

## Expropriate the Health Care Industry!

# For Quality Medical Care for All!

MAY 1—Donald Trump has so far failed to make good on his campaign promise to “repeal and replace” the Obama administration’s Affordable Care Act (ACA) due to opposition within his own party, but his administration is determined to do so. Since 2010, destroying the ACA (popularly dubbed Obamacare) has been a rallying cry for the Republicans and sundry religious and racist reactionaries. We oppose the Republican assault on the ACA; if it succeeds, millions more will be denied medical care, and increasing numbers of people will suffer and die.

Republicans described the ACA as some kind of insidious attempt by Obama to introduce “socialism.” Far from it! Obama’s ACA was crafted to maintain the profit motive in health care. Indeed, it has been a bonanza for the profit-gouging owners of the private hospitals, pharmaceutical and medical supply companies, as well as the parasitic health insurers. From the beginning, we denounced Obama’s ACA as a rip-off of working people in the phony guise of providing health care to all (undocumented immigrants were always excluded). A central purpose of the ACA was to cut costs for the capitalists by undermining employer-paid health plans, including decent ones won by the unions, which are to be hit with a so-called Cadillac tax.

Some 20 million people have obtained health insurance under the ACA. But, under the individual mandate forcing people to purchase insurance, many are paying high premiums, co-pays and deductibles for inadequate coverage. And 29 million still remain uninsured. More than half of the people who gained insurance did so because of the expansion of Medicaid, which now covers one in five Americans. The proposed repeal of the ACA would, according to the Congressional Budget Office, result in 14 million Americans losing their insurance next year, growing to 24 million by 2026. Even the meager gains provided by the ACA are anathema to Trump and his cronies, who are committed to eviscerating any program that might help working people and the poor.

Republicans have run into trouble with a section of their own constituencies, who fear losing their existing health coverage. Moves to allow insurance companies to go back to denying coverage for pre-existing conditions are particularly feared. Moderate Republicans balked at Trump’s bill after receiving tongue-lashings over the proposed cuts from angry voters at town hall meetings across the country. On the other side, the far-right House Freedom Caucus thought Trump’s first bill didn’t go far enough in leaving the poor to die in agony according to the logic of the “free market.” Trump has now won over the Freedom Caucus with an even more vicious version of the bill.

Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie seeks to spend on health care, education and

by workers to win even a modicum of the quality care everyone needs. Fully satisfying basic human necessities—including good education, decent housing and stable, well-paid jobs—will inevitably run up against the capitalist drive for profit. This points to the need to overturn the capitalist order through socialist revolution.

### Health Care, U.S.A.: Racist, Sexist and Anti-Worker

The tiny, super-wealthy minority at the top of capitalist society gets the very latest and best in medical treatment, while health care for the vast majority in the U.S. is rationed according to race, sex and class. Cries against “big government” have long been coded language for calls to ax social programs portrayed as a “redistribution” of income from hard-working folks to “undeserving” black people and other minorities. In this vein, the Republicans have been taking specific aim at Medicaid. It is no coincidence that most of the states in the former Confederacy were among those whose governments revolted against the ACA’s expansion of Medicaid.

To qualify for Medicaid, people’s income must be at starvation level; the median income for the parents in a family of three to qualify is less than \$28,000. In racist, capitalist America black people and Latinos are disproportionately consigned to joblessness and poverty. As paltry as Medicaid is, it represents the only lifeline for millions. Altogether, Medicaid covers some 70 million people, more than half of them children, including millions of white people. Two-thirds of Americans have received care under Medicaid or know someone who has. Many Trump voters are now realizing that workers and the poor across the board, including themselves, will be hit hard by attacks on Medicaid.

Attacks on abortion rights are being used as a wedge to introduce broader attacks on health care as well. Pandering to the religious zealots, on April 13 Trump signed a bill denying federal funding to any agency that provides abortions, even though federal funding to abortion itself has been outlawed since the 1976 Hyde Amendment. The new measure represents a renewed attack on

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New York City: Members of 1199SEIU and New York State Nurses Association protest Trump’s plan to gut health care, April 1.

other social benefits for workers the bare minimum to maintain a sufficient mass of labor power to be profitably exploited. The debate over health care “reform” reflects divisions within the U.S. ruling class over just how low that minimum should be. Both Democrats and Republicans share a fundamental commitment to enriching the health care industry profiteers: Obamacare was modeled on a program instituted by Republican Mitt Romney when he was governor of Massachusetts.

Access to quality health care should be an elementary right for everyone from birth to death. The whole health care industry—from the hospitals to the pharmaceutical companies—should be expropriated. The provision of personnel, medical facilities, equipment and medicines entails a cost to society. That cost should be borne not by individuals out of pocket but by the government. Medical care should be free of charge at the point of delivery. It will take fierce class struggle



Reuters



AP

Attacks on ACA by Donald Trump, Mike Pence and Paul Ryan sparked angry protests against Republican representatives at town hall meetings across the country. Right: Arizonans shout down Republican Senator Jeff Flake, April 13.



# The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women

We reprint below the conclusion of an article that originally appeared in the Women and Revolution pages of Spartacist (English-language edition) No. 59, Spring 2006. The first three parts appeared in WV Nos. 1108, 1109 and 1110 (24 March, 7 April and 21 April). This final part details the effects on women of the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Soviet workers state, as well as the ultimate destruction of that workers state through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92.

## PART FOUR

These 1923 debates on how to deal with the excruciating contradiction between the communist program for women's liberation and the terrible material want in the country took place on the cusp of the decisive battle over the degeneration of the revolution. The poverty of the country created strong pressures toward bureaucratic deformations. Social inequalities under the NEP [New Economic Policy] only exacerbated the pressures. As Trotsky later explained in his seminal work on the Stalinist degeneration:

"The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It 'knows' who is to get something and who has to wait."

—*The Revolution Betrayed* [1936]

Eventually and inevitably, these material pressures found expression within the Bolshevik Party itself. Stalin, who was appointed General Secretary of the party in March 1922, substantially increased the wages, benefits and material privileges of party officials, and became the exponent of the interests of the new bureaucratic layer. Soon after Stalin's appointment, Lenin suffered a major stroke; he returned to work for only a few months in late 1922, when he urged Trotsky to wage a resolute struggle against the influence of the growing bureaucratic layer within the party (see "A Critical Balance Sheet: Trotsky and the Russian Left Opposition," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001). A series of strokes beginning in December left Lenin incapacitated until his death in January 1924.

Stalin joined with fellow Political Bureau members Leon Kamenev and Gregory Zinoviev in a secret "triumvirate" within the Soviet leadership, work-



Tate, London

**Left Oppositionists in Siberian exile demonstrate on anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution, 1928. Banners read: "Turn the Fire to the Right, Against Kulak, NEPman and Bureaucrat, Not in Words but in Deeds" and "Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"**

ing assiduously to block the ascension of Trotsky. Trotsky understood that the alliance between the workers and peasants would remain fragile as long as the Soviet regime could not provide industrial and consumer goods to the peasants at low cost. Thus he advocated increased investment in heavy industry and centralized government planning. The bureaucracy resisted this, preferring to let the NEP run its course, and increasingly bending to the economic pressures of the kulaks [better-off peasants] and NEPmen.

In the summer of 1923 growing economic discontent erupted in strikes in Moscow and Petrograd. In a series of letters to the Central Committee, Trotsky demanded that the party open an immediate campaign against bureaucratism, and that it develop a plan for industrial investment. Forty-six leading party members (including the woman military leader Evgeniia Bosh) signed a declaration along similar lines. There was an outpouring of support for the loose, anti-bureaucratic opposition and the proposed "New Course" in the pages of the party newspaper, *Pravda*.

At the same time a revolutionary crisis in Germany held out the possibility of a workers revolution there, giving hope that the isolation of the Soviet workers state would soon end. When Zinoviev's Communist International [Comintern] leadership and the German Communist Party failed to seize the revolutionary opportunity that opened up in the summer of 1923 and ignominiously called off a planned

insurrection in late October, demoralization swept Russia (see "A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001).

In the ensuing party discussion, the triumvirate pulled out every stop to destroy the Opposition. The elections to the 13th Party Conference, held in January 1924, were so rigged that, despite strong support from party organizations in Petrograd, Moscow and some smaller towns, Trotsky and his supporters won just three out of 124 delegates. The triumvirate's victory at this conference marked the decisive point in the degeneration of the revolution. After Lenin's death that same month, the triumvirate opened a mass membership campaign (the "Lenin levy"), allowing politically backward workers, assorted careerists, NEPmen and other unsuitable elements into the party. This began the process that would transform the party from a conscious proletarian vanguard into a capricious bureaucratic apparatus at the top of the Soviet state.

At the end of 1924, the bureaucratic victory took programmatic shape as Stalin promulgated the absurd idea that the USSR could build socialism on its own, without revolutions in other countries. Over the next decade and a half, the Soviet bureaucracy zigzagged between outright conciliation of the various imperialist powers and heedless adventurism bound for defeat, but the theory of "socialism in one country" was the mainstay of evolving Stalinist dogma. The Communist International was transformed from a party seeking international workers revolution into one acting as a tool of Kremlin diplomacy.

Within the USSR itself, the bureaucracy began to relax the original NEP legislation which, while allowing free trade in agricultural produce, had severely *restricted* the hiring of labor and acquisition of land. Socialism was to be built in the USSR "at a snail's pace," in the words of Nikolai Bukharin, now allied with Stalin. The conciliation of the NEP petty traders and backward peasant *dvor* [male-dominated family unit] had serious and detrimental consequences for Soviet women and children. In April 1924 an order to place teenagers in agriculture was promulgated. The provision against adoption was reversed in practice. In 1926, some 19,000 homeless children were expelled from state-funded children's homes and placed in

extended peasant households to plow with a centuries-old wooden plow, and to reap with a sickle and scythe.

From mid 1926 to late 1927, Trotsky joined with Zinoviev and Kamenev, who, responding to their proletarian bases in Leningrad (formerly Petrograd) and Moscow, had broken with Stalin. The United Opposition (UO) fought against the policies of "socialism in one country" and for a perspective of international revolution. Along with a tax on the kulaks to fund investment in heavy industry, the UO fought for a policy of voluntary collectivization of the peasantry and "the systematic and gradual introduction of this most numerous peasant group [the middle peasants] to the benefits of large-scale, mechanized, collective agriculture" ("The Platform of the Opposition," September 1927, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* [1926-27] [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980]).

From 1924 on, the Zhenotdel [Communist Party department that addressed women's needs, formed in 1919] was directly involved in party factional struggles; many prominent activists supported the Opposition, including Zhenotdel head Klavdiia Nikolaeva. She was replaced in 1925 by Stalin supporter Alexandra Artiukhina. During the fight against Zinoviev and his Leningrad organization, Artiukhina mobilized Zhenotdel workers for the Stalin faction in order to keep a "united, solid, dis-



AP

**Young woman worker in Leningrad tractor plant, 1934.**

ciplined Leninist Party" (quoted in [Carol Eubanks] Hayden, *Feminism and Bolshevism: The Zhenotdel and the Politics of Women's Emancipation in Russia, 1917-1930*). Artiukhina asserted that from the slogan "equality" women workers might get the idea that they should receive the same wages as more highly skilled male workers, and argued that the Zhenotdel should undertake to explain to them why wage differentials were necessary. In sharp contrast, the United Opposition's platform called for women workers to receive "equal pay for equal work" and for "provision to be made for women workers to learn skilled trades" ("The Platform of the Opposition").

Stalin's firm control of the party and state apparatus allowed him to vilify and then crush the UO, most of whose leading members were expelled from the party in late 1927. While Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulated to Stalin, Trotsky and many other

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## WORKERS VANGUARD

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God only knows what Donald Trump understands about the Civil War. But his comments on May 1—that the war could have been averted if Andrew Jackson were still president—had little to do with his plentiful ignorance. Rather, they were a repudiation of the Second American Revolution and the Union soldiers, including 200,000 black troops, who crushed the slaveowners; an attack on black people, who won their freedom from slavery through that war of liberation; and a slap in the face of Abraham Lincoln, who led the Union to victory against the Confederacy.

That Trump described Jackson as having had “a big heart” is typical for a man whose administration is littered with types who flirt with Holocaust denial and embrace the Confederacy. Jackson’s 1830 Indian Removal Act led to the Trail of Tears and the deaths of thousands of Native Americans forced off their lands. A staunch supporter of slavery, he owned 150 human beings when he died in 1845. Trump’s claim that things could “have been worked out” by Jackson means maintaining America’s “peculiar institution.”

The Civil War was America’s most formative and

defining event. It was in reaction to emancipation that the Klan and other race-terrorist outfits formed to bloodily suppress the newly freed slaves. Today, the fascist scum emboldened by Trump dream of reversing the outcome of the Civil War. Although the war smashed slavery, the promise of black equality and integration remains unfulfilled. Its unfinished tasks demand the sweeping away of the capitalist order through proletarian revolution, a third American revolution in which black workers are slated to play a leading role. *Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!*

# — Palm Sunday Massacre — Egypt: Coptic Christians

## Under Siege

The April 9 suicide bombings at two Coptic churches in Egypt, which killed at least 49 people and injured another 126, highlight the deep oppression of Egypt’s Coptic Christian minority. The bombings were aimed at inflicting maximum deaths as both churches were packed with worshippers on Palm Sunday. These were the latest in a string of anti-Coptic attacks—at least 26 so far this year. Last December, during Sunday Mass, a bomb ripped through a Cairo church, killing 30 people and wounding dozens, many of them women and children. In February, following a series of killings in El Arish, a city in the northern Sinai Peninsula, 200 Coptic families were forced to flee their homes—some 90 percent of Copts in northern Sinai have been driven out.

While the April 9 bombings were claimed by the Egyptian branch of the Islamic State (ISIS), which described Copts as their “favorite prey,” Coptic Christians have been subjected to violence and discrimination on a daily basis long before ISIS ever existed. The violence is rampant in rural Upper (southern) Egypt. Particularly volatile is the province of Minya, home to the country’s largest Christian community. Attacks can be triggered by a mere rumor. Last May, a Muslim mob set fire to the homes of Christians in Minya after word spread that a Coptic man had had an affair with a Muslim woman. After the man fled with his wife and children, the mob looted and burned his parents’ home, stripped his 70-year-old mother and paraded her naked through the streets. Such assaults are almost never prosecuted. Instead, the government organizes “reconciliation sessions,” and Copts are often forced to leave their homes and villages in the name of “harmony.”

Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi seized on the April 9 bombings to further strengthen his rule. He declared a three-month state of emergency that gives him even more sweeping powers. Since coming to power through a July 2013 coup, Sisi, who is strongly supported by U.S. president Donald Trump, has presided over one of the worst waves of repression in Egypt’s modern history. Tens of thousands of his opponents, both secular and Islamist, have been imprisoned. Torture, extrajudicial killings and disappearances are rampant. Draconian laws limiting freedom of assembly, expression and the press are ruthlessly enforced. As the economy stands on the brink of collapse—with skyrocketing inflation, food shortages and the imposition of austerity measures—Sisi is also taking aim against the combative proletariat. When 3,000 workers, most of them women, went on strike in February at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company, the government arrested five female strikers, forcing an end to the strike.



Funeral procession for victims of bombing of Alexandria Coptic church, April 10.

Coptic oppression serves as an important pillar of bourgeois rule in Egypt. Successive capitalist governments—“secular” or otherwise—have repeatedly promoted Islamic piety and anti-Coptic chauvinism as a way to reassert their power, especially in the face of mass discontent. But Copts are not just victims; many are also part of Egypt’s working class. Alongside their Muslim class brothers and sisters, they can play a significant role in the fight for working-class rule, which can open the door not only for their liberation but also for the emancipation of women, Nubians and other minorities as well as the country’s deeply impoverished peasantry. Key to this perspective is the forging of a Marxist workers party that will struggle against bourgeois nationalism and all forms of religious reaction—including fighting for the separation of religion from the state.

Justifiably fearful of forces like the Muslim Brotherhood, many Copts falsely believe that Egypt’s bloody military will defend them against the Islamists. As Sisi prepared his coup against President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, he made a point of portraying himself as the savior of Copts. When he announced his coup on 3 July 2013, he was joined on stage by, among others, the Patriarch of the Coptic Church, Tawadros II. In fact, the military is no less the enemy of the Coptic people than the Islamists.

A vivid example is the notorious Maspero massacre of 2011. As demonstrators protesting the burning of homes and churches marched from the heavily Coptic working-class district of Shubra to the Maspero television building in Cairo, they were mowed down by military forces

working in collusion with Islamists. Hundreds were injured and 28 Copts killed, including Mina Danial, a leftist activist who had been a prominent leader in the Tahrir Square protests earlier in the year. Today, as Islamist forces in the Sinai and elsewhere battle with the military, the Copts find themselves victims of violence and the vagaries of a system rife with impunity. “Nothing has changed,” one Copt told the *New York Times* (April 15). “It happened six years ago, it happened this week, and it will happen again.... Another president, another regime—it’s all the same.”

The largest and one of the oldest Christian communities in the Near East, the

Copts make up about 10 percent of Egypt’s population of 92 million. Having succeeded in brutally suppressing pre-Christian pagans, Christians had become the majority of Egypt by the time of the Arab conquest in the seventh century. While some Egyptians embraced Islam voluntarily, many did so under the pressure imposed by the *jiziah*, a tax levied on non-Muslims. By the tenth century, Muslims outnumbered Christians, and Arabic replaced Coptic as the official language. Under Muslim rule, the Copts were relegated to second-class status, denied access to high government positions and, at times, subjected to organized violence. The *jiziah* was not abolished until 1856. Today, Islamic extremists call for it to be reinstated.

During Britain’s occupation of Egypt, which began in 1882, the British imperialists further exacerbated tensions between the Muslim majority and Copts and other minorities, including by promoting wealthy Copts into positions of power. Nonetheless, Coptic intellectuals and leaders played a prominent role in the nationalist movement against colonial rule, including in the 1919 uprising, which was brutally suppressed. Under left-nationalist strongman Gamal Abdel Nasser, who came to power following the 1952 Free Officers coup that toppled the monarchy and ended the British occupation, conditions for Copts were often contradictory.

On the one hand, Nasser reaffirmed Islam as the state religion and promoted pan-Arab nationalism, which held little attraction for Egyptian Copts. On the other hand, his emphasis on an Egyptian nationalist identity that transcended the Muslim/Christian divide appealed to Copts. While few Copts served in the top

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Maspero massacre: Security forces in Cairo attack Coptic Christians protesting attacks on churches and homes, October 2011.

Russian Revolution...

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leading UO members were sent into internal exile. The bureaucratization of internal party life had a demoralizing effect on the Zhenotdel. As of 1927, attendance at delegate meetings dropped off sharply—as low as 40 to 60 percent of potential attendees compared to 80 to 95 percent previously.

The Family Code of 1926

The bureaucratization of the Soviet party and state was not a swift, unitary process. It took years for the bureaucracy to fully stifle revolutionary consciousness, which also weakened in the face of the devastation of the country. The passionate debate over the Family Code of 1926 is just one example of the intensive public discussion that was still taking place in some sectors of Soviet political life. The Bolsheviks recognized that social relations would continue to evolve after the revolution. Drafted deliberately as a transitional set of laws, the 1918 Family Code was never considered to be definitive. Debate and discussion on family policy continued to simmer throughout the period of the Civil War and NEP. In 1923 a committee was formed to draft a new code. In October 1925, after a number of drafts and intense public debate, a draft was presented to the CEC [Central Executive Committee, state governing body]. There followed another year of nationwide discussion.

The 1926 Family Code marks a midpoint in the degeneration of Soviet family policy from the liberating ferment of the early revolutionary years to the Stalinist rehabilitation of the institution of the family in 1936. By 1925-26, arguments for the abolition of all marriage codes had ebbed. Instead, proponents of looser policies such as recognizing “de facto” (common law) marriage clashed with more conservative forces. Predominantly from the peasantry, the advocates of a stricter civil code also included some working-class women who spoke for the vulnerability of women and children in a society where the full replacement of the family with socialized methods was not yet possible.

Changes from the 1918 law in the 1926 Family Code included extending alimony payments to the able-bodied unemployed, as opposed to the disabled only, and adding joint rights for property acquired in the course of marriage, as opposed to the earlier stipulation that spouses retain only their own property. The 1926 Code also made divorce even easier: the “postcard divorce” was the simple filing of the wish to dissolve the marriage on the part of one of the parties; the requirement of an appearance in court was dropped. The greatest controversy was provoked over government recognition of de facto marriage, that is, to grant the same legal status to people living together in unregistered relationships as to officially married couples.

The juridical difficulty centered on the problem of defining marriage, outside of the civil registration of same, because, naturally, once you got into the courtroom, a man and a woman could well disagree on whether a marriage existed. Forty-five



Stalin’s glorification of family included “Glory of Motherhood” medal for childbearing. Above: Kazakh woman with ten children honored as “mother-heroine.”



percent of alimony suits were brought by unmarried women abandoned at pregnancy.

For many women, less skilled, less educated, and less able to command a decent wage or even a job, easy divorce too often meant abandonment to poverty and misery for themselves and their children by a husband exercising his right to “free union.” Their condition of dependency could not be resolved by easy divorce laws in the absence of jobs, education and decent, state-supported childcare facilities. As one explained in a *Rabotnitsa* article, “Women, in the majority of cases, are more backward, less qualified, and therefore less independent than men.... To marry, to bear children, to be enslaved by the kitchen, and then to be thrown aside by your husband—this is very painful for women. This is why I am against easy divorce.” Another noted, “We need to struggle for the preservation of the family. Alimony is necessary as long as the state cannot take all children under its protection” (quoted in Wendy Z. Goldman, “Working-Class Women and the ‘Withering Away’ of the Family,” in *Russia in the Era of NEP*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Rabinowitch and Stites [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991]). These excruciating contradictions underline the stark truth that the family must be *replaced* and cannot be simply abolished.

While the differences over the proposed Code were not clearly between the Right and Left, the discussion paralleled the general debates in the party and similarly reflected the pressures of class forces. Those opposed to the draft Code tended to reflect the influence of the peasantry, which adamantly opposed recognition of de facto marriage and easy divorce as a threat to the stability and economic unity of the household and a product of “conniving females,” “social and moral chaos,” and “debauchery” (Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*).

The United Opposition did not have a formal position on the Code, as far as we know; but Oppositionists took part in

the debate. Alexander Beloborodov, who was expelled from the party with Trotsky in 1927, had many reservations about the Code; he was particularly concerned about the effect of family instability on children “in so far as we are unable to arrange for community education for children and demand that the children be brought up in the family” (quoted in Rudolph Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the U.S.S.R.* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949]). Trotsky himself denounced opposition to the recognition of de facto marriage in a 7 December 1925 speech to the Third All-Union Conference on Protection of Mothers and Children:

“Comrades, this [opposition] is so monstrous that it makes you wonder: Are we really in a society transforming itself in a socialist manner...? Here the attitude to woman is not only not communist, but reactionary and philistine in the worst sense of the word. Who could think that the rights of woman, who has to bear the consequences of every marital union, however transitory, could be *too* zealously guarded in our country?... It is symptomatic and bears witness to the fact that, in our traditional views, concepts and customs, there is much that is truly thick-headed and that needs to be smashed with a battering ram.”

—Trotsky, “The Protection of Motherhood and the Struggle for Culture,” *Women and the Family*

Forced Collectivization and the Five Year Plan

By 1928, the bureaucracy’s policies of encouraging the kulaks to “enrich” themselves had brought the disaster predicted by the Opposition: the wealthy peasants had begun hoarding grain, having no incentive to sell to the state since there was nothing much they could buy with the



1931 poster reads: “Down With Kitchen Slavery! We Demand a New Life.”

proceeds. Unable to feed the cities, Stalin did an about-face. He turned on his ally Bukharin and forcibly collectivized half the peasants in the country in the space of four months. The peasants responded by sabotage, killing farm animals, including more than 50 percent of the horses in the country. During the ensuing social upheaval through the early 1930s more than three million people died.

At the same time, Stalin abandoned the policy of building socialism “at a snail’s pace” and adopted a desperately needed plan for industrialization, albeit accelerated to a reckless and murderous pace. The resulting economic development brought about a qualitative change in the conditions of working women. To enable them to work, childcare centers and cafeterias sprang up overnight in neighborhoods and factories. “Down with the kitchen!” cried one propagandist:

“We shall destroy this little penitentiary! We shall free millions of women from house-keeping. They want to work like the rest of us. In a factory-kitchen, one person can prepare from fifty to one hundred dinners a day. We shall force machines to peel potatoes, wash the dishes, cut the bread, stir the soup, make ice cream.”

“The saucepan is the enemy of the party cell” and “Away with pots and pans” became party watchwords (quoted in Stites, *Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia*).

However, economic planning in the USSR was not based on the democratic input of the workers, but on bureaucratic fiat. While the gains of industrialization were enormous, they were at the cost of quality of goods and with great bureaucratic inefficiency. Despite these problems, the Soviet Union was the only country in the 20th century to develop from a backward, overwhelmingly peasant country to an advanced industrial power. This is confirmation of the tremendous impetus to human well-being—not least the status of women—that results from the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a collectivized, planned economy, even in a single country. It was only because of this industrial development that the USSR was able to beat back the assault of Hitler’s armies in World War II, though at the cost of 27 million Soviet lives. At the same time the bureaucracy clogged society’s every pore, leading to waste, repression and caprice, while working to prevent the international extension of the revolution, which could be the only real, long-term defense of the gains of October.

Despite the real strides forward made by women through industrialization, the bureaucracy had abandoned the communist commitment to fight for women’s liberation. It used the rhetorical adventurism of the period to cover its retreat. Grotesquely, the government announced in 1930 that the woman question had been officially resolved. At the same time the Zhenotdel was liquidated; the prelude to this had been the abolition in 1926 of the International Women’s Secretariat, which was downgraded to the women’s department of the Comintern Executive Committee. The Zhenotdel’s liquidation was put forward in the guise of a party “reorganization” in 1929, with the claim that work among women would become the work of the party as a whole. But these words, borrowed from the revolutionary years, were now only a cover for inaction and retreat.

1936 and the Triumph of the “Socialist Family”

In 1929 the Communist Party was still calling for the withering away of the family. By 1936-37, when the Russian CP’s degeneration was complete, Stalinist doctrine pronounced this a “crude mistake” and called for a “reconstruction of the family on a new socialist basis.” The third Family Code, which became law in 1936, also made divorce more difficult, requiring an appearance in court, increased fees and the registration of the divorce on the divorcees’ internal passports, to prevent “a criminally irresponsible use of this right, which disorganizes socialist community life” (Schlesinger, *The Family in the U.S.S.R.*).

The official glorification of family life and the retreat from Bolshevik policies on divorce and abortion were an integral part of the political counterrevolution that usurped political power from the working class. Trotsky addressed this at length:

“The triumphal rehabilitation of the family, taking place simultaneously—what a providential coincidence!—with the rehabilitation of the ruble, is caused by the material and cultural bankruptcy of the state. Instead of openly saying, ‘We have proven still too poor and ignorant for the creation of socialist relations among men, our children and grandchildren will realize this aim,’ the leaders are forcing people to glue together again the shell of the broken family, and not only that, but to consider it, under threat of extreme penalties, the sacred nucleus of triumphant socialism. It is hard to measure with the eye the scope of this retreat.”

—The Revolution Betrayed

Repudiating the Bolshevik commitment to noninterference in people’s personal lives, the theory of the “extinction of family” was declared as leading to sexual debauchery, while praise of “good housewives” began to appear in the Soviet press by the mid 1930s. A 1936 *Pravda* editorial denounced a housing plan without individual kitchens as a “left deviation” and an attempt to “artificially introduce communal living.” As Trotsky said, “The retreat not only assumes forms of disgusting hypocrisy, but also is going infinitely farther than the iron economic necessity demands.”

To the great hardship of Soviet women, the 1936 Family Code criminalized abor-

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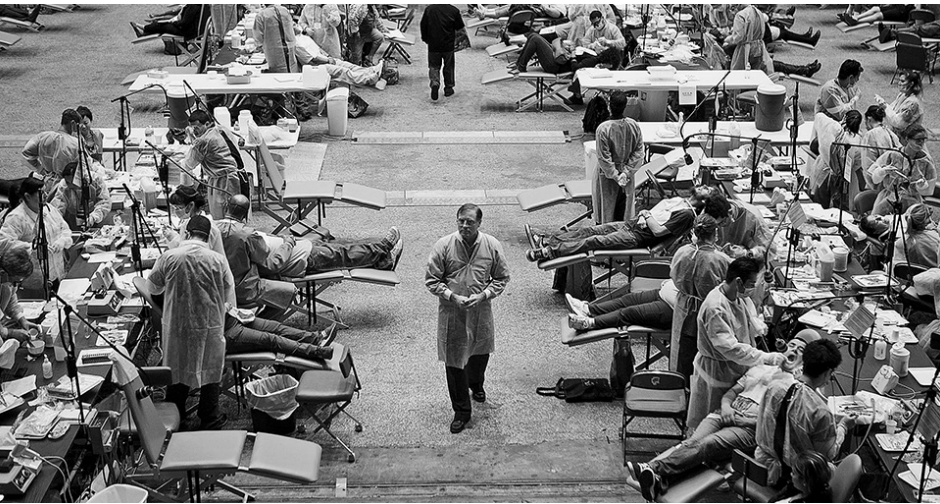
# Medical Care...

(continued from page 1)

Planned Parenthood, which provides millions of women with free and low-cost prenatal care, cancer and STD screenings as well as contraception.

Per capita medical costs here are by far the highest among advanced capitalist countries, yet the U.S. ranks lower than most in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality and the percentage of people aged 65 or older with chronic diseases. As detailed in Steven Brill’s powerful exposé, “Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us,” (*Time*, 20 February 2013), big urban and university hospitals that are supposedly “nonprofit” rake in lucrative surpluses by charging exorbitant prices for everything from generic Tylenol to surgeons’ gowns. A study published in *Health Affairs* (September 2016) calculated that what hospitals charge compared to the actual medical cost ranges from 180 percent for routine inpatient care to **2,850 percent** for specialized interventions such as CT scans! Drug prices have also skyrocketed, not least due to a ban on Medicare negotiating prices with the pharmaceutical companies.

Hospitals and clinics routinely turn away those without insurance who cannot pay up front. Even working families who have what they thought was adequate insurance can end up with bills for tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars for a simple outpatient procedure or a broken bone. People dying of cancer and their families are hounded by collection agency scavengers. Medical debt is the number one cause of personal bankruptcy—46 million people are currently struggling to pay off medical debt.



**Free health clinic for uninsured patients in Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena, 2012.**

tion, and the death rate from abortions soared. At the same time, the government began to issue “heroin awards” to women with large numbers of children, while officials decreed that in the Soviet Union “life is happy” and only selfishness impels women to abortion. The 1944 Family Code withdrew the recognition of de facto marriage, restored the humiliating concept of “legitimacy,” abolished coeducation in the schools and banned paternity suits. Only in 1955 did abortion again become legal in the USSR.

### 1991-92: Counterrevolution Tramples on Women

In the 1930s Trotsky predicted that the Kremlin bureaucracy would reach an impasse on the economic front when it became necessary to shift from crude quantitative increases to improvement in quality, from extensive to intensive growth. He called for “a revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers” (Transitional Program, 1938). Reflecting in large part the unrelenting pressure of world imperialism on the Soviet workers state, these economic problems came to a head in the 1970s and 1980s.

Taking over where the moderate [Soviet leader] Mikhail Gorbachev shrank from the necessarily harsh measures of restoring a fully capitalist economy, Boris Yeltsin



**November 2013: Barack Obama meets with health insurance CEOs. ACA has been a bonanza for profit-gouging capitalists in medical and insurance industries.**

Enormous advances are possible when the profit motive is taken out of health care. Albeit under Stalinist misrule, the Cuban deformed workers state, thanks to its collectivized economy, has developed a health system that outshines in many respects what is generally available in the U.S. Despite a longtime imperialist embargo and limited resources, Cuba has three times as many doctors per person as the U.S., and it also sends doctors to scores of poor countries.

### The Fight for Free, Quality Health Care for All

As we noted when Obama’s ACA was rolled out:

“That the U.S. is the only major industrialized country in the world without a national health care program is, in large part, testimony to how successfully America’s rulers have wielded anti-black racism and anti-immigrant nativism to divide and weaken the working class and

its struggles. Those divisions have been a major roadblock to the development of elementary class consciousness—that is, the understanding that the multiracial proletariat has distinct class interests that require political expression in its own party.”

—“For Socialized Medicine—  
Quality Health Care for All!”  
WV No. 1035, 29 November 2013

The race/caste oppression of black people, the majority of whom are forcibly segregated at the bottom of society, is fundamental to American capitalism, which was founded on black chattel slavery. While black workers are the last hired and the first fired, they are a strategic component of the working class, particularly in the unions.

The potentially powerful, multiracial trade unions would find plenty of allies if they waged some hard-fought class struggle. The working class must take up the fight for free, quality health care, including abortion and contraception and link it to the struggle against black oppression and for immigrant rights. Such a perspective is alien to the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats who, despite some griping, fell into line behind the Democrats and supported the ACA.

Contrary to Democratic Party mythology about FDR’s “New Deal” and LBJ’s “Great Society,” social programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid were only conceded by the capitalists after mass social struggle. Social Security came out of the class battles of the 1930s that forged the industrial trade unions. Union health care plans were wrested from the employers through militant strikes after World War II, like the cradle-to-grave, union-run system won by the United Mine Workers in 1950. Medicare and Medicaid were launched amid

[homeless children] are back, prostitution flourishes, and women in Central Asia have been thrown back centuries.

The International Communist League recognizes the harsh reality that political consciousness has retreated in the face of these unprecedented defeats. One of our key tasks is to struggle to explain and clarify the Marxist program, freeing it from the filth of Stalinist betrayals and the lies of capitalist ideologues. This study of the Bolshevik fight for the emancipation of women, showing how much could be achieved in spite of the poverty, impe-



**Capitalist counterrevolution in USSR brought misery, especially for women. Elderly woman sells belongings near Moscow, March 2017.**

the ferment of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements.

The labor tops’ prostration in the face of the bosses’ decades-long war on the working class is an expression of the union bureaucracy’s support to the capitalist system. These capitulations have resulted in a shredding of hard-won gains: health coverage, wages and pensions have been slashed. Instead of class struggle to defend pay and benefits, the union tops call on workers to vote Democrat. We fight to break the proletariat from the Democrats, Republicans and the rest of the capitalist rats who uphold the system of exploitation for profit. The labor sell-outs at the top of the unions push the lie that workers and bosses have common interests. The unions need a class-struggle leadership committed to mobilizing workers power against the class enemy.

### “Single-Payer” Socialists: Keeping the Profit in Health Care

Many liberals and reformist leftists, echoing Democrat Bernie Sanders, are proponents of a “single-payer” health system, something akin to what exists in Canada. In such a system, the capitalist government would pay private providers for the health care costs of the population while rationing medical care. If implemented, such a reform could represent a rational advance over the current “free market” anarchy, but a single-payer system would do nothing to take the profit motive out of health care.

The reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) explicitly accepts private medicine for profit. An April 6 article on socialistworker.org (“Putting Single-Payer Back on the Table”) says: “The left should embrace the opportunity to put forward single-payer as a real alternative.” It enthuses over a proposed single-payer scheme in California, under which it admits health care will be “carried out by various public and private providers.” The ISO tailors its demands to whatever is acceptable to the liberal wing of the bourgeois Democrats. The truth is that achieving free, quality medical care for all will require an uncompromising struggle by the multiracial working class to rip the health industry out of the hands of the profit-gorged capitalists.

It is the job of revolutionary Marxists to make the working class conscious of its power and interests in leading all the oppressed to overthrow the imperialist bourgeoisie. What is needed is a *multi-racial, revolutionary workers party* to lead the proletariat to seize state power from the capitalists and end the system of exploitation and oppression that barter human lives for profit. ■

rialist strangulation and later Stalinist degeneration of the USSR, is a testimony to the promise that a world collective planned economy, born of new October Revolutions, holds out to the exploited and oppressed of the world. The breadth of our long-term historical view of the socialist future, a new way of life that can evolve only after ripping out the entrenched inequality and oppression bred by capitalist exploitation, was addressed by Trotsky:

“Marxism sets out from the development of technique as the fundamental spring of progress, and constructs the communist program upon the dynamic of the productive forces. If you conceive that some cosmic catastrophe is going to destroy our planet in the fairly near future, then you must, of course, reject the communist perspective along with much else. Except for this as yet problematic danger, however, there is not the slightest scientific ground for setting any limit in advance to our technical productive and cultural possibilities. Marxism is saturated with the optimism of progress, and that alone, by the way, makes it irreconcilably opposed to religion. “The material premise of communism should be so high a development of the economic powers of man that productive labor, having ceased to be a burden, will not require any goad, and the distribution of life’s goods, existing in continual abundance, will not demand—as it does not now in any well-off family or ‘decent’ boardinghouse—any control except that of education, habit and social opinion.”

—*The Revolution Betrayed* ■

# Turkey...

(continued from page 8)

of the Turkish capitalist state. This is why we Marxists say: **Vote HAYIR/NA in the referendum!** (“No” in Turkish/Kurdish.)

The referendum constitutes an assault on the democratic rights of everyone, but is particularly aimed at further intensifying the brutal oppression of the Kurds. The central leadership of the pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples’ Democratic Party), which opposes an Erdogan dictatorship, was arrested in November 2016, so as to hinder their campaign against the referendum. These arrests were carried out under the state of emergency imposed following the failed coup of 15 July 2016. As a result of Erdogan’s counter-coup, a blanket ban has been imposed on anti-government demonstrations and strikes. Over 150 newspapers and radio stations have been banned, 148 journalists and media workers arrested and tens of thousands of people detained. Between 2001 and 2016 (Erdogan became prime minister in 2003), the number of people imprisoned more than tripled to almost 180,000. In the next four years, 165 new jails are scheduled to be built.

Opponents of the referendum are branded by the Erdogan regime “alternatively as terrorists, putschists or traitors” (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 27 February), making everyone who is not on Erdogan’s side a target, particularly the petty-bourgeois HDP, which was established by Kurds and Turkish leftists. While we defend the HDP against attacks by the Turkish state, we give it no political support. Among the supporters of “No” to the presidential system are even some supporters of Erdogan’s AKP and the ultranationalist MHP (Nationalist Action Party), to which the fascist Gray Wolves

**Victorious strike of over 2,000 metal workers in defiance of government ban, January 2017.**



also belong. Erdogan has received the support of the MHP because it welcomes his plans to reintroduce the death penalty. On March 20, the police helped a group of fascists gain entry to the Faculty of Communication in Ankara, where they hung up the banner “Execute Öcalan. United Greater Turkey!” A number of students who wanted to oppose this action were surrounded by the cops and then beaten up by the fascists. This incident shows how dangerous things have become for leftists, anti-fascists, Kurds and workers. Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, has been imprisoned on Imrali Island since 1999. **We demand the immediate release of Öcalan!**

The opposition to the referendum is diverse, with polls indicating that an Erdogan victory is by no means certain. Reasons cited for resisting amending the constitution include that it would lead to further division in Turkey, to the establishment of a dictatorship or to the abolition of Turkey’s supposedly progressive secularism. Leftist, secular and Kurdish forces have

set up their own HAYIR/NA campaigns. In the first few days, over 800 opposition supporters were arrested for “support of a terrorist association” (*Telepolis*, 16 February). Fahrettin Yokus, the head of the white-collar workers union, was shot at by unknown persons. The office of the civil servants union was wrecked after the head of the union declared that he was intending to vote “No” (*FAZ* online, 28 February). To prevent opponents of the referendum from protesting, AKP supporters openly threaten them with violence, in statements like: “We will bathe in your blood” (*Telepolis*, 5 February). Prime Minister Binali Yildirim declared: “Anyone who opposes the change will be eliminated” (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, on March 8, International Women’s Day, over 10,000 mostly women demonstrators assembled in Istanbul with chants against Erdogan and with “HAYIR” signs. The celebrations for Newroz (Kurdish New Year in March) were also held despite the repression and were linked to a campaign for “NA.” In Diyarbakir, the capital of the Kurdish part of Turkey, 100,000 people took part in them. **Down with the repression against the HAYIR/NA campaigns!**

A further sign that, despite consolidation of his autocratic rule, Erdogan cannot maintain total control was the January 20 strike by 2,200 workers at three companies (13 General Electric plants and two Swiss firms, ABB and Schneider). The strike was organized by Birlesik Metal-Is (BMI), a member of the DISK trade-union federation. Opposing the intimidation, BMI stated: “The government and the bosses are acting hand-in-hand against our basic rights; they are trampling our rights under foot and we simply won’t take this lying down.” In spite of the official ban on strikes, the strike forced through a pay raise: a success against the bosses.

Since negotiations between Erdogan and the PKK were broken off in 2015, the military has repeatedly attacked Kurdish villages and towns in southeast Turkey with heavy artillery and paramilitary groups; hundreds of Kurdish civilians have been killed. This military offensive is an expansion of the decades-long campaign to wipe out the PKK. After more than

30 years of military occupation, the area looks like a wretched disaster zone. **All Turkish military forces out of Kurdistan!** It is vital for the working class of Turkey to stand for military defense of the PKK against the Turkish state and for the Kurds to have their own state. Anti-Kurdish chauvinism is essential to maintaining bourgeois rule in Turkey. Applicable here is the socialist principle enunciated by V.I. Lenin: “No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations” (“The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” July 1916). What is necessary is the construction of a revolutionary binational (Kurdish/Turkish) workers party that will intervene to break the workers from Turkish chauvinism and win them to the defense of the national rights of the Kurds.

The Kurdish people—whose homeland is the mountainous region that stretches across the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran—constitute the largest nation in the Near East without its own state. We call for a united independent Kurdistan as part of our struggle for a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan in a socialist federation of the Near East. We also support the immediate independence of the Kurds from individual capitalist states—for example, the right of the Kurds in Turkey to secede. But in Iraq and Syria, the Kurdish nationalist leaders, including the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which is linked to the PKK, have currently subordinated the just struggle for self-determination to their alliance with U.S. imperialism in the fight against ISIS. This is a betrayal of the interests of the masses in the Near East, not least of the national aspirations of the Kurdish people themselves. The imperialists bear the central responsibility for the devastation of the entire Near East. The petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership of the PKK has a treacherous history of ingratiating itself with the imperialists and even with Erdogan himself. Kurdish militants must break with this bankrupt program and be won to a proletarian, internationalist, Trotskyist program.

## EU Imperialists Rail Against Turkey

The European imperialists have seized on Erdogan’s massive wave of repression in Turkey to cynically cast themselves in the role of defenders of bourgeois freedoms and thereby justify the strengthening of their own machinery of repression. The German government has assumed a vanguard role in the oppression of the Kurds. It regularly provides weapons to the Turkish government, and it banned the PKK in 1993, with the result that Kurdish leftists are frequently arrested and prosecuted. On March 2, shortly before the Europe-wide Newroz demonstration in Frankfurt, in which 30,000 people called for “HAYIR,” all pictures of Öcalan were banned; previously, only pictures of him in military garb had been banned. The cops videoed the entire demo, and every



**Police arrest supporters of pro-Kurdish HDP in Ankara, November 2016.**

# Spectrum...

(continued from page 8)

and Public Advocate Letitia James’s complaint against Spectrum’s non-compliance with the city’s cable TV franchise agreement. Relying on the capitalist courts to win the strike is a losing strategy. Banking on de Blasio to enforce the franchise agreement to prevent out-of-town scabbing is a dead end—even the city’s own lawyers say they cannot enforce this. It is the capitalists who call the shots when politicians make the laws—they are not “neutral” toward working people. During last year’s CWA/IBEW strike against Verizon, de Blasio sent in his thugs in blue to protect scabs. At that time under Obama’s administration, the NLRB got a federal judge to ban CWA pickets of hotels where scabs were being put up.

The capitalist government and bourgeois politicians, whether Republican or Democrat, are the enemies of working people. Democrats often posture as “friends of labor” but they are committed to serving Wall Street, the real estate moguls and the rest of American capitalism, a system based on grinding exploitation, racial oppression and imperialist war. That’s why fighting Trump’s attacks on workers and oppressed with

capitalist Democrats is a losing proposition. The pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy has long promoted a strategy of trying to elect Democrats, which has resulted in one defeat after another for the labor movement.

Instead of preaching reliance on the government and capitalist political parties, what’s needed is a leadership that fights for the complete independence of the workers movement. In fact the great industrial unions were built through class-struggle methods such as mass pickets, sit-down strikes and secondary boycotts that defied anti-labor laws and court rulings in the massive class battles of the 1930s and ’40s. Our pamphlet *Then and Now*, which we have distributed on the picket lines, highlights three victorious strikes in 1934 led by reds, demonstrating that leadership is key.

It will be in the course of hard-fought class battles that a new, class-struggle leadership will be forged that can revive and expand the trade unions. Workers need their own party that fights for a workers government, a government that would expropriate the capitalist class, including the telecommunications industry, and build a planned socialist economy. When those who labor rule, the wealth of society would be used for the benefit of all. **Victory to the Spectrum strike! ■**

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# Egypt...

(continued from page 3)

ranks of the government, military and academia, Nasser cracked down hard on the Muslim Brotherhood after having earlier used them to suppress the Communists. At the same time, the bankruptcy of Nasser's bourgeois-nationalist rule, which could not address the needs of the impoverished masses, paved the way for the rise of the Islamists.

When Nasser's successor, Anwar el-Sadat, came to power in 1970 amid declining economic conditions and growing unrest, he released the Islamists from prison in order to unleash them against the left. His 1971 Constitution explicitly made *sharia* (Islamic law) a principal source of legislation. When Coptic leaders protested the growing Islamization, Sadat branded them a "fifth column." Emboldened by Sadat's anti-Coptic stand, the Islamists

began burning churches and assaulting Christians. Copts didn't fare better under the regime of Hosni Mubarak. During the 1980s and '90s, as an Islamist insurgency gripped the country, Egypt saw even more violence against the Copts.

In an April 9 statement titled, "Terrorism and Tyranny Are Complicit in the Crimes Against the Copts," the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), Egyptian affiliate of the late Tony Cliff's International Socialist Tendency, condemned the Palm Sunday massacre. The statement rightly underlined the connivance between the military and the Islamists in persecuting the Coptic people. But in doing so, the RS disappeared its own complicity. Pointing to the January 2011 uprising, the RS complained: "The Muslim Brotherhood betrayed the revolution by siding with the Military Council (SCAF), which exploited sectarianism and inflamed it with the Maspero massacre. The secular opposition has also allied itself with the military to

get rid of the Muslim Brotherhood, paving the way for Sisi's 2013 coup."

Left unsaid is the fact that the RS called for a vote to the Muslim Brotherhood's Morsi in the second round of presidential elections in 2012, claiming that a victory for this reactionary would be "a blow against the old regime" (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 2 June 2012). A year later, the RS found itself standing with the old regime, as they celebrated Sisi's coup and described the popular mobilizations in support of the military as "the height of democracy" (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 5 July 2013).

During the uprising in Egypt in 2011, we pointed to the working class, whose strikes played a major role in bringing down the despotic Mubarak regime, as the potential gravedigger of the bourgeois order. We underlined the urgent need for the proletariat to act as the defender of all the oppressed, including women, Copts and landless peasants. It is precisely

this perspective that the RS opportunists reject, as they chase after one bourgeois force or another.

Despite ruthless repression, Egypt's working class continues to wage economic struggles. According to the Egyptian Centre for Social and Economic Rights, there were over 700 "industrial actions" in 2016 alone. At the same time, the bulk of the working class remains in thrall to bourgeois nationalism and religious reaction—including Coptic workers tied to the church. What is urgently necessary is the forging of a revolutionary working-class party—section of a reformed Fourth International—that acts as the tribune of the people as it struggles to win the proletariat to the fight for a workers and peasants government. Such a perspective must be linked to the struggle for socialist revolutions in the imperialist centers, which can lay the basis for the elimination of scarcity and, with it, both religious persecution and obscurantism. ■

individual carrying an Öcalan banner is threatened with legal action. Additionally, Germany's ban on the PKK has been extended to apply to youth and women's organizations (including the YXK student association) and to symbols of its military wing in Syria, the People's Protection Committees (YPG). The bourgeois state bases the charges on the "thought crime" Sections 129a/b ("formation of terrorist associations") of the legal code, which are also currently being used by a Munich court against ten leftists of the TKP/ML (Turkish Communist Party/Marxist-Leninist). *Down with state repression and the proceedings against Kurdish and Turkish activists! Down with the ban on the PKK and all Kurdish associations! Down with the "thought crime" Sections 129a/b!*

There are about 2.9 million Turkish citizens in the EU [European Union] who are eligible to vote in the upcoming referendum, 1.4 million of them in Germany. Erdogan ordered a few Turkish ministers to propagandize in EU countries for a "Yes" vote in the referendum. Various European governments promptly imposed bans on their speaking in public, taking the opportunity to take a swipe at Erdogan, who annoys the imperialists by not always bowing to their diktats. On March 11, the Turkish family minister, Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya, was expelled from the Netherlands and escorted to the German border by the police. In the port city of Rotterdam, Dutch cops then beat up demonstrators who were protesting in front of the Turkish consulate against the minister's expulsion. Shortly before this, in order to maintain "law and order," the Netherlands' prime minister, Mark Rutte, prohibited Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu from landing. Rutte outdid the anti-Muslim racist Dutch politician Geert Wilders with this witchhunting of Turks. Rutte hoped to attract votes from Wilders' supporters in order to be able to continue his anti-worker, pro-EU policies. This policy was promptly copied in Germany by the CDU/SPD [Christian Democratic

Union/Social Democratic Party] government of the Saarland, which banned all appearances by Turkish politicians even though none were planned. There were also bans in Germany on planned events in Gaggenau, Cologne and Hamburg.

We Marxists oppose the bans that national and local governments in Europe have imposed on Turkish politicians appearing, speaking or entering the countries. We also oppose the police attacks against demonstrations called by Turkish and Kurdish residents in connection with

"National Socialist Underground" (NSU) was able to carry out a series of murders and terror, targeting mainly people with a Turkish background, while the police and the German state carried out investigations against the victims' families. In fact, the periphery of the NSU Nazis was swarming with agents of the state, who are actively involved in the leadership of the Nazi terror organizations.

It is no wonder that Erdogan finds admirers among the oppressed in Germany, who suffer racist discrimination



Frankfurt, March 18: Kurdish demonstrators marching to Newroz (Kurdish New Year) festival with signs denouncing Erdogan dictatorship.

the referendum. The bans against Turkish politicians set a dangerous precedent that can be used to wield state censorship and repression against leftists or any workers organization simply because the state disagrees with their political views. The bans are also part of a campaign to further escalate terror and repression against Muslim communities in Europe. Since 2001, with their "War on Terror," the European capitalist rulers, from [German chancellor Angela] Merkel to [French president François] Hollande, have placed all Muslims under suspicion of being terrorists. They fuel hostility against Muslims, emboldening the fascists and other racist forces like right-populists, from Wilders and [leader of the French National Front Marine] Le Pen to the AfD [Alternative for Germany].

In Germany, while the anti-Muslim campaigns affect above all the workers who have immigrated from Turkey and Kurdistan since the 1960s, as well as their children and grandchildren, they are ultimately aimed at the working class as a whole. The Turkish/Kurdish immigrants—even more than immigrants from other countries—have been marginalized for decades as "guest workers" and have suffered racist oppression. Right up to the present, they and their children have been refused full political rights. In 1992 in Mölln and 1993 in Solingen, Nazi arson attacks inflicted murderous terror on families of Turkish and Kurdish origin. For years, the

and Nazi terror. It is the task of the workers movement to provide these oppressed layers with a different perspective by fighting against all oppression and discrimination, in particular by the German state. *Full citizenship rights for all who have made it here!* Immigrant workers and their descendants are a strategically important component of the working class in Germany; very often they are on the front lines of strikes and they form a living bridge to workers and oppressed in Turkey, Kurdistan and the Near East. In this way, the struggle for socialist revolutions in the Near East can be linked to the struggle to bring down the German bourgeoisie through a socialist revolution.

With their strident calls for bans against Turkish politicians, the leaders of the Left Party are once again proving how much they desire to take on governmental responsibility for German imperialism. Thus, Left Party member of parliament Sevim Dagdelen called for "sanctions against dictator Erdogan" and a "decision by the federal government for an entry ban. Chancellor Merkel can't be allowed to continue to duck the issue." Similarly, the leader of the Left Party's electoral list, Sahra Wagenknecht, stated on Twitter: "Federal government acts like a bunch of anarchists. We need at long last a clear line: Stop people from giving speeches for dictatorship!" and "Entry ban: Netherlands gives German government a lesson on how to show backbone toward Erdogan dictatorship."

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Erdogan Tightens His Grip

### Turkey Referendum



Left: Protesters take to the streets of Istanbul to denounce referendum result, April 22. Right: Turkish president Erdogan and his wife salute celebrating crowd in Ankara, April 17.

The Turkish constitutional referendum of April 16 resulted in a narrow win for the authoritarian president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and has left the country sharply polarized. Less than 52 percent voted “Yes” to granting him sweeping new powers, while almost half voted “No.” The mainly Kurdish areas that are being ravaged by Erdogan’s brutal war against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) overwhelmingly voted against him. Significantly, Erdogan also lost the vote in Istanbul, where his Justice and Development Party (AKP) has won every election since it was founded in 2001. The major cities of Ankara and Izmir also voted “No,” as did the Aegean and Mediterranean coastal areas.

Amid widespread reports of electoral

fraud, the result was contested. The opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) appealed to the Council of State to annul the result on the grounds that unsealed ballots were accepted as valid, but its appeal was thrown out.

President Trump congratulated Erdogan on his victory, which replaces the parliamentary system with an executive presidency; Erdogan now effectively controls parliament and the judiciary. He has taken the result as a mandate to beef up the draconian repression that he imposed following last July’s botched coup. On April 26, police launched yet another huge crackdown, arresting over 1,000 people and issuing warrants for thousands more. Erdogan also declared that Turkey will

hold a referendum on bringing back the death penalty. The aggrandizement of his bonapartist rule is an ominous threat to the historically combative working class in Turkey.

The following is a translation of an article that appeared prior to the referendum in *Spartakist* (No. 216, Spring 2017), newspaper of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, German section of the International Communist League.

### SPARTAKIST 4

A referendum to amend the Turkish constitution will be taking place on April 16, while the country is under a state

of emergency. At issue is the proposed change from a parliamentary to a presidential system through the adoption of 18 amendments to the constitution, which was imposed by the military in 1982. These amendments would substantially reduce the rights of parliament, and aim to massively strengthen the power of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. If the referendum passes, Erdogan could stay in power until 2029, giving him considerable latitude to pursue his Islamization of the country, which particularly threatens women’s rights. The referendum is a bonapartist measure that, if passed, will be tantamount to establishing one-man rule and will strengthen the repressive power

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## New York/New Jersey

# Victory to Spectrum Strike!

*We print below a leaflet issued by the New York Spartacist League on April 27, which has been distributed at IBEW Local 3 picket lines and strike rallies.*

For five weeks 1,800 workers in the cable TV division of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 3 in New York City and New Jersey have been on strike against profit-hungry Charter Communications/Spectrum. Charter Communications, the country’s second-largest cable company, recently swallowed up its rival, Time Warner Cable (TWC), and immediately took aim at its unionized workforce. For over two years, both TWC and Charter have refused to negotiate a contract with the workers. Now, in an attempt to gut the union, Charter wants to cut union medical benefits, pensions, shop steward representation and to replace union labor with subcontractors. By and large, there has been a capitalist media blackout of the strike, including by local news network NY1, which is owned by Charter/Spectrum. All working people across this city have a stake in this struggle! They



IBEW Local 3 strikers picket Spectrum office in Manhattan, April 28.

*hate* the price-gouging cable providers, and many would like to see Spectrum beat back by militant strike action. A victory by the multiracial Local 3 strik-

ers could be an opening for all of labor to fight back against the capitalists’ class war against workers, black people and immigrants in Trump’s America.

Spectrum has been recruiting out-of-state strikebreakers to carry out scab work to fix the mounting number of outages plaguing the company’s network. According to union picketers, Spectrum has been housing out-of-town scabs in non-union hotels in Queens, trying to avoid the example of last year’s Verizon strike when unionized hotel workers honored picket lines and got scabs thrown out of the hotels. At the April 5 strike solidarity rally, several unions spoke about the need for solidarity and honoring picket lines, and there have been union members from the CWA, hotel workers, TWU Local 100 and others joining the picket lines. But real solidarity must be built by mobilizing the independent power of labor on the picket lines to shut Spectrum down, not reliance on Democratic Party politicians and their lawsuits.

Much has been made by the IBEW tops of Attorney General Eric Schneiderman’s lawsuit against Spectrum for not delivering “fast, reliable” internet service

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