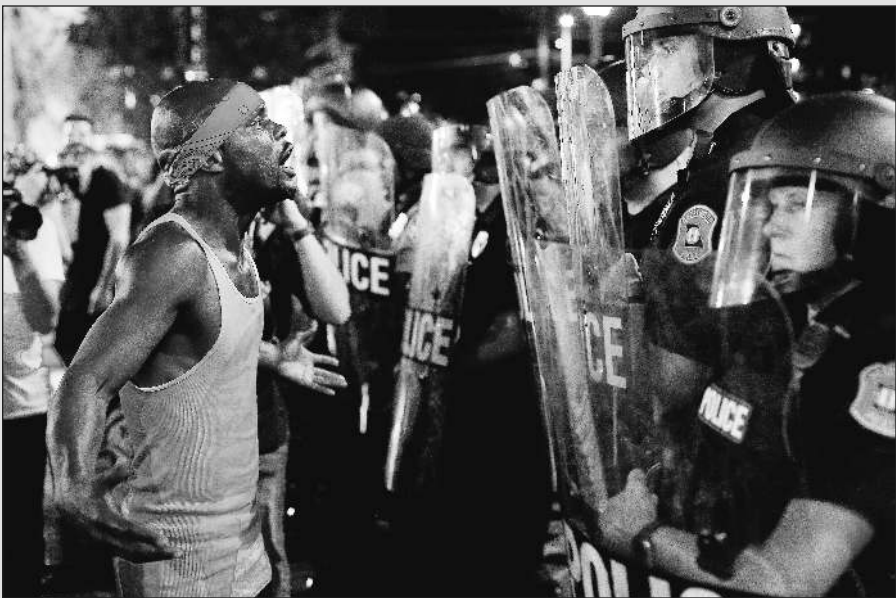


Trump Bashes Black Football Players



Getty



Reuters

The NFL, Racism and U.S. Imperialism

Donald Trump has declared war against black NFL players who refuse to stand for the national anthem. His white yahoo fan base ate up Trump’s September 22 call to arms, in which he denounced as a “son of a bitch” any athlete who “disrespects our flag.” After over 200 players engaged in anthem protests the next Sunday, rabid fans booed their own teams, a hostile display later topped off by a wave of jersey-burning. Two weeks later, Vice President Mike Pence staged a provocative walkout from the Colts-49ers game in his home state of Indiana. At one Missouri bar, a doormat was made out of the jerseys of Colin Kaepernick, who kicked off the

Left: San Francisco 49ers take knee during national anthem, Indianapolis, October 8. Right: St. Louis protesters confronted by riot cops on September 16, the day after the acquittal of the police officer who killed Anthony Lamar Smith.

anthem protests last season, and another protester, Marshawn Lynch of the Oakland Raiders. The jerseys were put together to read: “Lynch Kaepernick.” In the face of such blatant racist reaction, black athletes in the NFL and other sports courageously continue their protests, which have struck a chord among opponents of racial oppression nationwide.

The NFL is a multibillion-dollar business, its players almost 70 percent black, its owners and executives almost 100

percent white. Concerned that Trump’s in-your-face racism might provoke an uprising on their sports plantations, some of the filthy rich team owners, a number of them big Trump donors, linked arms with their players during the anthem. As revolting as it was cynical, this display of “unity” was not long-lived. The NFL masters, beginning with Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, are now cracking the whip to get their players up on their feet for “The Star Spangled Banner,” the anthem

of racist capitalist America, written by Maryland slaveholder Francis Scott Key.

On October 10, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell issued a letter to team executives and owners complaining that the dispute “is threatening to erode the unifying power of our game” and demanding resolution. Indeed, the whole purpose of playing the national anthem at sports events is to promote the myth of national unity, disappearing the stark class and racial divisions in this country, in order to rally the population behind the wars and military adventures of U.S. imperialism. The whole show in football was bought and

continued on page 6

Hundreds Arrested in St. Louis

Cops, FBI Target Black Activists

OCTOBER 15—Over the past month, more than 300 protesters against racist cop terror have been arrested in St. Louis, Missouri. Hundreds of black, white and Latino protesters have taken to the streets to denounce the September 15 bench trial acquittal of a white cop in the 2011 killing of black youth Anthony Lamar Smith. With the National Guard on standby, cops in full riot gear have attacked the demonstrators, kettled them in and doused them with tear gas, pepper spray and other noxious substances. On September 17, 123 people were arrested and another 143 on October

3, many of them for “failing to disperse.” The protests are ongoing and the repression continues. Five people were taken into custody last Friday in Ferguson, the St. Louis suburb that erupted in 2014 over the police execution of Michael Brown.

Emboldened by the Trump White House, the cops have reveled in repressing protesters and black activists. After the mass arrests on September 17, cops chanted, “Whose streets? Our streets.” At a subsequent press conference, the police chief gloated, “We’re in control. This is our city,” adding, “The police owned the night.” The Partisan Defense Committee condemned the cop terror in a September 20 letter to the St. Louis mayor and local prosecutors. We

say: **Drop the charges! Hands off the protesters!**

As we noted when the cop who killed Michael Brown walked: “In capitalist America, the job of the cops, courts and prosecutors is to maintain and defend a system rooted in the brutal exploitation of the many by the few—a system built on racial oppression from chattel slavery to wage slavery” (“Ferguson Righteous Fury,” WV No. 1057, 28 November 2014).

St. Louis’s Calvary Cemetery contains the grave of Dred Scott, the slave whose petition for freedom was denied by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857. In his ruling, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney declared that black people “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” Taney’s racist ruling contin-

ues to resound today in the wanton cop killings of black people like Anthony Lamar Smith. The officer pursuing Smith in a police chase six years ago, Jason Stockley, shouted that he was “going to kill this motherfucker, don’t you know it.” The cop proceeded to fire five rounds into Smith’s car. Stockley claimed that Smith was reaching for a gun, but forensics found only the cop’s DNA on the gun, not Smith’s.

Repression against anti-racist protesters is being stepped up across the country. Two young black men who were attacked by fascists in Charlottesville, Virginia, on the weekend Heather Heyer was killed have been charged with assault for defending themselves.

continued on page 2



St. Louis...

(continued from page 1)

DeAndre Harris suffered a spinal injury and required ten stitches for a head laceration after he was brutally beaten by six fascists, but he has been charged with “unlawful wounding.” Likewise, Corey Long, who was shot at by a fascist and then used a can of spray paint (thrown at him by a white supremacist) and a lighter to defend both himself and an elderly white man, has now been charged with assault and battery and disorderly conduct. *Drop the charges against Harris and Long!*

While local cops are viciously attacking protesters, the Feds are busy smearing black activists and radicals as “domestic terrorists,” setting them up for arrest and assassination. On October 6, *Foreign Policy* revealed a sinister August 3 FBI assessment report portraying a supposed threat from “Black Identity Extremists” who are responsible for an alleged increase in “premeditated, retaliatory lethal violence against law enforcement.”

If you’re wondering why you’ve never heard of these Black Identity Extremists before, it’s because the term is nothing but a label the Feds can apply to black activists of every stripe. “Basically, it’s black people who scare them,” a former FBI agent told *Foreign Policy*. On October 13, the Congressional Black Caucus wrote to FBI director Christopher Wray requesting a meeting to discuss its “concern” over



FBI’s COINTELPRO targeted Black Panther Party for murderous repression. Chicago BPP headquarters shot up in July 1969 predawn police raid. Panther leader Fred Hampton (inset) was killed in his bed by Chicago cops in December 1969.

the Black Identity Extremist designation. While Trump seeks to divert attention from the obvious rise of white-supremacists and fascist terrorists that he has fostered, the FBI’s deadly Black Identity Extremist label is hardly the brainchild of the current administration alone. The federal “assessment” of black activists began under President Barack Obama, channeling right-wing and cop complaints that Black Lives Matter pro-

tests were “endangering” cops and undermining their authority. The FBI is America’s secret police. Whether under Republican or Democratic administration, its purpose has always been to target those whom the racist ruling class perceives as a threat. Chief among them are radicals, reds and black people. As the *Foreign Policy* article noted, “From the time J. Edgar Hoover took over the anti-radical division in the FBI at the

height of the first ‘red scare’ in 1919, the bureau began systematically surveilling black activists.” For decades, the FBI has maintained a “Security Index” of leftists and black activists to be rounded up in the event of a “national emergency.” The FBI used the COINTELPRO program in the 1960s and early ’70s to disrupt and destroy the Black Panther Party, the best of a generation of black radicals. FBI director Hoover declared that “the Negro youth and moderates must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teaching, they will be dead revolutionaries.” And his agents followed through on that threat. Thirty-eight Panthers were killed and hundreds more imprisoned. As we noted in “Spying, Repression, War: Pillars of Capitalist Rule,” the simple fact is that:

“The spy agencies’ central purpose is to do the dirty work that goes on behind the scenes of the ‘normal’ administrative mechanisms of bourgeois democracy—the surveillance, burglaries, black-bag jobs, infiltration and tricks by agents provocateurs, extraordinary renditions, torture and murder. A whole system of class exploitation—and in this country racial oppression—that is maintained through state repression is not going to come crashing down or be fundamentally reformed by blowing whistles or through Congressional cosmetic reforms behind which the state continues its murderous work. Nothing less than victorious socialist revolution can abolish capitalism’s secret police and their deadly ‘dirty tricks.’” —WV No. 1037, 10 January 2014 ■



TROTSKY



The Marxist Theory of the State

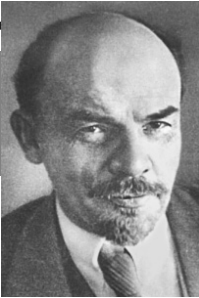
As the proletarian revolution in Russia was unfolding, V.I. Lenin wrote The State and Revolution to reclaim the Marxist theory

of the state from the distortions of the opportunists. Lenin underlined the need for the working class to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, which, extended internationally, would lay the basis for the withering away of the state in a communist society.

The completion of The State and Revolution was “interrupted” by...the eve of the October revolution,” as Lenin noted in the postscript, concluding, “It is more pleasant and useful to go through the ‘experience of the revolution’ than to write about it.” He continued his critique the following year in The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky.

Marx continued: “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”... Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the transition from capitalism to communism. Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely crushed, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), only then “the state...ceases to exist,” and “it becomes possible to speak of freedom.” Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realised, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to wither away, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copybook maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state.

—V.I. Lenin, The State and Revolution (August-September 1917)



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Democratic (Party) Socialists of America Roiled by Cop Scandal

In August, members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) trooped off to their National Convention and elected one Danny Fetonte to the DSA National Political Committee (NPC). It turns out that Fetonte, a longtime DSA leader in Austin, Texas, also happens to have been a longtime organizer for the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT)—the largest organization representing the racist killer cops in that state.

Following the convention, various DSA branches, caucuses, etc. demurred to Fetonte's election. The DSA's Libertarian Socialist Caucus fretted about "damaging the trust we are working to build with essential allies who deserve our wholehearted support in their fight for freedom from state oppression, like the Black Lives Matter movement." But in the very next sentence, it praised Fetonte's "exceptional contributions." Many complained that they had been kept in the dark about Fetonte's full resumé. In fact, his record was well known to the DSA's leadership and more broadly. A year before his election, an article in the *Austin American-Statesman* (15 August 2016) described Fetonte as a retired organizer for CLEAT.

Dismissing the objections, a majority of the NPC voted on August 27 to maintain Fetonte on the leadership body, "in keeping with the rules of the organization and the principles underlying our movement." Indeed, prominent among the "principles" of the DSA is defense of the capitalist state. In this, the DSA is the continuator of the long, sordid history of Social Democracy. In 1919, German Social Democratic leader Gustav Noske helped to prepare the fascistic Freikorps who murdered revolutionary leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and crushed the workers revolution.

The DSA is an organic part of the capitalist Democratic Party, class enemy of the workers and oppressed. As a member of the Socialist Party during the 1960s, DSA founder Michael Harrington worked overtime to keep the civil rights movement within the confines of the Democratic Party. He served the Lyndon Johnson administration as a member of its "War



Danny Fetonte (left) poses with imperialist running dog Senator Bernie Sanders in Austin, Texas, 2015.

on Poverty" task force, even as the administration ramped up the FBI's COINTEL-PRO program of disruption, false imprisonment and outright state assassination of Black Panther Party militants. Since its founding, the DSA (and its immediate forebear, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee) has loyally supported every Democratic Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, including Bill Clinton, who escalated the racist "war on drugs" and gutted welfare, and Barack Obama, who bailed out Wall Street at the expense of working people and reveled in assassination by drone.

For all their sound and fury about Fetonte having "had a direct hand in building police association power which was used by killer cops to cover for their actions," the NPC minority had no problem being in the same organization with him. They made it clear that "our primary disagreement is the seating of Danny Fetonte on the NPC" ("Minority Statement on the NPC's Failure to Remove

Danny Fetonte," 29 August). In the end, it was Fetonte who walked away, resigning from the DSA days later.

Embracing the forces of racist "law and order" goes hand in glove with being Democratic Party "socialists." When, in 2010, Toronto police were brutally attacking Black Bloc anarchists during anti-G20 protests, Bhaskar Sunkara, prominent DSAer and the founder of *Jacobin* magazine, sneeringly tweeted: "I'm rooting for the riot cops." DSA member Rev. Khader El-Yateem, the clergy liaison for the New York Police Department, ran (unsuccessfully) in this year's Democratic Party primary for New York City Council. He boasted of his ability to attract Republican voters and called for more cops on the streets of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 20 April). DSA member Marc Fliedner, *an assistant district attorney for almost 30 years*, failed to gain the Democratic Party nomination for Brooklyn D.A. but, undeterred, is seeking to become Manhattan's top prosecutor.

It's the State, Stupid

The DSA home page has a promotional animated video in which the voice-over states, "Democratic socialism is for everyone," while the cartoon shows a diverse crowd of smiley, happy people, with a cop prominent among them. Some reformist fake-Trotskyist groups, such as Socialist Alternative (SAIt), likewise claim that cops are part of the working class and welcome them in the workers movement. In contrast, the fathers of scientific socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, were crystal clear in their understanding of the nature of the capitalist state—centrally, the cops, courts, prisons and military—as the instrument of repression to maintain the profits and rule of the capitalist class against the working class and oppressed. The capitalist state cannot be reformed to act in the interests of workers and the oppressed, but must be swept away through socialist revolution.

Whom and what the cops "serve" is displayed on a daily basis in the racist cop terror meted out to the black population; in the rounding up of immigrants for deportation and the beating and teargassing of anti-fascist protesters. When workers go on strike, it's the cops who enforce court injunctions, protect scabs, attack picket lines and arrest strikers. Cop "unions" like CLEAT are not organizations of workers but of the enforcers of racist "law and order." They constantly push for more recruits, more pay, more firepower and more latitude to brutalize labor, blacks, immigrants and radicals.

In order for labor to fight for its own interests and those of the oppressed, it is necessary for its social power to be mobi-

lized in opposition to the bosses, their political representatives and their state. But the possibility for such a mobilization is undermined by the sellout labor bureaucracy and its reformist water boys who shackle the potential power of the unions by feeding workers the lies that cops are their union brothers and sisters and that Democrats are their friends.

In many cases, the labor misleaders open the doors of unions to the cops. A prominent member of the DSA, John Sweeney, was for a number of years the head of the AFL-CIO, whose member unions organize thousands of cops and prison guards. Before he resigned from the DSA, Fetonte defended himself by pointing out that his CLEAT organizing was carried out under the direction of the leadership of the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The CWA brags on its website that it became the biggest union in Texas when CLEAT affiliated with it in 1992. The capitalist rulers' armed thugs have no place in the workers movement. **Cops, prison guards out of the unions!**

One left group that waxes orthodox in its criticism of the DSA over the Fetonte affair is the Internationalist Group (IG). In its article "DSA Debacle Over Cop 'Union' Organizer" (*Internationalist*, September 2017), the IG crows that their Brazilian comrades "waged hard struggle to oust



German Social Democratic leader Gustav Noske reviewing troops, 1919.

police from municipal workers union." The truth is something else entirely. Their "struggle" to hold onto their leadership of this cop-infested union consisted in suing the union in the capitalist courts. In the process, they turned over the union's bank statements, account books, statutes and minutes to the class enemy (see "IG's Brazil Cover-Up: Dirty Hands, Cynical Lies," WV No. 671, 11 July 1997). Like all opportunists, the IG is quick to betray the principles of Marxism when they see a chance to "make it big" in the unions or elsewhere. Genuine Marxists oppose any capitalist state involvement in the unions.

The squabble within the DSA comes against the backdrop of Bernie Sanders's failed campaign for the Democratic Party presidential nomination and Donald Trump's election, which together have spurred interest in socialism. The DSA claims it gained 1,000 new members the day after that election, and that it went into its August convention with a total membership of 25,000. There may be some new DSAers who are nauseated by the fact that the organization they joined in order to fight this racist capitalist society is in fact dedicated to preserving it. To them we say: check out the Spartacist League's Marxist program of smashing capitalist rule through workers revolution. ■

SYC Nails DSA, SAIt

We print below remarks made by a comrade of the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club during the discussion period of a September 16 meeting organized by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Socialist Alternative (SAIt). Billed as a gathering for left unity to "Trump-Proof the Bay Area!" the meeting featured a panel of three speakers: former Green Party mayor of Richmond, California, Gayle McLaughlin, Bay Area DSA leader Jeremy Gong and SAIt's Seattle city councillor Kshama Sawant.

Hello, I'm from the Spartacus Youth Club. I have several comments on the DSA and SAIt's positions on recent events regarding fascism and fascists. First, the desire of SAIt in this time period to "draft Bernie Sanders into a people's party" is absolutely reprehensible, and worse, a betrayal of the working class. A so-called people's party with members like Bernie Sanders and the reformist politics of SAIt would essentially have Democratic Party politics without the Democratic Party name. Support to the Democrats betrays the working class and its ability to defeat the fascists. Reformists like SAIt and the DSA pressure the Democrats and

by extension the capitalist state to take action such as legally banning the fascists, which would fail to stop them and only be used against leftists. We call for mass labor/black mobilizations, the only way to crush the fascists in the egg.

Second, regarding Kshama Sawant, a member of SAIt and the Seattle City Council who is here today, she thinks that the cops would be a "public service policing in alliance with the communities," when their whole purpose is to defend capitalist oppression and exploitation. History has shown that cops will always protect the fascists, and any attempts to pressure them to suppress fascists will only result in them suppressing leftists. What's more, promoting coalitions with capitalist parties paves the way for fascism to exist, preventing the working class from gaining political independence from the class enemy. By contrast, the Spartacus Youth Club's program is to call for massive mobilizations of the working class and black people to crush the fascists in the egg. **For a multiracial vanguard party that will lead the working class to socialist revolution!**



For Free Abortion on Demand!

The following article is reprinted from *Australasian Spartacist* No. 232 (Spring 2017), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia.

**Australasian
SPARTACIST**

On 11 May the New South Wales (NSW) parliament voted down a bill put forward by Greens MP [Member of Parliament] Mehreen Faruqi to remove abortion from the NSW Crimes Act. In NSW, as in Queensland, abortion offences are still part of the criminal code written over a century ago. Relying on case law, terminations are only “lawful” where a doctor believes that the woman’s mental or physical health will be at risk if the pregnancy continues. Across Australia, the patchwork of laws and regulations restricting access to abortion, combined with the financial cost and lack of medical services, particularly in country areas, act as a severe deterrent to women seeking to terminate a pregnancy.

The demand for abortion rights is the demand for the basic democratic right to a simple medical or surgical procedure, among the safest in the world. It is an outrage that the capitalist state and bourgeois parliamentarians should have the power to interfere in a woman’s most intimate, private decisions. We communists fight for free abortion and contraception on demand, without qualification, linked to a program of quality health care for all, free of charge at the point of delivery. These are vital necessities for women and for working people as a whole, along with paid maternity and paternity leave and free 24-hour childcare.

The anti-abortion vote in NSW has occurred at a time of increased attacks on union rights and welfare, which hit poor and minority women hardest. Slashing penalty [shift or holiday differential] rates in the retail, hospitality and pharmacy sectors—industries which largely employ women and include some of the lowest-paying jobs—means that hundreds of thousands of people will lose up to \$6,000 in annual income. Cuts to [Department of Human Services] Centrelink payments and the rising cost of childcare place an extraordinary burden especially on sole parents, the vast majority of whom are women.

For Class Struggle, Not Reliance on the Capitalist State

Faruqi’s failed bill included a proposal to implement buffer zones, also known as “safe access zones,” around abortion clinics in NSW. Labor MP Penny Sharpe has drafted another bill for “safe zones” which is expected to be voted later this year. Such laws exist in four other states and territories, including Victoria, and essentially make it an offence to protest within 150 metres of a clinic. Buffer zones have been championed by many feminists, and by the deeply reformist Socialist Alliance, as a response to the reactionary anti-abortion scum and religious nut jobs who terrorise patients and medical staff outside abortion clinics.

We have always opposed such laws because they substitute reliance on the capitalist state for militant clinic defence. Indeed, “buffer-zone” laws have been used in the U.S. to arrest clinic defenders along with anti-abortion bigots. Such laws can provide a precedent to ban picket lines and quash political protests by left-

ists, workers and minorities. The cops and military, along with the courts and prisons, form the core of the capitalist state, a repressive institution that exists to maintain the exploitative class rule of the capitalists against the struggles of the workers and the oppressed. It is the bosses’ cops who break up striking workers’ pickets and terrorise Aboriginal, Muslim and other minority communities.

As revolutionary Marxists, we look to the working class as the motor force for progress. The interests of workers, who are forced to sell their labour power to survive, and the capitalists, who grow fat profiting from the wealth produced by the workers, are irreconcilably counterposed. With their role in production, proletarian men and women have the

potential to bring to bear enormous social power against capitalist attacks by withdrawing their labour. The fight to defend and extend women’s rights, including the right to abortion, must be waged through the *independent* mass mobilisation of the oppressed backed by the social power of labour. The power of the unions should be mobilised in support of women and their allies to *defend the clinics!* This is the road to decisively routing the religious cranks and their potentially murderous and fascistic hangers-on.

Feminism and the Labor Party

Feminism regards the main division in society as between the sexes not between the capitalist class and the working class. It is a bourgeois ideology that seeks to

change the position of women by changing social relations within the existing capitalist system. Feminists view women’s oppression as a set of bad ideas and policies that can be reformed through a variety of pressure tactics. Thus they promote gender parity in parliament as the means to achieving decriminalisation of abortion in NSW and Queensland and to more broadly address the inequality of women. For example, the Laborite feminist network Emily’s List was created with the explicit purpose of advancing women up the bourgeois parliamentary ladder. This logic encourages women to support female social-democratic and outright capitalist politicians, who—when in power—administer the anti-worker, sexist, violent capitalist state on behalf of the bosses.

While reforms can be won under capitalism, we Marxists understand they are necessarily partial and can be easily reversed. They are under threat so long as bourgeois rule remains. In sharp opposition to feminism, we maintain that to liberate the exploited and oppressed you have to change the foundations of society by abolishing private ownership of the means of production, expropriating the banks and collectivising industry in the interests of all. This requires sweeping away the whole rotting capitalist system through workers revolution.

Many feminists have secured careers in the Labor Party (ALP) where they have helped to oversee attacks on the working class, including on working women. Former Queensland Labor premier, Anna Bligh, is the embodiment of feminist ideology drawn to its logical conclusion. A former campaigner for abortion rights and a “pro-choice” feminist, Bligh played her part in *blocking* abortion decriminalisation bills in Queensland. The Labor Party, which continues to allow its MPs a “conscience vote” on abortion as on same-sex marriage, continually panders to the Catholic right wing of the party and pledges its commitment to the Christian lobby. In 2009 Bligh oversaw the state witchhunt of a young Cairns couple over the use of the medical abortion drugs Misoprostol and Mifepristone to end the woman’s pregnancy—they were finally acquitted after a harrowing 18-month ordeal (see *ASP* No. 206, Spring 2009). Bligh is now the first female CEO of the Australian Bankers’ Association and spends her time lobbying for the “rights” of the profit-gouging banks. A dazzling career indeed.

While the Greens are a capitalist party, the ALP is what Marxists call a bourgeois workers party. While based on the trade unions, it has a thoroughly pro-capitalist program and leadership. When in government, the Labor Party maintains capitalist order to ensure the continued exploitation of the working class. They work closely with the bureaucratic misleaders of the trade unions, who promote class collaboration, nationalist protectionist poison, and reliance on the state to stifle workers’ impulses for struggle against the bosses’ ongoing attacks.

A case in point is Sally McManus, the first female secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). McManus garnered popular support among militant workers when she defended workers’ right to so-called illegal industrial action, sparking a witchhunt in the bourgeois

Australia



Sydney: Abortion rights protesters march on New South Wales parliament, March 26.

Quality Health Care for All!



Petrograd, 1917: International Women’s Day march sparked February Revolution. Banner calls for increased rations for soldiers’ families.

media. She also condemned cuts to penalty rates, making this a major campaign issue in her first months as secretary. However, rather than rallying the social power of the ACTU's 38 affiliated unions to defend penalty rates through broad-based industrial action, McManus has pushed the dead-end strategy of trying to effect legislative change through swaying public opinion and pressuring parliament.

Many of those most affected by penalty rate cuts are not unionised. It is necessary to fight to *organise the unorganised* and mobilise the unions to stand in defence of all the oppressed. Such a course will take a struggle within the unions to replace the pro-capitalist union tops with a class-struggle leadership that is determined to take up the fight for workers and minorities and does not bow before the bosses' state.

Abortion Access: A Class Question

You don't have to be a Marxist, or even a partisan of the proletariat, to defend women's right to abortion. Many people support its decriminalisation. But *access* to abortion is a *class question*. Our call for free abortion on demand, as part of free, quality health care for all, and for free 24-hour childcare, addresses the deep class and race oppression of poor and minority women. In capitalist society, women with money and resources at their disposal will always be able to find safe abortions when needed. It is working women, the poorest and most oppressed who lack the means and access to this basic right, as well as to decent health care and education around reproductive health. This is exemplified by the desperate plight of deeply oppressed and impoverished Aboriginal women living in remote outback communities.

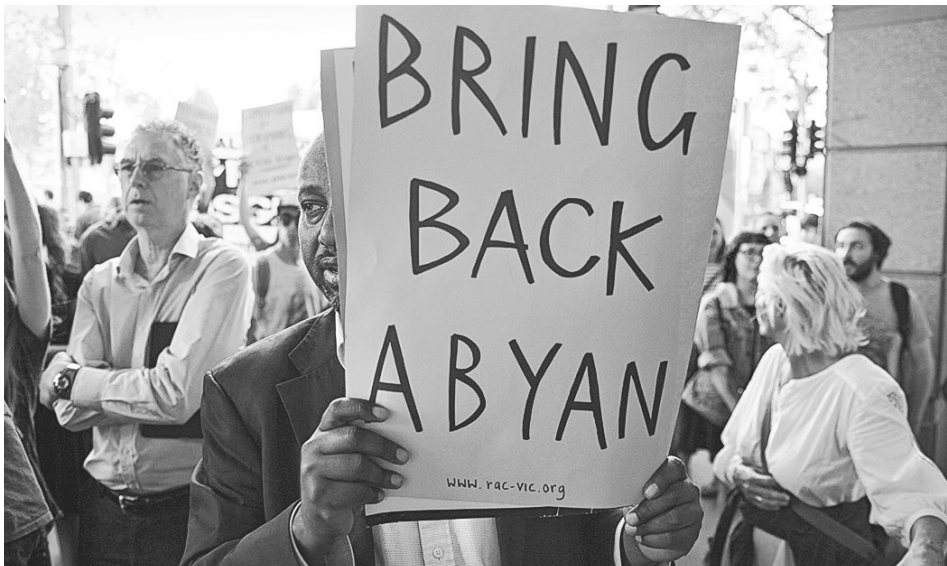
Medical abortion drugs such as RU486 are highly regulated as to when and how they can be accessed, often leading to costs similar to surgical abortions. Particularly on the east coast of the country, the majority of surgical abortions are performed in private clinics which often means paying hundreds of dollars. Terminations later in pregnancy are both more expensive and more tightly regulated. Across the country, the greatest restrictions apply to late-term abortions. Such restrictions are a legal wedge used to curtail abortion access, intimidate and prosecute abortion doctors and embolden the anti-abortion zealots.

Access Denied: Cases of Misogynist Cruelty

In NSW, case law permitting abortions on the grounds that the woman's mental or physical health is endangered has created the illusion of legality for some. This misconception was shattered earlier this year when a 28-year-old woman was convicted under Section 82 of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW), which makes it an offence for a woman to unlawfully procure her own abortion and carries a maximum penalty

of ten years in prison. The woman obtained Misoprostol over the internet after being refused an abortion at clinics because her pregnancy was past 20 weeks. After taking the tablets, she became unwell and went to hospital where she gave birth via emergency caesarean. She received a three-year bond and is reportedly the first woman to be prosecuted under this section of the Crimes Act.

Another grotesque expression of capitalist cruelty is the case of a Somali refugee woman known as Abyan. In 2015 Abyan was raped on Nauru, the site of one of Australia's hellish offshore refugee detention centres. Pregnant and interned on an island where abortion is illegal, she asked to be sent to Australia for a termination. After weeks of bureaucratic delays, her plea was accepted. By this time her mental and physical health were dire. She



Melbourne, October 2015: Protest outside Department of Immigration against grotesque misogynist treatment of Somali refugee woman known as Abyan.

was found unconscious in bed and had to spend two days in the Nauruan hospital before she could be taken to Sydney's notoriously brutal Villawood detention centre. Five days later, the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, falsely declared that she had decided not to go ahead with the abortion and transported her back to Nauru without her ever having seen a doctor. During this same period, Dutton also ruled out transferring several pregnant asylum seekers to Australia for medical treatment, including one heavily pregnant woman with serious health issues, grotesquely claiming there was a "racket" going on to "blackmail" the government to gain entry to the country.

There are multiple cases of pregnant women with potentially fatal diseases being denied life-saving treatment due to concerns about the effects on the fetus, and simultaneously being refused an abortion. An Iraqi refugee living in Queensland discovered she was pregnant shortly after being diagnosed with breast cancer. The public hospital where she sought treatment would not start chemotherapy while she was pregnant but

also refused to perform an abortion! She instead had to seek a termination at a private clinic, which she could not afford. It was only due to the actions of two sympathetic doctors that she was able to get a medical abortion at minimal cost, and could then undergo proper cancer treatment. These instances of cruelty provide a glimpse of the brutality women face in this racist, sexist capitalist society.

As Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx's closest collaborator, explained in his famous pamphlet, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), the historic roots of women's oppression lie in the development of private property. The primitive social equality of early hunter-gatherer society was overthrown when inventions such as agriculture created a social surplus that allowed, for the first time, the development of a

leisured ruling class that lived off the labour of others. The family, specifically the monogamy of women, was needed to ensure the orderly transmission of property and power to the patriarch's heirs, the next generation of the ruling class.

The family under capitalism also serves as the means of rearing the next generation of proletarian wage slaves and cannon fodder for future military conflicts. From infancy, the institution of the family socialises people to behave according to certain norms, respect authority and develop the habits of obedience and deference so useful for capitalist exploitation and profit-making. It serves as an ideological transmission belt for the “values” of the capitalist rulers and instils social conservatism. Along with organised religion and the state apparatus, the institution of the family is a fundamental prop for the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation.

For New October Revolutions!

What is needed is a revolutionary party that struggles against the treachery of class collaboration promoted by "left" feminists, the Laborite reformist left and sell-out union leadership. We need a party that stands as a tribune of the people. Such a party would take up the fight for all the oppressed and emblazon on its banner the fight for women's liberation. It is through such struggles that the proletariat will be won to the understanding and consciousness that it alone has the social power, and historic interest, to sweep away capitalism and establish a government based on a collectivised economy that produces for human need, rather than for the profit of a tiny minority.

Our model is the Russian Revolution of 1917. Led by the Bolshevik Party, it drew millions of women to its liberating cause. It gave flesh and blood to the Marxist program of workers rule. It freed women from the brutal peasant patriarchy of religious backwardness and gave them full legal equality. Divorce was made legal and all laws against consensual sexual activity were removed. In 1920, the Soviet Union was the first country in the world to grant women legal, free abortion. Inheriting economic backwardness, the isolated and war-ravaged workers state did all it could to build the communal dining halls, laundries, childcare and other programs

necessary to free women from the family confines. Marxists recognise that the family cannot simply be abolished; its social functions, especially the rearing of the next generation, must be *replaced* by socialised domestic services and collectivised care and responsibility for children.

The Bolsheviks understood that without qualitative economic development, a fully socialist society and the liberation of women could not be achieved. They founded the Communist International and viewed the Russian Revolution as the first step towards socialist revolution across the globe. They particularly looked to revolutions in advanced capitalist countries like Germany. The material basis for the realisation of the Marxist program is the *overcoming of economic scarcity* through a massive increase in the productivity of labour. This will take several generations of socialist development based on a worldwide collectivised economy to come into full being (for more on this, see “Communism and the Family,” WV Nos. 1068 and 1069, 15 and 29 May 2015).

The official resurrection and glorification of the family and retreat from Bolshevik policies on divorce and abortion were key manifestations of the subsequent degeneration of the Russian Revolution. A nationalist bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin usurped political power from the Soviet working class beginning with a political counterrevolution in 1923-24. This political counterrevolution was fought by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Despite the degeneration, the central gains of the Russian Revolution—embodied in the overthrow of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a planned economy—remained. These gains were apparent, for example, in the material position of women. Prior to capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92, Soviet women enjoyed rights unknown to those in neighbouring capitalist countries. They had access to state-supported affordable childcare institutions, full abortion rights (restored in 1955), access to a wide range of trades and professions, and a large degree of economic equality with their male co-workers.

Trotskyists defended the gains embodied in the workers states of the USSR and Eastern Europe while opposing the parasitic bureaucracy. Today we defend the deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba, not least because of the immense strides for women that have been made there. We strive to build a multiracial workers party of the type built by the Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky who led the October Revolution to victory 100 years ago. A proletarian, internationalist, revolutionary vanguard party would seek to lead the working class, on the streets and in the factories, to champion the rights of all the oppressed as part of the struggle to overthrow this racist, sexist and exploitative system through workers revolution. For women's liberation through socialist revolution! ■

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NFL...

(continued from page 1)

paid for by the government, which shelled out millions to NFL owners and executives to promote an orgy of patriotism.

As reported by ESPN commentator Stephen A. Smith, until 2009 players stayed in the locker room during the playing of the anthem. Moving them to the field was a “marketing strategy.” The Department of Defense, under President Barack Obama, paid the NFL \$5.4 million between 2011 and 2014, and the National Guard paid \$6.7 million between 2013 and 2015, to stage these patriotic ceremonies on the field.

The purpose of the spectacle is to facilitate roping in more poor and working-class youth to go off to fight the rich man’s wars against the downtrodden masses of the world. In 2010, the U.S. Army released a study titled *Blacks in the U.S. Army, Then and Now*. Pointing with concern to the decline of black recruitment, the study blamed so-called “Black influencers” for insufficiently motivating black youth to enlist.

Among the greatest of such “influencers” are those who have made it into the big leagues of American sports, one of the few professions where black people have the chance of making seven or eight figures in a few, short, brutal years. The price demanded by America’s racist rulers is that these players keep their heads down and their mouths shut. As NBA legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar put it:

“As long as we keep shuffling and entertaining, express our gratitude and keep our mouths shut like small children, then we can stay. But if we mention the conditions of those people outside, we are threatened with expulsion from the white Garden of Eden.”

Such was the fate of Kaepernick, a former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers. Over a year ago, Kaepernick defiantly announced: “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color.... There are bodies in the streets and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.” This season the talented Kaepernick is out of a job, blackballed by NFL executives, many of whom have denounced him as a “traitor.” He has now filed a grievance charging the owners with collusion.

Seattle Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett, who was among the few NFL players to forthrightly defend Kaepernick’s protest against racist cop terror, is now the target of the police in Las Vegas after he visited the city for the Mayweather-McGregor fight. When gunshots rang out, the police grabbed Bennett, threw him to the ground, handcuffed him and held a gun to his head. After Bennett publicly protested, a letter to Goodell from the Las Vegas Police Protective Association demanded that the commissioner take



Houston, April 1967: A defiant Muhammad Ali just after refusing to be drafted to fight in Vietnam.

action to silence this black player, noting his “disrespect for our Flag, and everything it symbolizes.” The NFL Players Association (NFLPA) must defend Bennett and all the anthem protesters.

In an appeal to his fellow players on October 13, Los Angeles Chargers tackle Russell Okung called for them to take collective action against racism: “As Kap’s message has now been distorted, co-opted and used to further divide us along the very racial lines he was highlighting, we as players have a responsibility to come together and respond collectively.” Indeed, the racial oppression of black people is the main weapon wielded by the capitalist rulers to divide the workers and weaken their struggles.

Many supporters of the protests argue that the protests themselves are an act of patriotism, an exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression that is supposedly embodied in the “stars and stripes.” Typical is an October 11 NFLPA statement that professes “a tremendous respect for our country, our flag, our anthem and our military.” This country’s flag and anthem stand for the forcible subjugation of the majority of the black population at the bottom of this society, the raw exploitation of labor, and the carnage of marauding capitalist state forces, from the cops on the streets to the military overseas.

That reality isn’t going to change until the racist ruling class is brought to its knees by the multiracial working class—Teamsters, longshoremen, transit workers and so on—standing up and fighting. That means taking on the misleaders of the labor movement, whose loyalty is to U.S. imperialism. At almost every union meeting, members are expected to stand for the national anthem or the pledge of allegiance. This practice symbolizes the labor tops’ fundamental political outlook—their allegiance to the lie that higher profits for U.S. corporations will bring the good life to

American working people. The red-white-and-blue trade-union bureaucrats must be ousted in a fight for a class-struggle leadership, one whose banner will be the red flag of international working-class solidarity! Such a leadership will prepare the workers for some hard-fought battles against the capitalist exploiters as part of forging a revolutionary workers party in which black workers will play a leading role.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The reformist International Socialist Organization recently reprinted a column from the *Nation* by sports writer Dave Zirin, pointing to Trump’s full-throated racism, sexism and general megalomaniacal ravings. Zirin complains that Trump “belongs in a psychological textbook as a case study, not in the White House” (“Trump Spurs Athletes to Action,” socialistworker.org, 25 September). Actually, Trump is the id of racist American capitalism. That is, he expresses its most primal urges for domination without any hypocritical nods to “democratic values”—the cover for the dictatorship of the capitalist exploiters.

CounterPunch editor Jeffrey St. Clair, himself a radical liberal, incisively captured the Trump presidency in an August 18 column. Skewering the “mock outrage” from the bourgeois media to the Democratic Party over Trump’s apologies for the murderous armed fascist gangs that rampaged through the streets of Charlottesville with their swastikas, Confederate flags and torches, St. Clair pointed out:

“Trump is a familiar character to most of the world. He is the unvarnished embodiment of the American bully, who has stalked the planet for the last century taking what it wants and leaving corpses and ruin in its wake. There is in Trump no pretense to the humane, no guise of benevolence, or cloak of empathy.... The elites fear Trump because he gives the game away. He personifies the reality they’ve been working for decades to conceal.”

Barack Obama, in contrast, was a master at sugarcoating the brutality of American imperialist rule, at home and abroad. In 2016, he offered that while it was “tough” for the cops and military to stomach, Colin Kaepernick’s refusal to stand for the national anthem was “how democracy works.” Such pious pronouncements have made the Democratic Party the bourgeoisie’s preferred party to rally the nation for war. During Obama’s last year in office, the U.S. military bombed dark-skinned peoples in seven countries and had special forces in 70 percent of the world’s nations.

In the case of Charlottesville, even members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued statements denouncing “racial hatred” and proclaiming that “our diversity is our strength.” Behind the lip service to diversity stands imperialism’s need for its black soldiers: despite declining recruitment numbers, some 20 percent of active-duty enlisted personnel are black (well above the percentage of black people in the population at large). That is a fault line that America’s military commanders can ill afford to see ruptured by fascist gangs emboldened by the racist rants of the Commander-in-Chief.

Black soldiers have been part of every one of this country’s wars. Many black

soldiers who served in World War I came home only to be lynched, many still in uniform, by white racist mobs. Black soldiers endured Jim Crow segregation in the military to fight in World War II, which the rulers lyingly claimed was a “war for democracy” against Hitler’s Nazis. When they returned, many black vets refused to go back to second-class citizenship. Robert F. Williams, a black Marine veteran, played a leading role in organizing members of his North Carolina NAACP chapter to arm themselves for self-defense during the civil rights struggles of the late 1950s. Hounded out of the U.S., Williams escaped to Cuba in 1961.

Amid the social upheavals of the 1960s, as younger activists rejected the pro-Democratic Party liberal politics of Martin Luther King Jr. and Co. and moved toward “black power” radicalism, black athletes became increasingly politicized. Muhammad Ali was stripped of his boxing title and livelihood for refusing to be drafted. Linking U.S. imperialism’s dirty war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants to the vicious oppression of black people in America, Ali defiantly proclaimed:

“My conscience won’t let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor, hungry people in the mud for big, powerful America. And shoot them for what? They never called me n---r, they never lynched me, they didn’t put no dogs on me, they didn’t rob me of my nationality, rape and kill my mother and father.”

Today, the mainly black football players put their bodies, and ultimately their lives, on the line to entertain heavily white crowds of spectators. Like a latter-day Roman emperor, Trump treats black NFL players like gladiators who should honor the U.S. imperialist empire by getting their brains bashed out on the field and be grateful “for the privilege of making millions of dollars.”

Ordered to respect the flag, black athletes are expected to ignore the vicious, racist reality of America. But it doesn’t ignore them or their families. If the cops can threaten to blow off the head of a millionaire sports star like Michael Bennett, if NBA superstar LeBron James can have the gate of his Brentwood mansion spray-painted with the “N” word, what black person in America is safe? But capitalism has not simply spawned victims. It has also created its own gravedigger, the multiracial working class, without whose labor the capitalist owners cannot reap their riches. Black workers, who remain a significant force in strategic industries, are potentially the most combative section of the working class.

The road to black freedom and to breaking the chains of wage slavery lies in the struggle to forge a revolutionary internationalist workers party that fights for a workers government. As we wrote in our article, “Salute Colin Kaepernick’s Protest Against Cop Terror!” (WV No. 1095, 9 September 2016), “The anthem of this fight will be the words of the ‘Internationale’: ‘No more tradition’s chains shall bind us; Arise, ye slaves no more in thrall! The earth shall rise on new foundations; We have been naught, we shall be all!’” ■



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(continued from page 8)

As Marxists, we underline that U.S. imperialism is the greatest enemy of the world's working people and oppressed, not least the Kurds. Thus, while we despise everything that ISIS stands for, we understand that the blows it strikes against U.S. military forces and their proxies are objectively in the interests of the international working class. These proxies include the PYD's military and the *pesh marga* as well as the Baghdad regime's army and the Iraqi Shia militias. *U.S. out of the Near East!*

The U.S. is opposed to Kurdish independence, which would redraw the map of the Near East, and has made clear that it will not countenance anything beyond “autonomy” in a unitary—and therefore inherently oppressive and Arab-dominated—Iraq. When Barzani announced the referendum, his Washington paymasters rebuked him. A September 15 White House statement condemned the referendum as “distracting from efforts to defeat ISIS.”

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The multinational and multiethnic proletariat of the Near East must be won to the struggle for a *united, independent Kurdistan*. This struggle includes defending the right of Kurds in the individual countries to secede. Anti-Kurdish sentiment is promoted by the regional powers to cement their rule over their "own" workers. By championing Kurdish self-determination, the working class of the region would be taking a stand against their own capitalist exploiters and helping to undercut U.S.



Vultures Circle Kurdistan

In Iraqi Kurdistan itself, the economic situation is dire; some 30 percent of the

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Whatever the intentions of the KRG leaders, the referendum has jolted Iraq's neighboring countries—in particular Turkey and Iran. The rulers of these countries, as well as the embattled Syrian regime, fear that any expression of separatism in Iraqi Kurdistan could ignite similar movements among their "own" Kurds. Shortly after the referendum, Turkey's would-be sultan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been waging a brutal war of annihilation against the PKK, flew to Tehran to meet with Iranian president Hassan Rouhani. Both leaders emphasized, "We will not accept changing borders in the region." Turkey has threatened to shut down its border with Iraqi Kurdistan and to "starve" it by refusing to purchase oil. Working in collaboration with the Baghdad regime, both countries have reinforced their troops along their borders with Iraqi Kurdistan.

The only regional power that supported the referendum is Israel, whose government, which lords it over the oppressed Palestinian people, declared, with no sense of irony, that Kurds have a right to self-determination. There is a long history of cooperation between Israel's Mossad and the Barzani clan, which has also worked with the CIA and Britain's MI6. Tel Aviv sees an independent Iraqi Kurdistan as a potential base for operations against Arab regimes, and especially against Iran.

Israel's support for the referendum has been seized on by anti-Kurdish forces in the region. A rally by Turkish chauvinists in Ankara on September 15 raised banners declaring, "We Won't Allow a Second Israel." Likewise, in a meeting with Turkey's Erdogan, Iran's "Supreme Leader," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, declared that his country would not allow the establishment of "a new Israel in the region."

For the Kurdish nationalist leaders, the national aspirations of the Kurdish people are little more than a negotiating tool. But for the Kurdish masses, the referendum represented a concentrated expression of their desire for independence. And the impact of that vote has the potential to spiral out of the control of those who set it in motion. In Iranian Kurdistan, under martial law conditions and the fierce tyranny of the "Revolutionary Guards," thousands of Kurds courageously took to

For Leninist Parties in the Near East!

Recent events in the region underline the historical fact that Iraq is not a nation, but a patchwork of different peoples and ethnicities cobbled together by the imperialists. The borders of Iraq were arbitrarily drawn to encompass oil concessions, forcing together hostile populations. The British imperialists are historically most responsible for dismembering the Kurdish national body; it was Britain that created "Iraq" in 1921 and then forcibly incorporated the Kurds into it.

But Kurds are not simply victims. The struggle for Kurdish independence has the potential to upend the entire set of relations established by the colonial powers and today defended by the regional regimes and the imperialist overlords. The fight for Kurdish self-determination will shape and be shaped by the future struggles of the region's proletariat. The aim of national liberation could itself be a motor force for a proletarian upsurge. Kurdish struggle in Iran could shake up the entire structure of that theocratic prison house of peoples, where the Persian-chauvinist regime presides over a population nearly half of which is non-Persian. In Turkey, the struggle for proletarian revolution is inconceivable without a fight for Kurdish self-determination. Anti-Kurdish chauvinism is a key pillar of Turkish nationalism and the Turkish capitalist state.

We seek to link the struggle for Kurdish independence with the fight to overthrow capitalist rule throughout the Near East. Kirkuk has a history of militant Kurdish workers struggles. But for the most part, the Kurdish proletariat is to be found outside of Kurdistan, including in the industrial centers and mining regions of Turkey. It is in the urban centers, among the industrial proletariat, that the power exists to lead the Kurdish people, and all the exploited and oppressed of the region, to freedom.

The future of the working class of the Near East will not simply be determined in that volatile region, but is intimately tied to the struggle for workers rule in the imperialist centers. As part of the proletariat of the Near East, Kurdish workers can play a leading role in bringing down the rotten structure set up to serve the imperialists. The millions of Kurdish and Turkish workers in Germany can serve as a living bridge linking the struggle for independence to the fight for socialist revolution in the Near East and West Europe.

Such a perspective must be brought to the proletariat of the Near East through the instrumentality of Marxist leadership. What is desperately needed is the forging of revolutionary Leninist parties committed to the equality of all nations and peoples. We fight to build workers parties that are sections of a reformed Fourth International, parties that will fight for the liberation of all the oppressed as a vital part of the struggle for workers rule. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

For a United Independent Kurdistan!

Iraqi Kurds Vote for Independence, Baghdad Seizes Kirkuk



Left: Rally for independence in capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, September 22. Right: Iraqi forces preparing to enter Kirkuk in wake of independence vote, October 15.

OCTOBER 17—Three weeks after Iraqi Kurds voted overwhelmingly for independence in a referendum, the U.S.-trained and -supplied forces of the Baghdad regime, supported by Iranian-backed Shia militias, took control of the city of Kirkuk and its surrounding oil fields from the Kurdish *pesh merga*, which is also trained and supplied by the U.S. As *pesh merga* forces retreated, Iraqi troops moved in, taking the city of Kirkuk itself and tearing down Kurdish flags. The Iraqi government's assault is a clear reprisal for the September 25 referendum and a slap in the face of the Kurdish people's longing for independence. The situation has the potential to explode, especially if Baghdad's forces continue north into Iraqi Kurdistan.

As Baghdad captured Kirkuk, a spokesman for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) denounced as "shameful" the "silence" of their American imperialist patrons. In fact, while Trump declared, "We're not taking sides," a statement by the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad endorsed the Iraqi government's actions: "We support the peaceful reassertion of federal authority, consistent with the Iraqi constitution, in all disputed areas." Washington had earlier condemned the independence referendum, as did virtually all the regional powers. As we have repeatedly asserted, the Kurdish nationalists' alliance with U.S. imperialism—most recently by acting as ground troops in the U.S.'s war against the Islamic State (ISIS)—sets up the masses of Kurdistan for more betrayals.

The historically Kurdish city of Kirkuk was captured in 2014 by *pesh merga* troops tied to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), as the Iraqi army disintegrated in the face of ISIS. The PUK co-governs the KRG alongside its more dominant bitter rival, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by KRG president Massoud Barzani. While in the October 16 assault there were some skirmishes between pro-Baghdad forces and elements in the *pesh*

merga, Iraqi troops retook Kirkuk without much of a fight.

According to the KDP, a secret deal was worked out between pro-Baghdad forces and the PUK to give up the city and its oil fields to Iraqi forces. Today, KDP forces also withdrew as Iraqi troops captured more territory that had been taken by the *pesh merga* in 2014. As with all the alliances and maneuvers that both the KDP and PUK routinely carry out with the imperialists and regional powers, it is the Kurdish people who will pay the price.

In last month's referendum, the Kurdish people made clear their desire for independence from their national oppressors. The referendum was held in territory administered by the KRG and in disputed

areas then held by the *pesh merga*, including Kirkuk. Voters were asked in Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish and Assyrian: "Do you want the Kurdistan Region and the Kurdistan areas outside the Region's administration to become an independent state?" With a turnout of over 72 percent, the referendum passed with an overwhelming 92.73 percent voting "yes."

As Leninist fighters against national oppression, we welcome the referendum and its result, while giving no political support to the bourgeois nationalists. Voting "yes" was the only principled position for Marxists committed to the struggle for working-class rule in the Near East and elsewhere. As for Kirkuk and other historically Kurdish areas, we would have no opposition to

their going over to the KRG or an independent Kurdistan. Kirkuk in particular has undergone massive "Arabization" over the past several decades, especially under Saddam Hussein, with Kurds expelled in large numbers and replaced by Arabs. In recent years, it has been the Kurdish nationalists who have expelled Arabs and others. Today, it is the Kurds being driven out, with thousands fleeing Kirkuk in fear of pogromist attacks. Whatever the formal status of such mixed cities, we vehemently oppose "ethnic cleansing" or forced population transfers of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrians and other residents.

Kurdish Nationalist Stooges for U.S. Imperialism

The carve-up of the Near East by the British and French imperialists following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I resulted in the Kurdish nation being denied a state of its own over the last century. Divided between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, Kurds have endured the suppression of their language, culture and history and have been the victims of brutal repression by both the imperialists and local capitalist regimes.

The Kurdish people have a long history of struggle against their oppressors. But their bourgeois-nationalist leaders have just as long a history of sacrificing these struggles for illusory support from the imperialists or their regional lackeys. The very Kurdish leaders who called last month's referendum are an *obstacle* to Kurdish independence, and they had no intention of implementing the referendum's outcome. Both the KDP as well as the PUK have long been in a military alliance with U.S. imperialism, acting as its willing tools. To maintain that alliance, they have *subordinated* the struggles of the Kurdish people for independence to the interests of U.S. imperialism.

During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the KDP and PUK operated under U.S. *continued on page 7*

Kurdish Leaders' Alliance with U.S. Betrays National Liberation



Kirkuk, 2011: Kurdish *pesh merga* soldier (foreground) patrols with U.S. troops. Kurdish nationalist leaders have long subordinated struggles of Kurdish people to interests of U.S. imperialism.