

September 16: Members of UAW Local 598 picket outside GM's Flint Assembly plant on first day of strike.

WV Photo

SEPTEMBER 17—Some 50,000 auto workers have hit the picket lines, idling General Motors plants across the country. Two major opposing class forces are now in open battle, and the impact could

soon be felt at parts suppliers and in other sectors of the U.S. economy, as well as the GM empire in Canada and Mexico. United Auto Workers (UAW) members, fed up with years of forced sacrifice, are

set against a manufacturing giant riding a wave of over \$30 billion in profits in the last three years alone—amassed from the blood and sweat of the workers. The automaker, like all capitalists, is

far from satisfied. GM wants to squeeze more out of the workers, including by saddling them with higher health care costs and a paltry, below-inflation wage *continued on page 7*

No Reliance on Democrats, Courts!

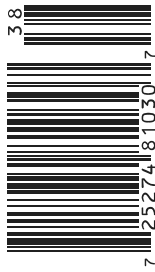
Fight for Free Abortion on Demand!

The utopian socialist Charles Fourier wrote in the 19th century that the social progress of any society can be determined by the condition of women within it. Today, in cruel and unequal capitalist America, one measure of the degraded status of women is the dismantling of abortion rights. During the first half of 2019, some 400 anti-abortion measures were introduced across the country, and many enacted. Laws criminalizing abortion at early stages in pregnancy, including at just six weeks, have been signed in nine states. The most draconian is Alabama's near-absolute ban set to take effect in November. Likely to face lengthy court battles, the abortion bans are explicitly designed to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling. Over the past four decades, state forces have erected so many financial and legal barriers to *Roe* that abortion access is practically nonexistent for the vast majority of working-class, poor and minority women. Women's fundamental right to abortion should be a question of basic health care, period. Abortion and contraception allow women to have sex without child-bearing and give them some control over reproduction, and therefore their lives. This relative freedom collides with what the ruling class and religion deem women's "god-given" role as mothers. Abortion is viewed as a threat to the sanctity of the patriarchal family, which is the main source of women's oppression. The institution of the family is the means through which the bourgeoisie passes on its

wealth to offspring and the working class reproduces the next generation of wage slaves. Along with religion, it also serves the rulers ideologically by enforcing gender roles, promoting bourgeois morality and instilling obedience to authority. The Trump/Pence administration has energized the bible-thumping medievalists who want women to shut up and stay barefoot and pregnant. Yet this White House is hardly the birthplace of anti-woman bigotry. The decades-long backlash against abortion is stamped with bipartisanship. The first major post-*Roe* attack on abortion rights took place under "born again" Democrat Jimmy Carter, who signed the 1977 Hyde Amendment eliminating abortion coverage for 23 million poor female Medicaid recipients. Both capitalist parties have renewed this ban on federal funding for abortion every single year since. The Kafkaesque obstacle course that many women must undertake to terminate a pregnancy today was set in place by the landmark 1992 Supreme Court case

*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. "Pro-life" Democrat and Pennsylvania governor Robert P. Casey defended the state's restrictions on abortion. The ruling gave clearance for state governments to impose ceaseless stipulations against abortion as long as they did not pose, in the court's words, an "undue burden." What followed was unduly burdensome to say the least: from mandatory waiting periods and parental consent rules to TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws, which continue to drive clinics out of business. Liberals and feminists of the anti-Trump "resistance" sell the lie that the only way to rescue abortion rights is by voting blue at the ballot box. However they differ in tactics, verbiage and individual views on matters like abortion, Democratic Party politicians are just as committed as Republicans to upholding the capitalist exploitation of the working class, to furthering U.S. imperialist interests and to maintaining the institution of the family. This is not just the case for

"establishment" Democrats but also "progressives" like Bernie Sanders, a darling of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Sanders recently claimed that he has consistently voted against the Hyde Amendment. A half-truth is also a lie: Sanders has repeatedly backed government spending bills that included this anti-abortion measure targeting poor women. We oppose the Democrats on principle because they are a capitalist party. As such, they are an obstacle to women's emancipation. In September 1972, just months before *Roe* was handed down, we explained: "For communists the reason for a complete break with capitalist politicians lies in the understanding that the oppression of women is one of the pillars upon which the capitalist system rests. Struggles against women's oppression will be bitterly opposed by the capitalist state and its political agents. On occasion reform issues may be supported by particular politicians, but this 'support' inevitably comes down to cynical manipulations to garner votes." —"SWP/WONAAC Sink in Bourgeois Swamp," WV No. 11, September 1972 As Marxists, we have always called for unrestricted, free abortion and contraception on demand, as part of a program of *continued on page 2*



For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Abortion...

(continued from page 1)

free, quality health care for all. These are necessities for all working people, along with paid parental leave and free 24-hour childcare. We link these demands to the fight for socialist revolution, which would lay the basis for socializing the functions of the family. Only with the abolition of classes in an egalitarian socialist society can women achieve true liberation.

The rights to legal abortion and contraception were not a gift from the courts or bourgeois politicians. They were concessions granted during a relatively brief but intense period of convulsive social struggles in the 1960s and '70s, reflecting a broader radicalization. In the context of battles against Jim Crow segregation in the South and opposition to U.S. imperialism's war in Vietnam, abortion emerged as a political demand alongside other advances for women, such as greater access to higher education and employment.

While the reforms wrested during this period were important, they were also partial. As shown by the rollback of women's and black rights since, the ruling class always tries to reverse the gains for workers and the oppressed when such struggles subside. At bottom, reforms under capitalism reflect the relationship of class forces.

The civil rights movement, dominated by



WV Photo

Boston, 1972: Women and Revolution supporters of the Spartacist League at abortion-rights demonstration.

a liberal, pro-Democratic Party leadership, could not challenge the root cause of black oppression—the American capitalist system. Nor could the petty-bourgeois women's liberation movement challenge the foundation of sexual oppression—the family. The crucial element lacking was the leadership

of a revolutionary vanguard party, forged in opposition to the Democrats and their reformist hangers-on. Such a party, a tribune of the people, would have united all those on the receiving end of capitalist brutality around a program to overturn the system of exploitation and oppression and to establish the class rule of the workers.

Democrats, Republicans, Supreme Court: Enemies of Women's Rights

Back in May, nationwide protests demanding “Stop the Bans,” organized by an array of organizations like Planned Parenthood and the ACLU, channeled justified fear and outrage over the assault on abortion into reliance on Democratic presidential hopefuls (and the hopeless Hillary Clinton). The Democratic Party's professed support to abortion rights is vacuous. Repeatedly pandering to anti-sex Christian fundamentalists, it has implemented or been complicit in the stripping away of access. This has meant that only *some* women have the “right to choose” while young, immigrant, poor and black women are left to fend for themselves.

Democratic politicians have the support of the feminist establishment that pushes an electoral “movement” to preserve *Roe*. Feminism represents bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women who seek their own power and prestige in a society they view as entirely gender-based, not class-based. All feminists, including the “radical” variant, support the capitalist system. What is more, many have been bedfellows with the religious right in state campaigns against pornography, prostitution and youth sexuality. Far from offering young women activists a road toward liberation, feminism keeps them wedded to the same puritanical and repressive order that oppresses them.

In the years just prior to *Roe*, it was the Democrats, with their large Catholic constituency, who opposed abortion while some Republican politicians were behind efforts to decriminalize it. The majority of Republicans during the 1960s regarded abortion as simply a private matter between a woman and her doctor. In 1967, California Republican governor Ronald Reagan signed one of the nation's most liberal abortion laws; shortly after,

New York Republican governor Nelson Rockefeller repealed the state ban on abortion. Of the seven Supreme Court justices who ruled in favor of *Roe*, five were Republican appointees.

The recent Netflix documentary *Reversing Roe* (2018) gives a taste of the evolution of abortion as a highly politicized issue attracting the wrath of Christian zealots. By the mid 1970s, Republicans increasingly sought to make common cause with religious voters, especially Catholics, in opposition to abortion and in support of “family values.” Today's anti-abortion movement has its origins in defense of racial segregation. A Protestant evangelical wing within the Republican Party was cohering as a political force, initially in the drive to maintain tax-exempt status for private, white-only academies. But this burgeoning “moral majority” had to calculate the best way to gain support for its agenda without proselytizing for outright racism. Opposition to abortion and other “moral” issues related to women—from pornography to the Equal Rights Amendment—was the perfect catalyst around which to organize.

The religious right was not simply the progeny of the Republicans, but went mainstream through the Democratic Carter administration, which needed to bolster the standing of U.S. imperialism following its defeat in Vietnam. To carry out Washington's renewed Cold War drive against the Soviet Union, Carter sought to regiment the population behind God, family and country, reinforcing anxiety around sex and race. In the subsequent Reagan decade, the abortion question fed a domestic crusade against secularism, women's equality and racial integration. The backlash was accompanied by a massive assault against the labor movement, kicked off by Reagan's 1981 smashing of the striking PATCO air traffic controllers union using plans drawn up under the Carter administration.

The 1980s and early '90s were a period of anti-abortion terror, as outfits like Operation Rescue and fundamentalist “god squads” regularly bombed clinics and maimed and murdered abortion providers. On the legal front, the courts and politicians pursued “salami tactics,” slicing away at abortion access bit by bit, to the point that 90 percent of U.S. counties have for years not had a single abortion clinic. Today, the anti-abortion fanatics can claim success on the political and ideological terrain. Abortion is stigmatized as shameful, and the issue has been doused with the (bogus) religious notion that human life begins at conception.

For decades, fighters for abortion rights have been demobilized by the losing strategy of entrusting the Democratic Party and liberal judges with protecting women. *Reversing Roe*, which was released to coincide with the confirmation hearings of Justice Brett Kavanaugh last year, partakes of this self-defeating approach. Just one example is how the documentary gives Bill Clinton and Barack Obama a “get out of jail free” card for having appointed “pro-choice” justices to shift the balance of the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, it omits key facts: under Clinton, welfare for mothers was axed as the number of abortion providers plunged and clinics closed across the country; under Obama, the Affordable Care Act denied federal funds for abortion and hundreds of new state restrictions on abortion were imposed.



TROTSKY

The Bolshevik Revolution and Women's Emancipation

In a speech just before the second anniversary of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin highlighted the measures the young Soviet workers state had taken to wipe out legal inequality and strike at the material foundations of women's oppression. The Bolsheviks understood that complete social equality would only be attained with the abolition of classes in a world socialist order, requiring the extension of proletarian rule internationally. A bureaucratic caste under J.V. Stalin, which usurped political power beginning in 1923-24, abandoned that internationalist perspective, promoting “socialism in one country” and later resurrecting the cult of the family, the central institution for the subjugation of women.

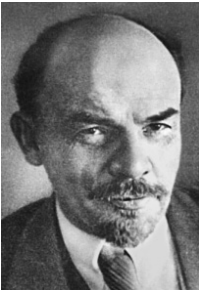
Soviet power has implemented democracy to a greater degree than any of the other, most advanced countries because it has not left in its laws any trace of the inequality of women. Again I say that no other state and no other legislation has ever done for women a half of what Soviet power did in the first months of its existence....

You all know that even when women have full rights, they still remain factually downtrodden because all housework is left to them. In most cases housework is the most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman.

In pursuance of the socialist ideal we want to struggle for the full implementation of socialism, and here an extensive field of labour opens up before women. We are now making serious preparations to clear the ground for the building of socialism, but the building of socialism will begin only when we have achieved the complete equality of women and when we undertake the new work together with women who have been emancipated from that petty, stultifying, unproductive work. This is a job that will take us many, many years.

This work cannot show any rapid results and will not produce a scintillating effect. We are setting up model institutions, dining-rooms and nurseries, that will emancipate women from housework. And the work of organising all these institutions will fall mainly to women. It has to be admitted that in Russia today there are very few institutions that would help woman out of her state of household slavery. There is an insignificant number of them, and the conditions now obtaining in the Soviet Republic—the war and food situation about which comrades have already given you the details—hinder us in this work. Still, it must be said that these institutions that liberate women from their position as household slaves are springing up wherever it is in any way possible.

—V. I. Lenin, “The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in the Soviet Republic” (September 1919)



LENIN

# WORKERS VANGUARD

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20 September 2019

Memorial gathering in honor of our comrade

James Robertson

1928-2019

Bay Area, CA • Sunday, November 3

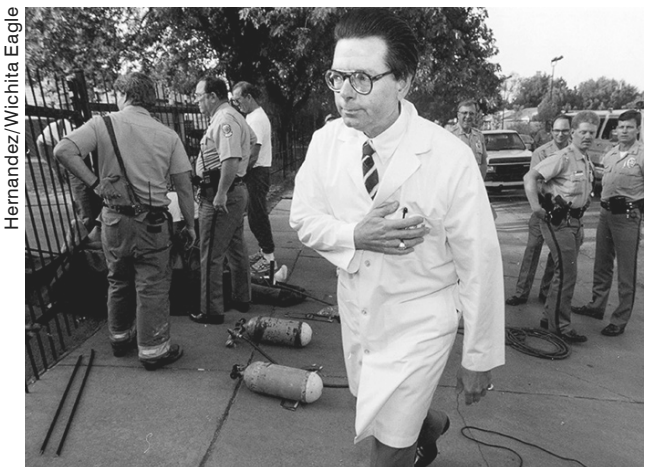
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The working masses do not have a stake in who sits on the Supreme Court, an inherently reactionary institution and rogues’ gallery of enemies of the working class, women and black people. Along with the police, prisons and military, the courts are part of the bourgeois state machinery, whose job is to enforce the repressive rule of the capitalists. Over the last 15 years alone, this court of injustice has ruled against black voting rights, prohibited late-term abortions, put limits on Medicaid expansion, overturned affirmative action and pointed a gun at public-sector unions. Reliance on these high-court tyrants for state-sponsored benevolence is perhaps the blindest act of faith.

### Racial Oppression and Anti-Woman Bigotry

After a May court ruling on Indiana’s abortion law, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas dug into his anti-woman grab bag and issued a treatise full of historical falsehoods comparing abortion to eugenics. The bourgeois media seized on his invoking of that pseudoscientific doctrine to debate whether advocates for sexual freedom have a hidden genocidal agenda. Quite a ruse by Thomas, a black front man for white supremacy whose

**Heroic abortion provider Dr. George Tiller outside his Wichita, Kansas, clinic, 1992. He was killed in 2009 by “right to life” terrorist.**



Hernandez/Wichita Eagle

The racist American eugenics movement did not promote abortion but rather forced sterilization, which was given legal sanction by the Supreme Court’s 1927 *Buck v. Bell* ruling. In the first half of the 20th century, dozens of states, as well as Puerto Rico, had laws mandating sterilization for those deemed “unfit” and “undesirable,” in other words, the poor, uneducated, sick and minority populations. Tens of thousands were sterilized across the country, particularly black, Latina and Native American women, largely against their will and often without their knowledge. Even after World

None of this belies the obvious: Access to contraception and abortion was, and continues to be, a huge benefit to *all* women. The majority of black people in this country continue to support the legal right to abortion as an essential feature of health care that should not be infringed upon by the government. In a society founded on chattel slavery, black women have long been brutally denied control of their bodies and livelihoods. Ground down by entrenched racial and class oppression, they suffer from substandard medical service, housing and education. They are also subjected to anti-woman chauvinism, stigmatized as “welfare queens” and criminalized as “unfit mothers.”

When abortion was outlawed, black and minority women faced the greatest risk of state repression and physical harm, including death, from back-alley butchers or self-induced abortions. In the years immediately following *Roe*, these women for the first time had wide-ranging access to skilled physicians, and maternal mortality dropped dramatically. Attacks on facilities like Planned Parenthood that provide crucial health care, including prenatal and postpartum care, have been particularly disastrous for the black, minority and poor women they serve. Southern states with high populations of black women have the most stringent abortion restrictions, the fewest clinics and the worst health care. Black women, who account for some 30 percent of all abortions, would face the most devastating consequences with the banning of abortion.

### A Socialist Perspective for Women’s Emancipation

In the U.S., the democratic right to abortion raises the question of women’s freedom, which itself is inseparable from the freeing of all working people from capitalist exploitation. Only the multiracial working class, whose labor produces the wealth of society, has the power and interest to shatter the capitalist order.

As Marxist revolutionaries, we fight to change the consciousness of the working class and break illusions in the capitalist profit system and its political parties, illusions fostered by the current labor misleadership.

For the working class to take up the fight for women’s emancipation would require a great leap in consciousness, and for that to happen, a revolutionary leadership is key. The issue of abortion is polarizing among working people in this country. It is through the intervention of a Leninist vanguard party in class and social struggles that the proletariat can overcome its own divisions—racial, gender, religious—which are sown by the rulers. A revolutionary workers party would mobilize the proletariat behind the causes of the oppressed, such as free abortion on demand, equality and integration for black people and full citizenship rights for all immigrants, as part of bringing working-class power to bear against the common enemy.

The vast bulk of the left has the very opposite strategy: peddling some version of Democratic Party “lesser evilism” to workers, black people and women. In a 29 July article, the reformists around the publication *Left Voice* promote their call for a “mass strike for reproductive justice”—nothing more than empty bombast with pro-worker coloration for the same dead-end bourgeois pressure politics. The main vehicle proposed for this so-called militant action is the Democratic Socialists of America, a component part of the Democratic Party. *Left Voice* urges the DSA leadership to organize the shutting down of “key parts of the U.S. infrastructure when *Roe vs. Wade* is challenged at the Supreme Court.” That *Left Voice* supporters are themselves members of the DSA is a telltale sign of how beholden they are to begging a wing of the ruling class to wage a fight on behalf of women.

To free women from their deep-seated special oppression will take a workers revolution that expropriates the wealth and productive capacity of society and organizes a planned, socialized economy at the service of human need. A workers government would crucially fight to extend proletarian rule worldwide. Only then can we undertake the profound changes in the fabric of everyday life that will replace the institution of the family with collectivized childcare and housework, enabling women to fully participate in social and political life. This is the perspective that the Bolsheviks sought to implement after the 1917 Russian Revolution, which gave flesh and blood to the Marxist program (see Quote of the Week, page 2). Three years later, Soviet Russia was the first country in the world to grant women legal, free abortion. ■



**Democratic president Jimmy Carter with arch-reactionary preacher Billy Graham (left), George Bush, 1980. “Born again” evangelical Carter spearheaded post-Roe attacks on abortion rights.**

political record would put him in the company of the KKK if not for his skin color.

Citing eugenics has long been a weapon in the anti-abortion arsenal, most recently wielded to vilify Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger in order to further right-wing efforts to defund the women’s health care provider. A courageous pioneer in the birth-control movement in the early 1900s, Sanger was both ahead of her time as well as *of* her time. Committed to educating women and doctors on safe birth control methods, Sanger also endorsed the mainstream eugenics view that social problems were a result of the uncontrolled fertility of the poor. However, as Dorothy Roberts points out in her book *Killing the Black Body* (1997), “Sanger was motivated by a genuine concern to improve the health of the poor mothers she served rather than a desire to eliminate their stock.”

War II, when eugenics became associated with the Nazi Holocaust, North Carolina expanded its sterilization program, which was not abolished until the mid 1970s.

Racist government-led medical experimentation and state eugenics programs are part of the long history of atrocities committed against black people. Recognition of this reality has been manipulated to stoke fears that birth control and abortion amount to black genocide, a myth peddled by black nationalist demagogues like Louis Farrakhan and some black preachers. Today, a few have cynically hijacked the slogan “black lives matter” to discourage black women from exercising their right to prevent or terminate a pregnancy. Such backward thinking—that a woman is a baby-making vessel whose place is in the home—shares common ground with the racist state forces intent on condemning black families to a living hell.

## On the Polanski Witchhunt Correcting a Quote

Last year, *Workers Vanguard* replied to a letter from an ex-member who claimed that the 1977 sexual encounter between filmmaker Roman Polanski and teenager Samantha Geimer was not consensual (see “Sex, Lies and Witchhunts,” WV No. 1135, 1 June 2018). In our reply defending Polanski, we quoted Geimer as saying to an interviewer from *Quillette*: “I never told Polanski to ‘keep away’” (31 January 2018). However, we cut out her next three words, “during the rape.” By excising the *Quillette* quote the way we did, we distorted what Geimer said and made it look as if we had something to hide when, in fact, we didn’t.

Geimer’s version of events is inconsistent. During her grand jury testimony, she claimed to have told Polanski to “keep away,” while adding: “I can barely remember anything that happened.” If anything, the fuller quote reinforces our point that her story keeps

changing. She has at times referred to the sexual encounter as “rape,” but not at others, describing it to Larry King in 2010 as “just sex.”

Feminist creed, now magnified by #MeToo, demands that only the woman is to be believed in judging potential sex offenses. But Polanski also deserves to be heard. He has always maintained that the liaison was consensual, and the available evidence clearly backs up Polanski’s account.

Soon after WV No. 1135 went to print, we received another letter from the same ex-member, prompting ICL members in London and Toronto to object to how WV cut the quote. However, comrades in editorial informally decided that no public correction was needed. In the course of discussion, it was decided that it was necessary to issue a correction. Printing this correction is an elementary act of upholding the communist integrity of *Workers Vanguard*.

### Spartacist League/SYC Forums

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## School Segregation and the Legacy of Slavery

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No to Counterrevolutionary Rampage in Hong Kong!  
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# For a Workers and Peasants Government! Algeria in Turmoil



ZUMA



Mostaganem Aujourd'hui

Left: Mass anti-regime demonstration in Algiers, September 3. Right: Dock workers on strike for nearly three weeks, in port of Mostaganem this spring.

We print below a translation of an article by the *Ligue trotskyste de France*, section of the *International Communist League*, that appeared in *Le Bolchévik* No. 228 (June 2019). Since the publication of this article datelined May 12, many hundreds of thousands of Algerians have continued to demonstrate against the government.

## LE BOLCHEVIK

Since mid February, Algeria has been rocked by an unprecedented wave of mass demonstrations and strikes triggered by [then President] Abdelaziz Bouteflika's attempt to run for a fifth presidential term. The first demonstrations took place in Vgayet (Bejaïa) in Kabylia [region in northern Algeria, home of the Berber-speaking Kabyle national minority]. Hundreds of thousands of people then took to the streets of Algiers, where rallies had been banned since the 2001 Kabyle “black spring,” in which some 130 Kabyles were killed. According to some estimates, some ten million people, nearly one-quarter of the country's population, have been involved in protests. Bouteflika was finally ushered out by the army, which has held the real power in Algeria since independence. His ouster did not appease the protesters, who have continued to demand the removal of the whole Bouteflika “system,” including Army Chief of Staff Gaïd Salah. But even the departure of all the notables of the “system” would not solve anything if the struggle remains within the narrow framework of the *capitalist* system and if it does not have an internationalist perspective.

Algeria is a neocolonial country subjugated by imperialism, primarily by French imperialism. The Algerian bourgeoisie is tied to the imperialists by a thousand threads; it is too weak to break with its own subordination because it fears above all its “own” working class and the threat the latter poses to capitalist property.

### Down With French Imperialism!

Imperialism is a global system of exploitation and oppression, dominated by a few rival powers. In the era of the dominance of finance capital, monopolies are supported by their nation-state with its armed forces. Behind the “aid” and “advice” of the IMF, the World Bank and the European Union are the imperialists, who seek to intensify the plundering of the natural resources of the dependent countries and bleed their economies dry in order to increase profits.

Our perspective is permanent revolution. Trotsky explained that, under capitalism, the bourgeoisie of those countries of belated capitalist development, restrained by imperialist oppression, cannot break

## For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

the imperialist yoke. To do so, it is necessary to overthrow the capitalist system itself through socialist revolution. The proletariat, once in power, will have to call on its class brothers in the neighboring Arab countries and in the imperialist centers to extend the revolution to the rest of North Africa, especially to the powerful Egyptian proletariat, and to France itself, where hundreds of thousands of workers of Algerian origin are an integral part of the working class.

Algeria's independence was heroically wrenched from the French colonialists in 1962, but the country, which remained *capitalist*, could not free itself from imperialist subjugation. The turnkey factories purchased at an exorbitant cost in the 1970s under [President Houari] Boumediène, with the aim of consolidating the development of a powerful Algerian national bourgeoisie, have only enriched imperialist engineering companies, without allowing balanced economic development.

Independent Algeria has never ceased to be a capitalist state. The army that has held power since 1962 defends the same forms of property as before, only now without any resort to “socialist” rhetoric. The core of the bourgeois state consists of bodies of armed men (the police, army, courts and prisons) whose very purpose is to defend the capitalist system of exploitation. Socialist revolution would shatter the institutions of the capitalist

state by replacing them with new organs of power based on workers councils.

Our model is not Boumediène's so-called “socialism,” but rather the Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky. The capitalists were driven out and the entire economy was nationalized, land was given to the peasants, and the young Soviet state fought with all its might for the victory of workers revolution in the capitalist countries of Europe, especially in Germany.

Despite the subsequent degeneration of that revolution due to the defeat of the German Revolution in late 1923, the internationally isolated Soviet Union remained a workers state, making possible vast economic and social progress, including in the realm of women's rights. The very existence of the Soviet degenerated workers state allowed the Algerian bourgeois-nationalist government to maneuver in the face of imperialist demands. Thus, Algeria was a preeminent player in the “non-aligned” movement; its oil industry was nationalized in 1971.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, with the capitalist counterrevolution led by [Boris] Yeltsin in collusion with the imperialists, was a catastrophe for workers in the Soviet Union and far beyond. The “non-aligned” balancing act became impossible, and Algeria found itself more than ever dependent on international oil prices set in London and New York. The country sank into a bloody civil

war, with the army pulling the strings to preserve its power.

Capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR had a profound impact on the level of consciousness of many workers around the world, including in Algeria and the diaspora of those of Algerian origin. Many Algerians, invoking the fate of the USSR and/or the failed industrialization of Algeria, think that socialism “did not work.” But it is ultimately because the Soviet Union was isolated that it perished. The Stalinist bureaucratic caste usurped political power from the working class beginning in 1923-24. The Stalinist bureaucracy, which pursued the pipe dream of conciliating the imperialists, was an enemy of international revolution—and an obstacle to achieving it. That history does not at all show that a socialist revolution in Algeria is impossible. Rather, it underlines that revolutionaries would have to immediately seek to extend the revolution internationally, including to France, where workers of Arab and Amazigh (Berber) origin would provide a huge base of support.

### Constituent Assembly: A Trap for the Proletariat

Some demonstrators in Algiers praised the police and the army, viewing them as allies. This is a cruel illusion. It is true that demonstrating this spring in Algiers against the military regime has so far been considerably less dangerous than demonstrating in France against the “progressive” [President Emmanuel] Macron and his supposedly democratic cops. Nonetheless, while a section of the Algerian security apparatus was well aware that, sooner or later, the dying Bouteflika regime (which was a national embarrassment) would have to be buried, that apparatus is ready to defend capitalist domination by any and all means, including a bloodbath. Moreover, the May 9 arrest of Louisa Hanoune, leader of the (Lambertist) Workers' Party (PT), is an ominous threat to the entire labor movement, regardless of the extent of her involvement with the Bouteflika regime. *We demand Hanoune's immediate release!*

The army recently announced a presidential election for July 4. [The election was postponed and has been rescheduled for December 12.] Clearly, this election will in no way solve the problems of Algerian workers; nor will their problems be solved by the convening of a constituent assembly, which most of our political opponents are clamoring for. The Algerian Workers Socialist Party (PST), which has links to the NPA [Nouveau parti anticapitaliste] in France, declared that “only the election of a sovereign constituent assembly, representing the democratic



Keystone

December 1960: Fighters for Algerian independence in Algiers. The Algerian people wrested independence from French colonialism but remain under imperialist domination.

and social aspirations of workers, youth, women and all the oppressed in our country, can represent a truly democratic solution to the current crisis” (National Secretariat of the PST, 3 April).

The central committee of the Algerian PT, which is linked in France to the Lambertists of the POI [Parti ouvrier indépendant], likewise decided on April 6 to focus its interventions “around demands for a sovereign Constituent Assembly, defense of the Algerian nation and renationalization of national wealth. For this the regime must clear out” (*Informations ouvrières*, 11-17 April). As for the dissident Lambertists of the POID [POI démocratique], who have been conspicuous in the Paris demonstrations, their newspaper headlines demand “a sovereign Constituent Assembly.” (The POID would have us forget that for more than 20 years its leaders led the international organization to which Louisa Hanoune and the PT still belong. The latter are rightly seen by many Algerians as flunkies of the regime.)

But to call for a constituent assembly is to call for a *capitalist* government. Consider the case of Tunisia after the fall of [President Zine al-Abidine] Ben Ali in 2011. A constituent assembly was duly elected in a relatively transparent manner. But the reality of bourgeois democracy was seen in the rise of anti-woman Islamist reactionaries and, moreover, a return of Ben Ali supporters. Today, in Tunisia it is more difficult to get an abortion than it was ten years ago. Historically, calling for a constituent assembly has simply been a trap for the working class and the oppressed. As we wrote in our article “Why We Reject the ‘Constituent Assembly’ Demand”:

“From the 19th century to today, all attempts to channel the struggles of the discontented masses into constituent assemblies or other new bourgeois parliamentary bodies have proven to be deadly traps. History has shown conclusively that the constituent assembly can achieve neither democracy nor national and social liberation, but only continued subordination to the bourgeoisie. It cannot be a bridge to proletarian state power, but only to disaster and defeat.”

—*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 63, Winter 2012-2013

The capitalist system is rooted in the oppression and exploitation of the working masses; bourgeois democracy is simply a facade for the dictatorship of capital. In a country like Algeria that is under the boot of imperialism, such a facade can only be a thin veneer for the power of the military. We oppose the call for a constituent assembly because the working class cannot exercise power on the basis of bourgeois institutions. There is only one way to put an end to the dictatorship of capital: the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry and the impoverished urban masses.

The working class must forge its own organs of power—workers councils—in carrying out a socialist revolution led by a revolutionary workers party. By seizing state power, the proletariat can smash



Reuters

Algiers, June 21: Anti-government protesters fly Berber flag (right) in defiance of recent state ban.

bourgeois rule, expropriate the capitalist companies, lift the countryside out of its longstanding backwardness and establish a collectivized economy. This is the only road that leads to an international classless society in which oppression in all its forms has disappeared.

Mobilize the Social Power of the Working Class!

The lot of Algerian workers has significantly worsened since the collapse of oil prices in 2014. The country currently has an official unemployment rate of nearly 12 percent, and almost 30 percent for youth. According to the government, one-third of the population was living below the poverty line in 2015. Industrial production is stagnating, and the country has a trade deficit of billions of euros. The imperialists have seized the opportunity to have the IMF demand “the consolidation of public finances and the implementation of ambitious structural reforms.” The aim is clearly to force Algeria to implement an austerity program targeting the working masses and the poor.

Algeria has a small industrial proletariat whose social power is proportionally much greater than its size. These workers extract the oil and gas that constitute the core of the country’s economy. In March and April, a series of strikes practically paralyzed the capital and other cities in the country, in particular Vgayet and Tizi Ouzou in Kabylia. Workers in the public sector, the steel industry and even the oil industry went on strike. There is an urgent need for the proletariat to mobilize behind a *class* perspective: taking the lead in the struggle of the Algerian masses against the regime, with the aim of fighting for a workers and peasants government and the overthrow of the capitalist system itself.

This requires a political struggle in the unions against the hegemony of bourgeois nationalism. The main union, the UGTA, has since independence been a transmission belt for the FLN [the ruling National Liberation Front]. Following

repeated protests by the union membership, UGTA leader Abdelmadjid Sidi Saïd finally announced on March 28—more than a month after the anti-Bouteflika movement began—that the union was distancing itself from the government. At the same time, the UGTA head was backing the plan of the army chief to replace Bouteflika in order to constitute “a legal framework capable of overcoming the political crisis facing our country today.”

Recently, the UGTA rank and file has increasingly mobilized to oust the bureaucrats who control the UGTA apparatus with an iron hand. The fight to forge a class-struggle leadership of the unions is inseparable from the struggle for the class independence of the unions from the capitalist state. Such struggles go hand in hand with the fight to forge a revolutionary vanguard workers party.

Such a party would seek to rally all the oppressed behind the working class, particularly the peasantry, the urban poor and women, who have mobilized massively in recent demonstrations. It would fight for the separation of mosque and state and against all the backward laws that discriminate against women, for instance, concerning inheritance. The oppression of women is rooted in the division of society into antagonistic social classes, as well as in the institution of the family. To eradicate this oppression, the victorious proletariat will put in place the means to socialize domestic tasks, including child-rearing, in order to lay the basis for replacing the family. *For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!*

For the Right of Self-Determination for Kabylia!

From the start of the demonstrations, the government has sought to set Arabs and Kabyles against each other in an attempt to sidetrack the mobilization. It raised, in scarcely veiled terms, the specter of a nonexistent separatist plot. In fact, workers who are Kabyle or of Kabyle origin played a very prominent role in the demonstrations and strikes against the Bouteflika “system,” in Kabylia itself but also in Algiers, Paris and elsewhere.

Anti-Kabyle chauvinism is an essential tool of the Algerian bourgeoisie to paralyze the proletariat. Yet Kabyles played a

key role in the Algerian war of national liberation against French colonialism. Since then, they have repeatedly risen up, notably in 1963, 1980, 1994, 1998 and 2001, against their oppression, especially forced Arabization. The Kabyles, who have their own language, have long struggled with courage and determination for their rights. We are for the *right of self-determination for Kabylia*, including the formation of a separate Kabyle state if the Kabyles so decide.

This demand is crucial for the unity of the Arab and Amazigh proletariat against the capitalist rulers of Algeria. It does not imply any political support for the Kabyle bourgeois nationalists—on the contrary. Ferhat Mehenni’s MAK (Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylia) is a split from the RCD, a bourgeois Kabyle party that fully supported the Algerian army in the 1990s civil war. Obscenely, the MAK has repeatedly called on the UN, where France sits on the Security Council. In his 2017 book, *Kabylia—Mémoire pour l’indépendance*, Mehenni went so far as to compare French colonialism favorably to independent Algeria! The rights of the Kabyle people will be wrested in the struggle against Algerian capitalism *and against French imperialism*. The true potential allies of the Kabyle people are Algerian Arab workers and French workers.

We have in the past, under the guise of opposing the forced Arabization of the Kabyles, demanded that Berber and Arabic be promoted and treated equally, which is correct, but we also chauvinistically said the same of *French*. We argued that not to learn French would “further isolate Algerian youth from world culture.” But French was the language of colonialism, and it is the language of the main imperialist power that continues to oppress Algeria! We repudiate this chauvinist position and the articles we have published in the past on Algeria. This is part of a general rearming of our party on the national question (see “The Fight for Leninism on the National Question,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 65, Summer 2017).

In France, too, we oppose the chauvinist imposition of French monolingualism. To further their integration, immigrants and minority youth should be entitled to free, quality, bilingual education in French and in their mother tongue—thus maintaining the use of their language of origin. All public services in France must be provided in Arabic or Tamazight (among other languages). We also note that French youth are badly in need of a quality education in foreign languages (including English); they are, in fact, cut off from world cultures by French monolingualism.

It is necessary to build in Algeria, France and every country a revolutionary workers party that is independent of all bourgeois parties and firmly opposed to them. Such revolutionary parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, would link the struggle for workers revolution in Algeria with that in France and other imperialist countries. When the proletariat rules on a world scale, the development of technical knowledge and industry will be used to lift the masses out of misery and scarcity and put them on the road to building a classless communist society. ■

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South Africa...

(continued from page 8)

elementary class consciousness has been trampled all over by the reformist mislead-ers of the working class, who have worked overtime to promote the suicidal illusion among workers that the neo-apartheid capitalist state is “theirs.” For example, Zwelinzima Vavi, general secretary of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), responded to the cops’ retreat from the Jo’burg CBD by railing against the informal traders for disturbing “law and order,” tweeting on 2 August: “What we saw in the streets of Johannesburg are acts of criminality. The state came under attack from criminals! The state must stop anarchy and lawlessness—full stop!”

This revolting reaction should come as no surprise. In 2012, Vavi and other COSATU/SACP misleaders denounced striking mineworkers in the same man-ner during the Marikana massacre. Vavi’s tweet expresses, in a concentrated way, the treacherous programme of class collabora-tion that has kept the militant black prole-tariat of this country politically prostrated before its own butchers, the racist capi-talist exploiters and their state. Through the Tripartite Alliance, the working-class base of COSATU and the SACP has been sold out and subordinated to the bour-geois ANC in a nationalist popular front whose whole reason for existence is to maintain and administer neo-apartheid capitalist misery on behalf of the Rand-lords. Though Vavi, along with the lead-ers of the metalworkers union NUMSA and other “dissident” affiliates, left the Tripartite Alliance after being expelled from COSATU in 2014, there was never any fundamental political break from the nationalist, class-collaborationist pro-gramme that made them an integral part of the wretched Alliance for over two decades.

In a 2 September statement, the SAFTU leadership condemns the anti-immigrant attacks and postures as opponents of “the capitalist system that divides and exploits the black working class.” This rhetoric is just leftist gloss for SAFTU’s whitewash of the bourgeois state, in order to better promote deadly reformist illusions in neo-apartheid. In the same breath, they whine that “the



Foto24

16 August 2012: Cops of the ANC-led government massacred 34 striking miners at Marikana.

SAPS [South African Police Service] have their hands full as in any case they can’t protect ordinary South Africans from the rampant criminals on a daily basis”—as if “protecting ordinary South Africans” was the job of the bourgeois cops!

Over 200 truck drivers, mainly from neighbouring countries, have reportedly been killed in attacks since March 2018. Yet the tops of the COSATU-affiliated transport workers union, SATAWU, one of the largest unions in the sector, have done nothing to mobilise the union against this anti-immigrant terror, which ultimately threatens its own members. The leaders of COSATU, just like those of SAFTU and other union federations, have done nothing but pay lip service to organ-ising vulnerable and immigrant workers into the unions. Instead, the COSATU and SAFTU tops promote reliance on the rac-ist neo-apartheid police thugs, who they even recruit as members along with secu-rity guards and prison guards.

The fight to mobilise the power of the unions in defence of immigrants and other vulnerable layers is inseparable from the political struggle that must be waged against the reformist trade-union bureaucracy, centrally for the indepen-dence of the workers movement from the bourgeois state. *Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!* It is during hard *class struggle* that work-ers have managed to break through the

poisonous national and racial divisions. For example, during the 2012-13 wave of wildcat strikes in the Western Cape, striking farmworkers had to confront not only violent repression from the cops but also attempts by the bosses and their government to drive a wedge between immigrant and South African workers.

With real unemployment close to 40 percent and economic growth close to 0 percent, immigrant workers and small traders from other parts of Africa and the Indian subcontinent are offered up as scapegoats for the wretched poverty and grinding national oppression that the black majority continues to suffer 25 years after the end of formal apartheid. This is the classic tactic of “divide-and-rule,” inherited from colonial/apartheid butchers like Cecil Rhodes and Hendrik Verwoerd. In neo-apartheid South Africa, capitalism is based on the superexploita-tion of the black proletariat, and the racial hierarchy remains fundamentally intact—with whites on top, Indian and coloured people in intermediary positions, and black Africans on the bottom.

Since the 1990s, we have repeatedly warned that if the seething discontent of the masses does not find expression along *class lines*, it will fuel and embitter every other kind of division. Under neo-apartheid, the aspirations of *all sections* of the oppressed continue to be bitterly frus-trated. As happened during previous anti-immigrant pogroms, the current wave of xenophobic attacks has been accompanied by violence along tribal and racial lines targeting South African citizens. During the police raid of the Jo’burg CBD on 7 August, two women of mixed-race back-ground were also caught up in the anti-immigrant dragnet by bigoted, chauvinist cops who decided that they “smell Ethi-opian and they look Ethiopian too.” As one of the women bitterly remarked, “The hatred for foreign nationals is appalling and the fact that they discriminate by just looking at people, it is exactly like the apartheid era.”

Among the ANC’s bourgeois political opponents, only the nationalist popu-lists of the Economic Freedom Fighters posture as opponents of divide-and-rule. For example, EFF leader Julius Malema tweeted in early September: “Our anger is directed at wrong people. Like all of us, our African brothers & sisters are selling their cheap labour for survival. The own-ers of our wealth is white monopoly cap-ital; they are refusing to share it with us & the ruling party ANC protects them.”

But the EFF, no less than the ANC, is committed to the maintenance of the very capitalist system that is at the root of both the oppression of the black masses and the murderous divisions among the oppressed. The main difference is that the EFF is not (yet) in power, and so can afford to make populist promises about forcing white monopoly capital to “share” some more of the wealth. To obscure the bourgeois class interests they pursue, the EFF takes advantage of the oppression of the black majority to peddle the national-ist lie that all black people share common interests that trump class divisions. At the same time, the EFF promotes its own brand of divide-and-rule, seeking to re-direct the anger of black South Africans toward *Asian* immigrants and South Afri-ca’s Indian minority. Like all bourgeois parties, its “principles” are extremely flexible: the EFF has not let the nox-ious racism and anti-immigrant raids of Jo’burg mayor Herman Mashaba and the DA prevent its councillors from installing and keeping Mashaba’s DA-led local gov-ernment in power since 2016.

For our part, we fight for a black-centred workers government to expropriate the bourgeoisie. This is the only way to put an end to the racial, ethnic and tribal divi-sions among the non-white peoples, all of which are endemic to South African capi-talism. To combat the murderous divisions among the oppressed, communists put forward a programme to advance the vital objective interests that the various sec-tions of the working class have in united struggle against their common enemy—the racist capitalist ruling class. Thus, we link the calls for workers defence guards against the anti-immigrant mobs, for full citizenship rights for immigrants and no deportations, to demands that highlight the burning needs of the working class as a whole: for organising the unorganised; for smashing the parasitic labour brokers; for jobs for all through a shorter work-week at no loss in pay; for massive wage increases to combat inflation; for free, quality healthcare and affordable, quality, integrated housing for all.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Vanguard Party!

As the current attacks grimly highlight, the class unity of the proletariat in South Africa is not going to magically arise out of growing mass discontent—it must be *fought for*. This means in particular fight-ing *politically* to draw the lessons from past defeats, particularly from the betray-als of the workers’ leaders who continue to prop up neo-apartheid. Chief among these lessons is the absolute necessity for the political and organisational indepen-dence of the proletariat from all bourgeois forces—ANC, DA or EFF. This means fighting to break working-class militants from nationalist false consciousness and win them to a genuinely revolutionary, internationalist programme.

Many of the reformist leftists who pre-viously supported the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance are now trying to cobble together an alternative popular front. For example, the leaders of SAFTU complain in their 2 September statement about the weak-ened state of the trade-union movement, only to call for unity of “all progressive political formations of the left”—a class-collaborationist “broad church” that could easily include the EFF.

In fact, it’s the likes of SAFTU leader

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### Spartacist South Africa

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Vavi, NUMSA leader Irvin Jim and Co. who bear primary political responsibility for the demoralisation of the working class. As loyal servants of the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance, for two decades they did their utmost to sabotage and betray countless workers struggles. Today, the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) of Irvin Jim makes abstract calls for workers to unite instead of turning on each other, and even proposes defence committees to defend immigrants. But the SRWP, whose chairperson Jim is also general secretary of NUMSA, the largest union in the country, has done nothing to mobilise this potent social power, and in fact doesn't even mention the existence of the trade unions in their statement! This is no oversight, but reflects the fact that the leadership of the SRWP upholds the same class-collaborationist programme as when they were in the Tripartite Alliance. The SRWP campaign for the May general elections left open the possibility of entering government coalitions with bourgeois forces like the ANC and EFF, and the SRWP leadership refused to respond to our 23 April Open Letter requesting that they clarify their position on such coalitions. For this reason, we of Spartacist/South Africa held that there was no principled basis for giving their campaign any support, however critical.

Our perspective is forging a racially integrated vanguard party, rooted in the black proletariat, that can intervene and fight for revolutionary leadership among all sections of the oppressed. We have consistently fought to raise the proletariat's consciousness of its vital interest in defending the oppressed, particularly

immigrants. Our model is the Bolshevik Party that, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, led the working class to power during the 1917 October Revolution. This party was built through an unceasing political struggle to *break from* the opportunists and conciliators of the bourgeoisie. Lenin fought for the strict independence of the Bolsheviks from all bourgeois forces, while simultaneously forging the closest possible unity among the proletarians of the different nationalities. The importance of this was highlighted by the Russian proletariat's response to anti-Jewish pogroms, which in tsarist Russia had been one of the chief weapons in the autocracy's repression of

the revolutionary vanguard. At the height of the 1905 Russian Revolution, the Tsar threatened to "drown the revolution in Jewish blood," unleashing the pogromist Black Hundreds mobs. Within hours, the Petrograd Soviet mobilised some 12,000 armed workers to defend the Jewish minority.

**For a Socialist Federation of Southern Africa!**

The borders between the countries of Southern Africa, as in the rest of the continent, were not determined by the natural development and sentiments of the tribal and ethnic groups inhabiting the region, but by the schemes of imperialist looters



Striking black, coloured and immigrant farm workers from De Doorns rally in Cape Town for higher wages, January 2013.

**UAW...**

(continued from page 1)

raise. It must be stopped. A hard-fought strike that wins could also help invigorate other union struggles to beat back the profit-hungry bosses elsewhere, not least at Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

As was evident from discussions with workers on the picket lines, the toxic tiered wage system and ever-growing pool of temporary workers burn deep for auto workers. The low-tier and temp workers toil at jobs alongside union brothers and sisters for vastly unequal compensation. The shrinking number of workers who started at GM before 2007 earn roughly \$31 an hour; the great majority hired since then make far less, and temps are at the bottom, paid less than half that amount. These temp positions tend to be filled by a greater share of black and women workers, part of the ploy by the bosses to sow further division within the workforce. The last time UAW members went on strike against GM, for two days in 2007, the settlement imposed on them introduced the low-wage tier for new hires. No more betrayals! There must be a fight to end second-class union membership and win equal pay and benefits for equal work, at the highest levels for everyone.

The strike has met with an outpouring of support from working people across the country, and the Teamsters president pledged that carhaulers would refuse to transport GM vehicles during the strike. In the hours before the walkout began, though, the scene was very different outside five GM plants where UAW-represented janitors went out on strike and set up pickets, only to have union officials instruct production workers to cross and report for their shifts. "This isn't what solidarity looks like," one UAW member bitterly commented.

Indeed, the directive was a punch in the gut to everyone involved. Picket lines must be respected. They are battle lines in the class struggle. Industrial unions were built on core principles like "one out, all out" and "picket lines mean don't cross." Now that the janitors and production workers are out together, they should stay out together until all their demands are met. Their pickets should be further reinforced by the mobilization of the ranks of labor, especially UAW members at Ford and Fiat

Chrysler, as well as the parts plants.

It is crucial to weld bonds of solidarity across national borders as well. Mexico now accounts for over a quarter of GM's production in North America. Those laboring in the plants there are natural allies of UAW members. Earlier this year, tens of thousands of union workers at sweatshop factories in the border city of Matamoros successfully waged combative strikes, including against a manufacturer of parts for GM vehicles. The joint struggle of auto workers in the U.S., Mexico and Canada would deliver a mighty blow to management efforts to grind everyone down, irrespective of plant location.

This perspective is decidedly not that of the UAW bureaucracy, which retails the lie that jobs in the U.S. can be saved by appealing to the bosses and the likes of Donald "America First" Trump to take measures that would cost workers in Mexico their jobs. Last November, when GM announced plans to close five plants, UAW president Gary Jones railed against companies that "choose foreign workers over American workers." This chauvinism has seeped into the workforce, with some strikers telling *Workers Vanguard* reporters that Mexican workers are to blame for job losses. Protectionism is poison, pure and simple. It cripples the potential for international labor solidarity, while treating the automaker as a prospective "partner" of the union.

The union can put a halt to job cuts and the other attacks of the bosses only by relying on its numbers, organization and solidarity. As it has time and again come contract time, GM is today insisting on further closing what it calls the "labor cost gap" between itself and the non-union, foreign-owned auto plants in the U.S. Well, it is high time the union closes that gap on its own behalf, by launching a concerted drive to organize the sea of unorganized workers in the industry, so that all auto workers can enjoy the best wages and decent work conditions. Any such campaign will, as a matter of course, entail taking head on the system of racial oppression and segregation, which has historically served to divide workers and keep unions out, especially in the South.

Various Democratic Party politicians have voiced support for the strike. Watch out for these false "friends" who are in fact enemies! The UAW tops tie the fortunes of the union to the election of such

Democrats, who, no less than the Republicans, are the servants of the capitalist exploiters. The current cheering of the UAW strike by the field of 2020 Democratic hopefuls is a transparent attempt to get votes and nothing more. Joe Biden was part of the Obama administration, which brought the hammer down on the union in order to bail out the auto bosses in 2009. The UAW leadership had a hand in the affair, including by agreeing to a no-strike pledge, and to this day claims the orgy of mass layoffs and wage-slashing preserved jobs. Others among the Democrats, like Bernie Sanders, are not fundamentally better. This so-called progressive is an old-fashioned protectionist, whose preferred economic policy is based on pitting workers against one another across national lines.

The Obama administration also made its mark on the UAW by launching the now-expanded federal government investigation into alleged financial chicanery by union officials. This probe is a clear and present danger to the union, calculated to go after more of its leadership amid contract negotiations. On the eve of the strike, UAW regional director Vance Pearson was added to the list of current or former union officials so far arrested. This meddling in the union should make clear to every UAW member that the police and other state authorities are repressive agents of the bosses. ***Government hands off the UAW! Labor must clean its own house!***

One striking worker, expressing a widely held sentiment, described the union lead-

and mass murderers like Cecil Rhodes. These borders dismember whole peoples, such as the Ndebele, Tswana, Sotho, Ovimbundu and many others. The hysterical frenzy of the ANC and other demagogues about "our borders" is yet another testament to the utter incapacity of the bourgeois-nationalist forces to put an end to the national oppression brought by colonisation. To do that requires the leadership of a different class, the proletariat.

The proletariat of South Africa—which the workers of neighbouring countries have been inextricably woven into ever since the beginnings of the migrant labour system—is the key to liberating not only the downtrodden masses in this country, but those of the entire region groaning under neocolonial misery. Immigrants from countries throughout the region working and/or staying in South Africa represent the potential human bridge connecting the proletarian revolution against neo-apartheid capitalism to revolutions throughout the region. There *is* an alternative to the dog-eat-dog world of murderous divide-and-rule under imperialist domination. The fight for a socialist federation of Southern Africa, combined with the necessary struggle to extend socialist revolution to the advanced capitalist countries and establish a collectivised, planned world economy, points the way to lifting the masses out of neocolonial misery and creating a society in which there will be genuine liberation and equality for all the myriad peoples of the entire region. This is the Trotskyist perspective of Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). ■

ership as "corrupt and nepotistic." Shady dealings for private gain are one thing. The underlying problem, though, is the political corruption of the union bureaucracy, which proceeds from the starting point of class collaboration, including by extolling one Democrat after another. Class collaboration is a recipe for union defeat.

A dubious outfit calling itself the "World Socialist Web Site" has seized on the corruption scandal to claim that "the UAW has been thoroughly discredited" (wsws.org, 14 September). Beware these anti-union scoundrels, who equate the basic defense organizations of the working class with their pro-capitalist misleaders. Our purpose in denouncing class collaboration is to facilitate the struggle that will strengthen the unions.

What is needed is a class-struggle leadership of the unions forged in opposition to the Democrats and all other capitalist parties. Armed with the certain knowledge that the working class has no interest in common with the bosses, a union like the UAW could play a leading role in a broad fight against capitalism's ravages, drawing in other workers and the unemployed as well as black people and immigrants targeted by the capitalist rulers. To hold to such a perspective against the many obstacles that the bourgeoisie will put in the way requires building a workers party committed to the expropriation of the capitalist class and the establishment of a proletarian government that represents the working people and is answerable to them. ■

A Spartacist Pamphlet

1934 Strikes

Class-Struggle Leadership Made a Key Difference

Then and Now

Minnesota National Guard  
Minneapolis, May 1934: At the Battle of Duponts Run, thousands of strikers and supporters routed cops and overwhelming special deputies.

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## Neo-Apartheid State Stokes Anti-Immigrant Rampage

### South Africa



James Oatway photos

Anti-immigrant violence in Johannesburg on August 7. Left: Cops round up immigrants. Right: Mob smashes windows of migrant-owned shop.

# Defend Immigrants! For Workers Defense Guards!

*We print below a September 13 leaflet issued and distributed by our comrades of Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).*

A new wave of deadly anti-immigrant pogroms is engulfing the racist hellhole that is neo-apartheid South Africa. In the first week of September, anti-immigrant mobs looted and burned the shops of foreign nationals in parts of Johannesburg and surrounding townships; numerous foreign truck drivers were attacked along routes from Johannesburg to Durban; and hundreds of immigrants were driven from their homes in places like Marabastad [near Pretoria], where taxi operators fire-bombed a shack settlement inhabited mainly by Zimbabweans. In Katlehong, east of Johannesburg, one Zimbabwean man, Isaac Sithole, was beaten and burned to death by a mob that chased him and more than a hundred others from their homes, leaving at least one other burnt corpse in its wake. In Gauteng Province, conservative estimates are that twelve people were killed in the first week of September as a result of the anti-immigrant rampage. Hundreds of people from Nigeria, Mozambique and other countries are being repatriated.

Immigrant communities around Johannesburg, joined in some places by supportive locals, have been mobilising to defend themselves. We strongly support efforts to organise self-defence against the anti-immigrant mobs. What's urgently called for is the formation of workers defence guards, made up of class-conscious workers, including immigrant, black South African, coloured, Indian and anti-racist white workers, to bring the social power of the trade unions to bear in defence of immigrants.

The xenophobic attacks not only are a deadly threat to immigrants, but also strike at the class solidarity of this country's mainly black proletariat, which is facing a major onslaught of union-busting and privatisation from the capitalists and their government. Forming workers defence guards based on the trade unions would cut through the murderous national, racial and ethnic divisions among the oppressed. Combined with a struggle to organise the unorganised, especially vulnerable layers like immigrant workers, and for demands like jobs for all through a shortened workweek at no loss in pay, this could inflict a real blow against the racist capitalist rulers. Capitalism is the source of the hideous oppression, misery and desperation that are fertile ground for the reactionary anti-immigrant mobs. The workers movement has a vital and direct interest in taking up the fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!**

The bourgeois media and politicians try to portray the attacks as coming out of nowhere, or even absurdly deny that they are fuelled by anti-immigrant chauvinism. This cynical hypocrisy is aimed at wiping the bloody stains off the "Brand SA" marketed to international investors. In reality, anti-immigrant pogroms are as much a part of the "Brand" of neo-apartheid capitalism as is the brutal oppression of the black masses epitomised by the Marikana massacre of August 2012. Both are necessary parts of maintaining the class rule of the Randlords and carrying out the dictates of imperialist finance capital—the job of the bourgeois-nationalist ANC [African National Congress] and its Tripartite Alliance partners [the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP)].

**Break with the Tripartite Alliance! For a black-centred workers government, part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa!**

In crying for the state to restrain the anti-immigrant mobs and restore the "rule of law," the capitalists' propaganda hacks are now trying to cover up the fact that it was the armed thugs of the bourgeois state—cheered on by the media—that gave the green light for the mobs to attack in the first place. Throughout August, a pogromist frenzy was whipped up by the main media houses and bourgeois parties, with the ANC and the white-racist Democratic Alliance [DA] leading the charge. The hysterical orgy of anti-immigrant demagoguery was unleashed on 1 August, when street vendors in the Johannesburg central business district (CBD)—many of them immigrants, but also including South Africans—succeeded in repelling a cop raid.

Instantly, immigrant street hawkers struggling to eke out an existence were proclaimed "public enemy number one." ANC government officials spewed venom against "foreign nationals who want to turn our country into a lawless banana republic" (Faith Mazibuko) and denounced the CBD vendors as "terrorists" (Khumbudzo Ntshavheni). The ANC's David Makhura (premier of Gauteng) revived the time-worn racist libel—previously vomited by the DA's Herman Mashaba (mayor of Johannesburg)—that immigrants are carriers of "Ebolas" and other "funny diseases." Meanwhile, the bourgeois media beat the drums with slanders about immigrants being "criminals," "drug peddlers," overwhelming public services, etc.

Backed up by this chorus of anti-immigrant vitriol, police minister Bheki "Shoot-To-Kill" Cele led a massive anti-immigrant dragnet through the Johannes-

burg CBD on 7 August. The aim, in Cele's words, was "to stamp the authority of the state" on the CBD. The cops detained over 600 people, mainly foreign nationals, and confiscated truckloads of goods from small shops and street vendors. In many cases, police refused to even look at the detainees' immigration papers, or simply confiscated them while carting them off to the police station. Hundreds of people were hauled off to the Lindela deportation centre. Accompanying the police dragnet was an anti-immigrant mob that rampaged through the CBD, smashing cars with foreign licence plates and looting shops while the cops mostly looked on approvingly. Within a week, further bouts of anti-immigrant looting began to break out around other parts of Gauteng, building to the pogromist wave at the start of September.

**For Working-Class Independence from the Bourgeois State**

The cops who harass immigrants are the same neo-apartheid police force that regularly attacks striking workers, including infamously massacring black mineworkers in Marikana; that brutalises protesters fighting for basic services in the townships and rural areas; that beats and evicts landless squatters, etc. In short, together with the courts and the army, they are the core of the capitalist state, which, as Lenin taught us, is nothing but an organ of class **domination**, an organ of **oppression** of the working class by the capitalist class.

The natural response of class-conscious workers and other opponents of this racist, exploitative system was to **cheer** the street vendors who managed to beat back the cops on 1 August. This was a blow against our common oppressor. But this

*continued on page 6*