress.

In the end the Soviet government had no other choice but to resort to the NEP. The alternative, to maintain the policies of war communism in the conditions of social collapse, would have led to massive peasant revolt and counterrevolution. But the NEP brought its own dangers of that kind. As [Bolshevik leader Leon] Trotsky said, “With the transfer to the NEP bourgeois tendencies received a more copious field of action” (*The Revolution Betrayed*). Even within the constraints imposed by national isolation and economic weakness, however, the degradation of women’s status was not preordained but was rather determined by a political struggle



Topical Press

September 1921: Smolensk Market in Moscow. New Economic Policy allowed peasants to sell in private markets, reviving the economy but exacerbating inequality, including for women.

ate women: mothers had little opportunity to study, get skills or participate in social and political life.

Perhaps the most tragic consequence of the NEP for women was the re-emergence of prostitution. Prostitution was not illegal in Soviet Russia. Rather, the government sought to “return the prostitute to productive work, find her a place in the social economy,” in the words of Lenin as reported by [Clara] Zetkin (“My Recollections of Lenin,” in *The Emancipation of Women* [1934]). A 1921 government commission reaffirmed opposition to state interference in private matters:

“In fighting against prostitution, the government by no means intends to intrude into the sphere of sexual relations, for in that area all forced, regulated influence will lead only to distortion of the sexual self-determination of free and independent economic citizens.”

—quoted in Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)

Unemployed women and *besprizorniki* were the largest groups of urban prostitutes during the years of the NEP.

Goldman notes that delegates to a 1922 meeting on female labor angrily called attention to “the catastrophic position of services designed to protect mothers and infants due to state budgeting pressures under NEP” (Goldman, *Women, the State*

over *changeable* government policies.

In fact, the broader policies advocated by the Left Opposition [led by Trotsky] could have opened the road to a real improvement in the situation of women even within the framework of the existing material conditions. The implementation of a systematic plan of industrialization as laid out by the Opposition in 1923 would have undercut the bourgeois tendencies fueled by the NEP, while greatly increasing the employment of women in industry and changing the functioning of factory managers. Discrimination against women workers in wages and employment was a manifestation of bureaucratic degeneration within the industrial managerial apparatus that could have been fought and reversed.

The “Sea of Peasant Stagnation”

The most intense conflicts between the goals of the Bolshevik Revolution for the liberation of women and the actual conditions of Russian society occurred in the countryside. The 1922 Land Code abolished private ownership of land, water, forests and minerals and placed all land in the hands of the state. By law all citizens regardless of sex, religion, or nationality had rights to the land, and each adult was to have a voice in the *skhod* or village assembly. The Family Code granted individuals the right to live apart from



Sputnik/Alamy

Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai, People’s Commissar for Social Welfare, in 1918.

a spouse, to divorce, and to receive alimony and child support. Extreme poverty exacerbated the gap between law and life, making it almost impossible for many peasant households to pay women their legal due. As long as the family remained the basic unit of production, as long as patriarchy determined the institutions of village life, neither peasant women nor men could realize the individual freedom promised by Soviet civil law.

The contradictions could not be resolved by law; the problem was inherent in the very nature of the Russian Revolution. The relatively small proletariat was able to carry out its revolutionary dictatorship because it embraced the fight of the peasantry against feudal barbarism. But once in power the proletariat had to go beyond the bourgeois-democratic tasks posed by the abolition of tsarist absolutism. As Trotsky predicted even before the outbreak of the 1905 Revolution, in addressing such questions as the length of the working day, unemployment, and protection of the agricultural proletariat, “the antagonism between the component sections will grow in proportion as the policy of the workers’ government defines itself, ceasing to be a general-democratic and becoming a class policy” (*Results and Prospects* [1906]). The deepgoing process of uprooting feudalistic social relations in the countryside required a huge investment of resources to build the necessary infrastructure of schools, roads and hospitals, as well as the mechanization of agriculture. The Bolsheviks looked to workers revolution in the advanced European countries, which could provide the technological resources to enable the Russian proletariat to prove the benefits of collectivized agriculture to the peasant masses.

The Commissariat of Justice set up several commissions to investigate the tangled problems facing women and children in the countryside. The jurists upheld their commitment to equal rights in the face of powerful peasant opposition. For example, land ownership was based on the male-dominated family unit (*dvor*), and alimony was awarded based on family assets. Faced with a demand for alimony, peasants developed ruses for avoiding payments by creating a fictitious division of the family unit, thus reducing the extent of property that the court could award a divorced woman. Officials in the Commissariats of Land and Justice repeatedly

refused to accede to peasant demands to abolish divorce and alimony, and continued to support the rights of the vulnerable, the weak, and the landless peasant woman. The Land and Family Codes established rights for women that could result in smaller farm plots and decreased production, at a time when increasing grain production was a state priority. The Moscow commission declared: “To agree that the *dvor* should bear no responsibility for alimony means to flood our Soviet law in a sea of peasant stagnation” (quoted in Goldman, *op. cit.*).

Despite the difficulties, the laws, enforced by the Soviet state, did have an impact. Melnikova, an impoverished *batrachka* [a laborer hired for a season as a “wife” and discarded when pregnant] thrown out of her husband’s *dvor*, came to the judge saying, “I heard in the village that now there was this law that they could no longer insult women in this way” (quoted in *ibid.*). While there was often much resistance based on fear, ignorance and the inertia of tradition, once they were functioning, the institutions and changes in daily life throughout the early and middle 1920s gained the increasing support of the peasantry, especially the women.

A small but significant minority of peasant women found their lives transformed by the party’s educational efforts, the activities of the Zhenotdel and their new legal rights. Delegates at one women’s congress spoke proudly of their struggle as single women to retain their share of the land, to attend meetings of the *skhod*, and to organize agricultural cooperatives for women. Mothers of illegitimate children and divorced peasant women defied centuries of patriarchal tradition to fight the household in court for the right to child support and alimony.

Problems of Everyday Life

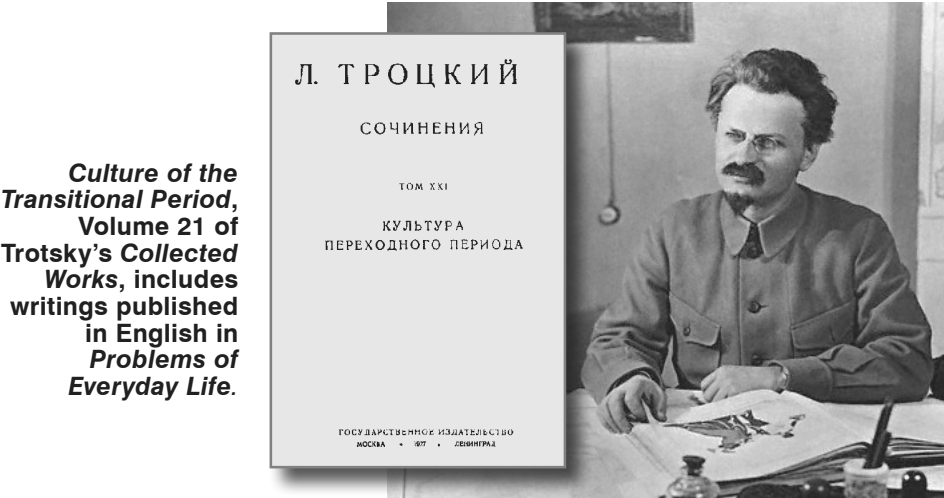
In 1923, a discussion developed within the Bolshevik Party on the question of how to improve the quality of *byt* (daily life). This seemingly mundane issue cuts to the heart of the struggle to create wholly new economic and social relations. At its core is the question of the emancipation of women, which is the political prism for “everyday relations” in a broader social sense. No other question reaches so far into the daily life of the masses, weighed down by centuries of custom, habits of social deference and religious reaction, especially in a backward, impoverished country as was Russia in the early 20th century—comparable to Iran or India today. As Trotsky said two years later, “The most accurate way of measuring our advance is by the practical measures which are being carried out for the improvement of the position of mother and child.... The depth of the question of the mother is expressed in the fact that she is, in essence, a living point where all the decisive strands of economic and cultural work intersect” (“To Build Socialism Means to Emancipate Women and Protect Mothers,” December 1925, *Women and the Family*).

Even party members, shamefully, sometimes derided the Zhenotdel as “bab-kom” or “tsentro-baba” (*baba* is a derogatory term for woman). Zetkin recalls Lenin saying:

“Our communist work among the masses of women, and our political work in general, involves considerable educational

continued on page 6

Hulton-Deutsch



On “Commander-in-Chief”

10 February 2017
To: Workers Vanguard

For a number of years now, the bourgeois media, journalists and pundits, politicians, and other representatives of the upper echelons of U.S. capitalism have been blithely referring to the political position of President as “Commander-in-Chief”—in the sense of “Commander-in-Chief of the nation”, not merely of the armed forces as specified in the U.S. Constitution. This blurring of the presidential power from purely military to political is dangerous to the extent that it reframes (and bolsters acceptance of) the concept of an imperial, Bonapartist presidency—a danger especially highlighted lately by the saliently authoritarian impulses of Donald Trump.

Marxists are rightfully disdainful of bourgeois political structure, designed to enforce a dictatorship of a nation’s bourgeois ruling class, but we also recognize the need to preserve whatever shreds of democratic norms exist. Within this context, with respect to the U.S. political environment, I feel the need to raise a note of caution about some recent use of the “Commander-in-Chief” formulation by WV.

On one hand, the term “Commander in Chief of U.S. imperialism” (as used for example in the recent article “For a Revolutionary Workers Party!” in WV No. 1103) is accurate and useful in underscoring the undemocratic, brutal, and oppressive role of the pinnacle of American capitalism’s apparatus of rule. But I also sense a vulnerability for misinterpretation that may inadvertently assist the current bourgeois sloppiness (or intention) to reinforce the authoritarian, Bonapartist attributes of the presidency (in pursuit of a further regimentation of U.S. society).

After all, “imperialism” as used by communists can refer to several concepts, from direct military application of imperialist oppression on a global scale to a metonymic reference to the imperialist nation as a whole. It’s in this latter usage that “Commander-in-Chief” could be vulnerable to confusion.

WV’s reply to a letter (“Democrats, Liberals and the Union Tops”) in WV No. 1104 seems to further exacerbate this semantic-conceptual vulnerability, stating “Today, with Trump having succeeded Obama as Commander-in-Chief...” In context, this use of the term (without even reference to imperialism) seems to basically just substitute “Commander-in-Chief” for “President”—a blurriness that may be especially liable to confusion with current bourgeois usage.

For me personally, the ICL and SL represent the most trustworthy modern authority in regard to Marxist and communist policy, strategy, and analysis. It’s within this realization that this note of caution is raised.

Regards,
Lyndon

WV replies: By referring to the president as Commander-in-Chief we in no way accept the drive toward bonapartism but seek to expose the democratic facade of the capitalist state—the apparatus of class repression of the workers and oppressed.

A Victim of “Sexual Abuse” Witchhunt

Roslindale, Mass.
23 February 2017

Dear Comrades,

The article about the victimized young women in Texas [“San Antonio Four: Latina Lesbians Exonerated” (WV No. 1105, 10 February)] reminded me of another victim of that era of witchhunting, a young gay man of Pittsfield in western Massachusetts, Bernard Baran, who left school at 16, became a child care worker and was accused of child molestation and convicted in 1985 in a monstrously fraudulent prosecution conducted by a vindictive prosecutorial team which included the Democratic district attorney. Baran was the first of the child care workers to be prosecuted in what was to be an era of hysterical victimization of innocent people. He was sentenced to three life sentences and ended up spending 22 years

When we use the term “Commander-in-Chief,” we are emphasizing that the president *is* directly responsible for myriad repressive functions.

Bonapartism refers to direct military/police rule, devoid of the usual democratic trimmings, that the property-owning class may resort to if its rule is significantly challenged. An element of bonapartism is intrinsic to the executive office of any capitalist state. The U.S. president has extraordinary authority, as provided in the Constitution.

We do not have “several concepts” of imperialism but understand, as laid out by Lenin, that it is the highest stage of capitalist development, characterized by the dominance of finance capital and gigantic capitalist monopolies. Imperialism has necessitated a vast increase in the bureaucracy and repressive apparatus of capitalist states. In the imperialist era the presidency has arrogated to itself many of the powers that the Constitution originally assigned to Congress. As U.S. imperialism has come to assert itself as the world’s top cop, it is convenient for the president to be able to launch wars and military adventures without being held up by the bother of seeking Congressional approval.

in horrific imprisonment which included repeated rapes and beatings and medical treatments that were performed sadistically. He was released on bond in 2006 and died suddenly in 2014 of causes no doubt related to his years of imprisonment. He spent almost half of his short life behind bars. Even after his conviction was set aside by the courts, liberal Democratic darling and then Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley refused to expunge his criminal record when it was in her power to do so. In 1989 the chief prosecutor was nominated as associate justice for the Massachusetts Superior Court by Michael Dukakis where he still serves. One of the lessons of this tragic story is that Democrats as well as Republicans are united in service to the interests of the capitalist class in whipping up day care hysteria in an attempt to scare par-

The last time Congress used its constitutional power to declare war was the U.S. entry into World War II.

In the Watergate hearings in 1973, Richard Nixon’s staff argued that the president had the right to commit robberies, but they admitted they had not researched whether he had the right to commit murder. Four decades later, in 2011, Barack Obama asserted his right to kill U.S. citizens anywhere, anytime, with not even the pretense of judicial oversight, when he ordered the drone assassinations of Anwar al-Awlaki and two other U.S. citizens in Yemen. And now the unpredictable Donald Trump has his finger on the nuclear button.

Trump’s lust for authority and his close relations with the military, the police and their political organizations are certainly ominous, but what he will be able to get away with will fundamentally be determined by the development of the class struggle. While the working class must fight to defend every shred of democratic rights and other gains, it needs the understanding that this “democratic” system is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that freedom from oppression and exploitation will come only through overthrowing the capitalist state by socialist revolution. ■

ents into keeping mom at home raising the kids and performing unpaid labor all her adult life, cooking, cleaning and caring for children, her life diminished into performing menial tasks in the context of the nuclear family, so valuable to the ruling class in fostering low social consciousness, conservative social attitudes and obedient children. The tragic brief life of this man must be remembered by the working class.

A WV reader

WV replies: We thank our reader for highlighting the case of this victim of the “sexual abuse” witchhunt. At the time, we denounced the reactionary nationwide campaign against childcare workers in “Children, Sex, State Witchhunters: The Uses of Abuse” (*Women and Revolution* No. 29, Spring 1985). ■

Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 1)

PROMESA (“promise,” Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act). This law demands budget cuts of \$450 million to education alone—in addition to more taxes, the sale of \$4 billion worth of public buildings and the slashing of government spending. The governor, Ricardo Roselló, is a union-busting lackey of the imperialists, who is faithfully imposing their austerity.

The Puerto Rican masses are threatened

with the destruction of public education, health care, pensions and the privatization of the government-owned public utility company, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority. The teachers’ pension fund is so depleted that contributions by working teachers flow straight out to retirees. The *New York Times* (8 March) reported that “none of Puerto Rico’s current teachers can expect to get their money back, because the fund is due to run out of money in 2018.” Since 2008, more than 350 schools in Puerto Rico have closed and today many hospitals have no funding to provide essential services. Workers in the U.S. should take a side with the workers and oppressed of Puerto Rico who are being ground down by colonial oppression and demand: *Cancel the debt!*

A century ago, Puerto Ricans were given limited American citizenship rights, but they are unable to vote in federal elections and have no voting representation in Congress. When Puerto Rico came under the rule of the U.S. in 1898, as a result of the Spanish-American War, the population was forced to receive their education in English. In 1909, Spanish was banned in all public schools. This was an assault on four hundred years of language and culture under the guise of “civilizing a savage people.” It wasn’t until 1949 that Spanish became the language of public education.

As forthright opponents of national oppression and U.S. imperialism, we favor Puerto Rican independence. Puerto Ricans hate their second-class status as residents of a U.S. commonwealth, but their feelings about independence are mixed. On the one hand, people on the island have a very



Pacific Press

New York City, April 11: Hotel Trades Council union members protest abuse of workers by hedge-fund owner of El San Juan Hotel in Puerto Rico.

strong sense of nationhood; on the other, many are fearful of losing the ability to live and work on the mainland and of sinking to the level of poverty of their independent Caribbean neighbors. We oppose any attempts to forcibly impose independence against the will of the population. Thus, we emphasize the *right* of independence.

The fight against colonial oppression in Puerto Rico would necessarily be directed at the local agents of imperialism and could therefore act as a lever for socialist revolution. Such struggles would also reverberate throughout the Caribbean, Latin America and on the U.S. mainland.

About five million Puerto Ricans live in the United States (the population on the island is 3.5 million), where they are a component of the multiracial U.S. working class in many urban centers. These workers can be a link for class unity of

workers in Puerto Rico and the United States against both the imperialists and their local enforcers. Our perspective is to build Leninist parties in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico whose goal is to establish workers rule.

As we said in our article “U.S. Colonialism Chokes Puerto Rico” (WV No. 1075, 2 October 2015):

“A victorious workers revolution in the U.S., in which class-conscious Puerto Rican workers can play a vanguard role, would immediately grant Puerto Rico independence and massive amounts of economic aid, establishing relations on the basis of its freedom to exercise national self-determination. But the spark of revolution could also come from the colonial or neocolonial countries. Workers struggle in Puerto Rico against U.S. colonial domination could inspire the multiracial working class on the mainland in the revolutionary overthrow of U.S. imperialism.” ■

North Korea, Syria...

(continued from page 1)

using nuclear weapons several times in the 1950-53 Korean War. In that war, some three million people were slaughtered, the peninsula was devastated and North Korea’s capital Pyongyang was flattened by the imperialists.

Like China, North Korea is a bureaucratically deformed workers state where capitalist rule was overthrown. The aim of the imperialists is to restore capitalist rule. Speaking in South Korea on April 17, Vice President Mike Pence threatened a military strike on North Korea, declaring, “All options are on the table.” In a gibe against Obama, he also reiterated Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s line that “the era of strategic patience is over.”

That era never existed. Whether under Republicans or Democrats, U.S. imperialism’s sole policy toward North Korea has always been to foster counterrevolution on the road to overturning the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Trump’s bellicosity, and his unpredictability, raise the prospect of nuclear Armageddon in the Far East. But his predecessor, Obama, also threatened to attack the North, including with nukes, having several times sent B-2 bombers over the peninsula. The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system that the Trump administration provocatively began installing in South Korea last month had been in the works for months, going back to the Obama presidency.

The overturn and expropriation of capitalism in China and North Korea are historic gains for the international proletariat, despite bureaucratic misrule. As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of these countries against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution. Such defense includes supporting the development of nuclear weapons and effective delivery systems to deter imperialist aggression. As political commentator Mike Whitney noted in an article titled, “The Problem is Washington, Not North Korea” (counterpunch.org, 17 April), “There’s no country in the world that needs nuclear weapons more than North Korea.”

Refusing to bow to Trump’s diktat, the North Korean regime did test-fire a ballistic missile, which reportedly exploded within seconds. It is welcome that the North has gone some way toward developing a nuclear deterrent, including ballistic missiles covering northeast Asia and advances in developing missiles that could reach the U.S. Pacific coast. It is because North Korea has some capacity to fight back that the U.S. has thus far not launched the kind of military strikes that it did in Syria.

The attack on the Syrian air base was widely cheered by the Democratic Party. Indeed, in reversing policy regarding Assad, Trump essentially came over to the position of Democratic Party hawks such as Hillary Clinton, who have long pushed for direct military action to oust Assad and a more bellicose posture toward Syria’s Russian ally. Those Democratic politicians and their press mouthpieces who denounced Donald Trump as an impostor to the presidential throne, a pathological liar, “Putin’s puppet” and too unhinged to have the nuclear codes suddenly joined in a chorus of “Hail to the Chief.” CNN’s Fareed Zakaria proclaimed that with the Syria strike “Donald Trump became the president of the United States.” Given his job description as Commander-in-Chief, yes he did.

Notably, the Democratic Party’s response to Trump’s bellicosity against North Korea has been somewhat more worried, due mainly to the fact that North Korea can not only defend itself but could inflict heavy damage on South Korea and Japan. The *New York Times*, which on April 7 celebrated the Syrian strikes for having provided it a “sense of emotional satisfaction,” published an editorial on April 17 that lectured, “It would be risky for Mr.

Trump to let overconfidence and bombast, expressed in tweets and public statements, box him into some kind of showdown” with North Korea. As a North Korean government official astutely observed, the attack on Syria “proves a million times over that our decision to strengthen our nuclear deterrence has been the right choice. Only military power of our own will protect us from imperialistic aggression.”

For its part, the Trump administration has been putting enormous pressure on the Beijing regime to bring North Korea to heel. While China remains Pyongyang’s only ally, its policy regarding North Korea is premised on the futile Stalinist pursuit of “peaceful coexistence” with

site, in March alone the U.S.-led coalition butchered at least 1,800 civilians in Syria and Iraq. Since late 2014, the U.S. military has been heavily engaged in the Syrian quagmire, with about 900 Special Ops, Rangers and Marines stationed there. Trump is now considering sending an additional 1,000 troops to combat the Islamic State (ISIS). Since August 2014, the U.S. coalition has carried out over 19,000 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria with more than 72,000 bombs and missiles. Meanwhile, the U.S. recently announced it is dispatching dozens of soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division to Somalia.

It takes a heavy dose of chutzpah for Washington to shed tears over the use



U.S. Navy
F/A-18 Super Hornet onboard USS *Carl Vinson*. The carrier, with its strike group, was redirected by Trump to Korean Peninsula.

world imperialism. China has repeatedly pressured North Korea to stop its development of nuclear weapons. In 2013 and again last year, China helped the U.S. to draw up UN resolutions imposing sanctions on North Korea following the latter’s nuclear tests. Reportedly, China has stopped buying North Korean coal, and a major government newspaper said that it may curb oil sales to the North in the event of another test—moves that would further undermine the beleaguered North Korean economy. At the same time, it is unclear if China will implement these threats. Chinese trade with the North has actually expanded over the last two years.

Beijing’s collaboration with Washington against Pyongyang harms the defense of the Chinese workers state itself—the ultimate target of the U.S. imperialists. Capitalist counterrevolution in North Korea would bring U.S. forces right to the Chinese border, hugely intensifying the imperialist military threat. Key to the defense of the deformed workers states is the fight for workers political revolution to sweep away the nationalist ruling bureaucracies. The struggle to replace the Stalinist misleaders with governments based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism must be linked to the extension of proletarian power to the centers of world imperialism—West Europe, Japan and the U.S. imperialist colossus. Vital to this fight is the creation of Leninist-Trotskyist parties as sections of a reformed Fourth International.

U.S. Hands Off the World!

The pretext for the attack on Syria was the purported April 4 bombing of rebel-held Khan Sheikhoun with sarin gas, attributed to the regime of Bashar al-Assad, which left dozens dead. We do not know who is responsible, although there is every reason to suspect that Washington’s account is another set of alternative facts. The Syrian government denied carrying out any chemical attack. Russia blamed the opposition, saying a government shell hit a building where rebels were producing chemical weapons. Certainly, the U.S. imperialists are masters at fabrications to justify their wars—from the USS *Maine* (Cuba), to the Gulf of Tonkin incident (Vietnam) to “weapons of mass destruction” (Iraq).

When it comes to slaughtering civilians, the U.S. imperialists are second to none. According to the Airwars web-

site, in March alone the U.S.-led coalition butchered at least 1,800 civilians in Syria and Iraq. Since late 2014, the U.S. military has been heavily engaged in the Syrian quagmire, with about 900 Special Ops, Rangers and Marines stationed there. Trump is now considering sending an additional 1,000 troops to combat the Islamic State (ISIS). Since August 2014, the U.S. coalition has carried out over 19,000 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria with more than 72,000 bombs and missiles. Meanwhile, the U.S. recently announced it is dispatching dozens of soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division to Somalia.

Marxists have no side in the grisly Syrian civil war. But we have a side against the U.S. and other imperialists. Thus, while we are implacable enemies of everything the reactionary ISIS cutthroats stand for, we recognize that when they deliver blows against the U.S. occupiers and their proxies—the Iraqi army, Shia militias and Kurdish armed forces in Iraq and Syria—such acts coincide with the interests of the international working class, including in the U.S. At the same time, we do not imbue the repugnant ISIS forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials. We also oppose the capitalist regional powers (such as Russia, Iran and Turkey) that have become involved in the conflict and demand that they, too, get out of Syria. It is unclear whether the Trump administration will commence a full-on war against neo-colonial Syria’s Assad regime. In the event of such a war, we would have a military side with Assad’s forces, while maintaining our political opposition to his brutal capitalist regime.

It is the duty, *and a vital interest of*

the U.S. proletariat, to oppose the depredations of U.S. imperialism. The U.S. imperialists who wage military aggression abroad are also waging a one-sided class war against working people at home. Their cops gun down black people and Latinos in the streets, while their prisons hold a quarter of the world’s prison population. From Ferguson to Baltimore and Standing Rock, those who dare protest the oppression they endure under capitalism have been met with brutal state repression, including rubber bullets, pepper spray and tear gas.

The struggle against imperialist militarism and war must be linked to a program for the revolutionary overthrow of the world imperialist order by the working class. That revolutionary perspective is rejected by the reformist left. The Stalinoid Workers World Party (WWP) and Party for Socialism and Liberation held rallies to protest the U.S. attack on the Syrian air base. But, denying the possibility of international proletarian revolution, both of these groups tail after Third World nationalists. They are virtually uncritical of Assad’s bourgeois regime, falsely painting his dictatorship as progressive and anti-imperialist. At home, their tailing after “progressive” bourgeois forces has repeatedly put them in the arms of the Democratic Party—like WWP’s celebration of Obama’s 2008 election. The minuscule turnout to demonstrations against the attack on Syria makes clear that the anti-Trump “resistance” ballyhooed by the reformist left is nothing more than a vehicle for the Democrats, who supported the missile barrage.

For its part, the thoroughly wretched International Socialist Organization (ISO), echoing Hillary Clinton, complained that the military strike was insufficient: “The missile strike, targeted on a single airfield, did little to damage the Assad regime’s military capacity,” adding, “This is consistent with the U.S. foreign policy goal, carried over from the Obama administration, of allowing the Assad regime to remain strong enough to head off revolutionary change” (“U.S. Missiles Won’t Liberate the Syrian People,” socialistworker.org, 8 April). Time and again the ISO has complained that the U.S. is not sufficiently supporting the rebels in what it deceitfully calls the “Syrian Revolution” (see “ISO on Syria: Pimps for U.S. Imperialism,” WV No. 1097, 7 October 2016). Being on the side of the imperialists is nothing new for the ISO. In the tradition of its political godfather, Tony Cliff—who broke from the Trotskyist movement in 1950, opposing defense of North Korea and China during the Korean War—the ISO has always championed counterrevolution.

What is desperately needed is class struggle against the capitalist rulers, both to defend the interests of workers and the oppressed at home and to oppose U.S. imperialism abroad. The Spartacist League and our comrades in the International Communist League aim to win the most conscious layers of the working class to the understanding that what is necessary to put an end to exploitation, racial oppression and imperialist slaughter is the overturn of the capitalist order in the U.S. and internationally through socialist revolution. ■

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 _____

1110
Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Fascists...

(continued from page 8)

The workplace is the only real point of integration in American society, providing the potential basis for unity in struggle to defend working people and the oppressed. Black workers in particular can be the living link that unites the power of the working class with the anger of the ghettos.

The union movement has been flat on its back for many years under a misleadership that is committed to capitalism and has shackled the unions to the Democratic Party. A fight by militant unionists to organize labor/black power to crush the fascists can give the working class a taste of its social power. It is the fascists—not black people, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, leftists and others—who must be made to feel the sting of fear.

Who Are These Scum?

Today, many fascist groups in the “alt-right” claim that they are something different from the Klan and Nazis. They dress in “respectable” suits and ties and promote themselves as intellectuals. One of their leading voices is Richard Spencer, *führer* of the innocuously named National Policy Institute (NPI). When the NPI held a conference in Washington, D.C., shortly after Trump’s election, Spencer responded to the audience’s stiff-armed Nazi salutes by declaring: “Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!” (the latter a translation of the Nazi slogan “Sieg Heil”).

Allied with Spencer is Identity Evropa, which describes itself as an organization of “awakened Europeans” and requires that its members be of “European, non-Semitic heritage.” Its leader, Damigo, is a former Marine who was twice deployed to Iraq. After returning, he held up an immigrant taxi driver at gunpoint in San Diego in 2007, believing the man was Iraqi. While in prison for four years, he immersed himself in the writings of “former” Klansman David Duke. Before founding Identity Evropa in March 2016, Damigo—who describes black people as “inferior to whites, genetically”—was a leader of the now-defunct National Youth Front, the youth arm of the white-supremacist American Freedom Party.

Identity Evropa is currently waging a campaign, called “Project Siege,” to recruit from College Republicans. Its members have appeared at colleges and its posters and stickers have been spotted on campuses around the country. These posters consist of Greco-Roman images with slogans like, “Protect Your Heritage.” Their slick website serves as a portal for those who claim racial superiority and who deny the Holocaust. As part of their recruitment drive, Damigo, Spencer and others held a rally on 6 May 2016 at UC Berkeley, the former bastion of left-wing student protest.

Today, outfits like Identity Evropa, the

Traditionalist Workers Party and others are still small. But they will strike with force, as seen in Sacramento and Berkeley. It is vital that they be crushed in the egg before they grow. Against those who call for bans on “hate speech” or who argue for “free speech” for fascists, we say that when these race-terrorists rear their heads they must be repulsed through mass protest. *Fascism is not about speech or ideas; it is about racist terror.* “Anti-extremism” bans, whether instituted by campus administrations or government forces, will always be used to silence leftists, anti-racists and minority activists.

Fascism in the U.S. is rooted in the defeat of the Confederacy by the Union Army in the Civil War, when 200,000 black soldiers and sailors played a key role in destroying slavery. The Klan and other race-terrorists came into being after that victory and bloodily suppressed the newly freed slaves. No less than the KKK, the fascist vermin in the “alt-right” represent a threat to the very right of black people to exist. They aim to reverse the verdict of the Civil War.

Prepare to Fight!

Unlike Germany in the 1930s, when the Nazis rose to power and went on to carry out the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust, America’s capitalist rulers do not at this time feel the need to resort to fascism. The U.S. is not a defeated imperialist power, as Germany was after World War I, nor does the U.S. bourgeoisie currently face a challenge to its rule from the working class. The daily terror meted out by the cops against black people and minorities is today deemed sufficient to keep the oppressed in check. At the same time, the capitalist rulers hold the fascist shock troops in reserve, to be unleashed at times of social crisis in order to spike any prospect of revolutionary struggle by the working class.

The Trump administration is not fas-



WV Photo

New York City, 23 October 1999: Trade unionists at PDC-initiated anti-Klan mobilization.

cist, but the fascists sure as hell have a lot of friends in high places. Trump appointed as his chief strategist Stephen Bannon, a well-known “white nationalist” who took over Breitbart News and turned it into “the platform of the alt-right,” as he boasted. Trump’s top counter-terrorism advisor, Sebastian Gorka, is reportedly a member of the Vitezi Rend, a Hungarian organization that harks back to the fascist interwar dictatorship of Admiral Horthy—Gorka wore its medal at Trump’s inauguration ball. Stephen Miller, one of Trump’s senior advisors, joined Richard Spencer in organizing an anti-immigrant event at Duke University in 2007. He went on to work for notorious racist and defender of the Confederacy, Jeff Sessions, now the attorney general. One could go on.

Bolstered by their high-ranking friends, the fascists have put the left in their deadly sights. We of the Spartacist League were targeted earlier this year, when a fascist secretly videoed one of our comrades distributing *Workers Vanguard* at the D.C. inauguration protests. The fascist posted the video on YouTube and vowed to “infiltrate” our organization. In Berkeley, the fascists made it clear that they are targeting leftists by chanting “commies, off our street!” It is a matter of life and death for the left to fight for united-front actions, based on the power of the unions, to beat back the fascist threat. In such united fronts, every organization must be free to put forward its political program in the course of struggle. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky put it: “March separately, but strike together!”

During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, much like today, the official racism of the White House encouraged the Klan and Nazis. When the fascists tried to hold rallies in major urban centers, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee initiated and organized labor/black mobilizations. From Washington, D.C., where the Klan threatened to stage an anti-immigrant provocation, to Chicago, where the Nazis took aim at a Gay Pride demonstration, and elsewhere, we succeeded in sparking protests of thousands to stop the fascists. At the core of these actions were contingents of determined workers from the multiracial unions standing at the head of the black poor, immigrants and all the intended victims of fascist terror.

These mobilizations required a constant political struggle—against the cops, courts and other forces of the capitalist state, as well as capitalist politicians. Fearing the specter of labor/black power, Democratic mayors and other officials preached “tolerance” and “peace.” They called diversionary rallies far from where the fascists intended to march while violence-baiting those who wanted to stop fascist violence. And time and again, they were joined by reformist leftists who promoted reliance on the Democrats. When, in October 1999, we issued a call to stop the Klan from marching in New York City, the International Socialist Organization refused to endorse and instead joined a diversion organized by the Democrats where they shared the platform with a Latino police association. It should be an elementary understanding for leftists that the cops are the enemy. Historically, the policeman and the Klansman have often been the same man.

What is needed is a fight to finish the Civil War through an American workers revolution that achieves the promise of black equality, the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed and puts the last nail in the coffin of the fascist killers. The labor/black mobilizations we initiated are a small example of the leadership and forces needed to build a party of our class in struggle against the capitalist enemy. In the face of the growing fascist menace, we must be prepared to mobilize. ■



Anadolu

Berkeley, April 15: Antifa activists defend themselves during fascist-infested pro-Trump mobilization.

Russian Revolution...

(continued from page 3)

work among the men. We must root out the old slave-owner’s point of view, both in the Party and among the masses. That is one of our political tasks, a task just as urgently necessary as the formation of a staff composed of comrades, men and women, with thorough theoretical and practical training for Party work among working women.”

—Zetkin, “My Recollections of Lenin”

Neither the social reorganization nor the material conditions yet existed to inaugurate a new and higher order of family life, which in any case would require some generations to evolve. Indeed, the equality of women, in a social sense, may well be the last emancipation to be fully achieved in a classless society, just as women’s oppression was the first non-class social subordination in history.

Trotsky began to write a series of essays on the question of *byt*, such as “From the

Old Family to the New” and “Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema” (both dated July 1923), later collected in one volume as *Problems of Everyday Life*. Of course, he emphasized the importance of material abundance in the achievement of “culture,” which he defined not in the narrow sense of literature and art, but as all fields of human endeavor. Only in an advanced communist society can one truly speak of “choice” and “freedom.” Meanwhile, however, Trotsky advocated the encouragement of voluntary initiatives in daily life.

Trotsky’s writings provoked a sharp rebuttal from Polina Vinogradskaia, a member of the Zhenotdel, who argued that the problem could be reduced to lack of initiative from the government and opposed opening a wider discussion on *byt*. But Trotsky insisted that such a discussion was a necessary part of social development:

“The material foundations inherited from the past are part of our way of life, but so is a new psychological attitude. The culinary-domestic aspect of things is part of the concept of the family, but so are the mutual relationships between husband, wife, and child as they are taking

shape in the circumstances of Soviet society—with new tasks, goals, rights, and obligations for the husbands and children....

“The object of acquiring conscious knowledge of everyday life is precisely so as to be able to disclose graphically, concretely, and cogently before the eyes of the working masses themselves the contradictions between the outgrown material shell of the way of life and the new relationships and needs which have arisen.”

—“Against Bureaucracy, Progressive and Unprogressive,” August 1923, *Problems of Everyday Life*

In the revolutionary process the working masses were not simply passive objects, but necessary actors. Trotsky suggested, for example, that more forward-looking people “group themselves even now into collective housekeeping units,” posing this as “the first, still very incomplete approximations to a communist way of life” (“From the Old Family to the New”). While such pro-socialist initiatives were not central in the political struggle against the Stalinist degeneration of the party and state, they were entirely possible within the difficult reality of Soviet Russia in the 1920s.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Boeing...

(continued from page 8)

union-busting “right to work” laws, now on the books in 28 states, including onetime Midwest union strongholds. These statutes were first passed during and after World War II in the Jim Crow South to undermine integrated industrial unions and were sanctioned at the federal level by the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act. The “right to work” zealots, then and now, have combined vicious anti-unionism with virulent racism, often in cahoots with the Ku Klux Klan and other race-terrorists. On February 1, a national “right to work” bill was reintroduced in the House of Representatives by Iowa’s Steve King (who has drawn the praise of former KKK grand wizard David Duke) and Joe Wilson of South Carolina.

What the bosses call “union avoidance,” and workers know as union-busting, is closely intertwined with anti-black racism, which the capitalists wield to further the exploitation of black and white workers alike. This is especially so in states of the former Confederacy and the Charleston plant was no exception. Its managers, charged with making the factory “Stay Union Free,” are known for heaping abuse particularly on black workers, who make up a third of the workforce.

In fact, Boeing has an extensive history of racial discrimination. This manufacturer refused to hire a single black person for over 25 years from its 1916 founding, and long afterward maintained segregated bathrooms and lunchrooms while restricting black workers to less desirable job classifications. To make any significant headway in the South and beyond, the unions must take up the fight against black oppression. Black workers, who make up the most oppressed and militant section of the working class, are the potential vanguard of any organizing drive.

A serious mobilization of labor power in response to recent racist atrocities in the Charleston area—the murder of nine black people in the Emanuel AME Church by a white-supremacist in June 2015 and the cop killing of Walter Scott two months earlier, among others—would have been a strong declaration by the unions to the besieged black population: “We’ve got your back.” By demonstrating the union movement’s willingness to wage a fight in the interests of working people and the oppressed, any such action could have helped propel both black and white Boeing workers into the ranks of the IAM.

But this perspective was not that of area union officials, least of all those of the IAM. The powerful Charleston long-shore union, ILA Local 1422, while participating in community rallies over the massacre and making its union hall available to activists, didn’t attempt to bring to bear its strongest weapon: a work stoppage that could have shut down the Port of Charleston. For its part, the state AFL-CIO’s response to the Emanuel

AME Church massacre was to encourage union members to pray. In any event, the self-defeating IAM bureaucracy sought to “win” community support through very different methods: cutting checks for charity events, which some groups returned because a union was not the right “fit.”

The Boeing organizing drive didn’t have to end this way. An IAM victory at the crown jewel of South Carolina manufacturing would have opened a crack in the dam of anti-union opposition and given a shot in the arm to labor organizing across the South. A union leadership worth its salt would have prepared workers for battle in a hostile territory where the racist

maintained vain hopes in Democratic Party politicians. The IAM rushed to call the recent vote before Donald Trump could fill two vacancies on the NLRB and scrap rules adopted by appointees of Barack Obama (who was in the hip pocket of Chicago-based Boeing). The union tops push the illusion that if we only elect more “labor friendly” Democrats, the capitalist state’s labor laws can be used to benefit workers. Truth is, that rulebook is stacked against the unions and is designed to shackle labor’s social power—its ability to shut down production.

The unleashing of that power in the tumultuous class battles of the 1930s is



September 2008: Boeing machinists rally in Everett, Washington, in preparation for hard-fought 57-day strike.

ruling class revels in trampling on labor, black people, immigrants and the poor; the other side was certainly ready for a fight. Not the IAM bureaucrats though, or the rest of the pro-capitalist trade-union officialdom. The head of the IAM International, not to mention the AFL-CIO’s Richard Trumka, couldn’t even be bothered to make an appearance in Charleston.

It is hardly going to convince the undecided to sign up, and risk all, if when Boeing berates the union as a “divisive” force that will insert itself into the relationship between workers and managers, IAM organizers cry: “False!” In fact, Boeing South Carolina workers sorely need a force to battle the profit-gouging bosses—that is, a union rooted in the understanding that the interests of workers and their exploiters are counterposed. Wages, benefits and working conditions are ultimately decided by the struggle between these opposing classes.

Playing nice with the class enemy is the road to ruin. In 2015, the IAM withdrew a request for a unionization vote at the Charleston plant, declaring that, due to intimidation and threats against union organizers, it was “impossible to hold a free and fair election.” But the union continued to play by the bosses’ rules and

precisely what built the industrial unions in this country. The turning point was 1934, when three major citywide strikes were guided to victory by leaderships, all avowed socialists, intent on fighting it out class against class and who understood the importance of combating the racial and other divisions that are deadly to proletarian unity (see our pamphlet *Then and Now*). In those and subsequent struggles that forged the CIO industrial unions, workers won by standing up against the might of the capitalists and their security guards, police and National Guard. The CIO organizing drives shattered the color bar in basic industry, drawing large numbers of black workers into the unions, although they were largely confined to the hardest and dirtiest jobs and were the last hired and first fired.

At the same time, the CIO leaders undermined working-class militancy by preaching faith in the capitalist Democrats and Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Over the ensuing decades, the class-collaborationist policies of the union bureaucracy increasingly spelled disaster for organized labor. The recent defeat in South Carolina was prepared by a series of betrayals by the IAM tops. Boeing bought the Charleston plant from Vought Aircraft in 2009. The IAM had represented Vought’s workforce, but the day the purchase was completed, a petition to decertify the union was filed. A rotten contract voted the previous year at a meeting attended by only 13 members had turned many workers off to the IAM. Boeing’s promises to send the plant assembly line work for the 787 “Dreamliner” and a half-hearted IAM effort to retain its foothold gave Boeing a non-union operation in the Deep South.

After the company set up 787 work in South Carolina, the IAM bureaucrats played right into the bosses’ “divide and rule” by campaigning to “protect Seattle jobs” while insulting their class brothers and sisters in South Carolina. The head of IAM District 751 in Seattle declared: “If they continually offload and go into areas of nonskilled workers, they’re just not going to have that quality product.” The company held up such despicable statements, as well as an IAM-filed NLRB lawsuit to return the 787 work to Washington State, to convince South Carolina workers that the union didn’t give a damn about them.

A union leadership that aims to win battles for labor would have committed

to organizing the workforce wherever Boeing shifted production and to ensuring that its workers receive top wages and benefits. Instead, the IAM bureaucracy has offered up its services to the company as labor contractors. This participation in the capitalist game of dog-eat-dog competition for jobs, including against workers the union is putatively trying to organize, is the antithesis of the very purpose of the unions: to unite workers in struggle against their common exploitation.

The IAM officialdom’s toxic policy of pitting worker against worker is even more virulent in the case of workers overseas. Peddling “America First” protectionism, the union tops wrap themselves in the Stars and Stripes and tie the interests of the working class here to maintaining the competitive edge of U.S. imperialism. Thus, when Trump toured the Charleston plant two days after the union representation vote, the IAM International issued a statement not denouncing the union haters’ victory celebration but advising the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism to “urge Boeing to bring jobs home.”

Such “Made in the USA” chauvinist bleating is an obstacle to much-needed international labor solidarity and fuels racism against black and immigrant workers. Bemoaning “cheap labor” abroad also serves to mask the treachery of the labor bureaucracy, which in the name of sacrifice for American corporations has fueled a race to the bottom, greatly expanding the pool of cheap labor at home. In contrast, the importance of unity in struggle was shown by the union organizing victory at Smithfield meatpacking in Tar Heel, North Carolina, in 2008. During that 15-year battle, the heavily black and immigrant workforce mobilized in action to beat back union-busting attacks, including attempts by *la migra* to round up immigrant union activists.

Boeing is but one example of the “Southernization of labor.” Organizing the South is long overdue. The union bureaucrats occasionally give lip service to doing so, but any such campaign is anathema to these labor lieutenants of capital. A serious and sustained organizing drive would involve a level of class and social struggle that challenges the very foundations of the American capitalist order, not least the entrenched racial oppression of black people. In the class battles to come, the unions must champion the fight for black rights as well as full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

The question of transforming the unions into battalions of class struggle and champions of the oppressed is a political one. There must be a fight to replace the trade-union bureaucracy with a leadership dedicated to the complete independence of the working class from the bosses, their government and their political representatives. Workers need their own party, one whose goal is not just to improve the present conditions of the working class but to do away with the entire system of wage slavery and racial oppression and replace it with a planned, collectivized economy under a workers government. ■

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
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (312) 563-0441

Los AngelesBox 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (213) 380-8239

New YorkBox 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (212) 267-1025

Oakland.....Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604
slbayarea@fastmail.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (510) 839-0851

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

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

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

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

A Spartacist Pamphlet

1934 Strikes

Class-Struggle Leadership
Made a Key Difference

Then and Now

AUSTRALIA...AST

BRITAIN...710

CANADA...CON1

EUROPE...E1

SOUTH AFRICA...R2

USA...1351

\$1 (24 pages)

Order from: Spartacist Pub. Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

WORKERS VANGUARD

For Labor/Black Action to Stop Fascists!

Fascists Fueled by Trump Election

Hundreds of Jewish headstones desecrated. Women wearing the headscarf attacked on the streets. Two software engineers from India shot, one fatally, in Kansas in February by a Navy vet who howled, “Get out of my country.” A Sikh American shot in his driveway in Kent, Washington, last month by a masked white man screaming, “Go back to your own country.” Timothy Caughman, a 66-year-old black man, murdered on the streets of Manhattan on March 20 by a white-supremacist who had come to New York City from Baltimore with the express purpose of killing black men.

The race-terrorists have been emboldened by the campaign and victory of the right-wing demagogue Donald Trump,

and are taking their cue from the unabashed racism and anti-immigrant vitriol emanating from the White House. The ultimate aim of the fascists, including those who congregate around the “alt-right,” is racial genocide and the destruction of workers organizations, including unions and the left.

The race-terrorists have played on the racist backlash against Barack Obama, America’s first black president. Obama’s eight years in office offered nothing to black and working people; the Democratic Party no less than the Republicans represents the very capitalist order that breeds fascism. During the Obama administration, conditions for black people and workers continued to worsen while cops wantonly gunned down

black people on the streets. More industrial areas turned into rust bowls, while strongholds of union power continued their steep decline. Obama rigorously pursued U.S. imperialism’s war aims abroad, while ramping up the “war on terror” at home, which targets Muslims in particular. The fascist thugs feed off anger and frustration arising from economic devastation; they scapegoat black people, immigrants and minorities for the misery inflicted on the population by the capitalist rulers.

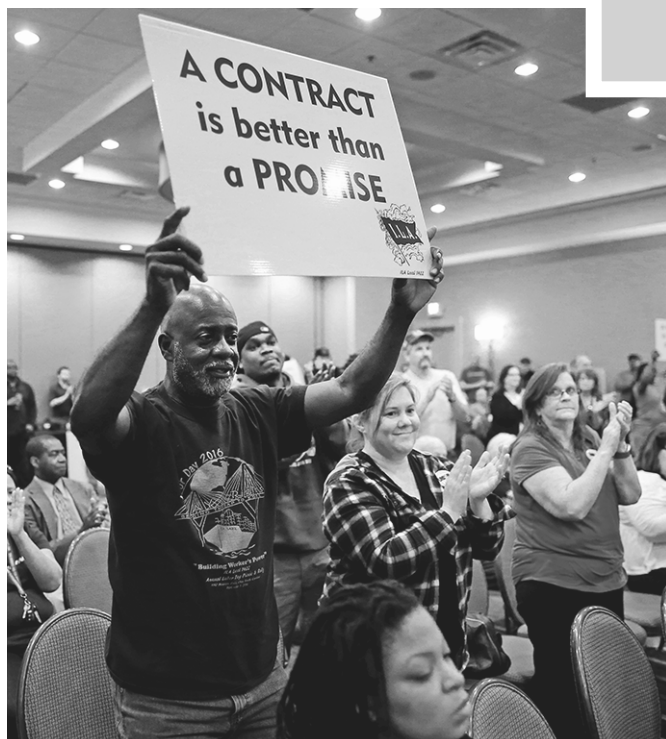
On April 15, when hundreds of “protesters” descended on downtown Berkeley for a pro-Trump rally, the fascists infesting the crowd made clear that they were out for blood. Chanting “Hitler did nothing wrong” and giving Nazi salutes,

they viciously attacked antifa activists and leftists with clubs, flagpoles and knives. One viral video shows Nathan Damigo, head of the fascist group Identity Evropa, punching a woman in the face. Last June, in Sacramento, white-supremacists of the Traditionalist Workers Party and the Golden Gate Skinheads stabbed and slashed at least seven antifascists, sending them to the hospital. In Berkeley, anti-fascists were able to defend themselves from fascist violence but a number were injured.

Individual acts of courage are not enough to smash the fascist threat. What is needed are massive, integrated, disciplined mobilizations based on the social power of the multiracial working class.

continued on page 6

South Carolina



Reuters



Bloomberg

Left: ILA longshoreman shows support for Boeing workers at IAM rally before February unionization vote in North Charleston, South Carolina. Right: Boeing 787s at South Carolina assembly facility.

Bitter Union Defeat at Boeing

In a serious defeat for the labor movement, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) lost a representation vote, by a three-to-one margin, at Boeing’s assembly plant in North Charleston, South Carolina, on February 15. Workers had been hammered by company propaganda, intimidation and threats, from the break room to the living room, morning, noon and night. But while the aerospace giant and a cabal of capitalist politicians, area manufacturers and anti-union outfits brought out the long knives, IAM leaders ducked the fight that was necessary to win this organizing effort in the open shop South. Pursuing the same entirely legalistic strategy that has led to one setback after another, the union tops—with their commitment to corporate profitabil-

For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize the South!

ity, their appeals for aid from false “friend of labor” Democrats and their dependence on the good graces of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)—squandered an opportunity for a major labor breakthrough. At the end of the day, a union’s right to exist is won or lost in struggle, not at the ballot box.

The union defeat in Charleston is far-reaching. It is a blow to Boeing South

Carolina workers, who will remain at the mercy of grinding speedup, ever-changing work rules, doctored performance evaluations and other management dirty tricks, while earning on average \$8 an hour less than their IAM-organized counterparts in Washington State. Having lost the vote, the IAM has now pulled out of Charleston, abandoning its supporters just as the company is moving to impose layoffs.

It is a blow to unionized Boeing workers, whose demonstrated ability to shut down Seattle-area production through solid strikes once gave them great clout. In recent years, the IAM tops have pushed huge concessions and a ten-year no-strike pledge onto the workers in the face of company threats to move more work to its non-union operations. It is a blow to working people across South Carolina, the country’s least unionized state, where the poverty rate increased over the last decade despite a surge in auto and other manufacturing jobs.

Indeed, the IAM’s defeat at Boeing is a blow to working people across the U.S., as the Southern labor system of no unions and low pay continues to expand nationwide. A graphic example is the spread of

continued on page 7