

**Break with the Tripartite Alliance Popular Front –
Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

South Africa: Workers Slam ANC Neo-Apartheid Regime

The August 2012 massacre of mine workers at Marikana marked a turning point in South African history, intensifying class struggle and opening what could become a revolutionary period. If the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 drove home the murderous nature of the apartheid regime of white supremacy, Marikana laid bare the deadly reality of its successor, the *neo-apartheid* regime presided over by the African National Congress (ANC), which is still based on the *super-exploitation* of black labor. Sharpeville, with its toll of 69 black protesters killed and more than 18,000 activists arrested in the aftermath, produced an outpouring of mass disobedience of the notorious passbook laws, as well as the banning of the ANC and the start of armed resistance.

We are now witnessing the political fallout of the point-blank police slaughter of 34 strikers at the Marikana mine, and the reverberations will be felt around the world. Its role as guarantor of racist capitalism exposed, the ANC's governing alliance is beginning to come undone in the face of massive discontent among the vast black and non-white majority over the continued poverty, police brutality and exclusion. As South African workers direct their anger at their black capitalist rulers, the key to the outcome will be to forge a *revolutionary workers party* to fight for *international socialist revolution* – a fight that starts now, not some time in the distant future. Otherwise, as always in the past, it will be the capitalist slave masters who will profit.

From December 17 to 20, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) held a special congress which officially declared its break with the ANC, and with the Tripartite Alliance – which also includes the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).¹ The Metalworkers condemned the police massacre at Marikana, while the SACP and COSATU leaders defended the police and the government. Since then the Metalwork-

¹ NUMSA represents auto and steel workers, while the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) had grown so close to the mine bosses that at Marikana it called for the bloody suppression of its own striking members.



Alexander Joe/AFP

Auto service workers, members of NUMSA, on strike in Johannesburg, 9 September 2013.

ers union has been the object of a vilification campaign by the ANC, SACP and COSATU. At the congress, NUMSA secretary general Irvin Jim declared that the union was “*gat-vol*” (fed up) with the attacks on it and would no longer support ANC candidates.

NUMSA's break came shortly after the death of ANC leader and South African president Nelson Mandela, and the special congress was postponed in view of the official mourning period. For over a week, millions came out to view the casket, participate in mass assemblies and line the streets for the funeral procession in order to pay their respects to the man seen as the symbol of the fight against apartheid. But current ANC president Jacob Zuma was roundly booed and jeered by the thousands-strong crowd at the December 10 memorial meeting in Johannesburg's soccer stadium. Many turned thumbs down and called for Zuma to resign over pervasive corruption while the masses

continue to suffer poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Barely a week later, the 1,200 delegates at the NUMSA congress voted to break with the ANC in no uncertain terms. The Declaration issued by the congress states that:

“... the leadership of the ANC and SACP is protecting the interests of white monopoly capital and imperialism against the interests of the working class. The ANC and SACP leadership defends the ownership and control of the mines, banks and monopoly industries in the hands of white monopoly capital and imperialism....”

“That is why our comrades died as they did at Marikana and de Doorns [where police shot down striking farm workers in January 2013]. It was not incompetence on the part of the police. It was the conscious, deliberate support, by the armed forces of the state, for the interests of shareholders and against the interests

of workers....”

“The ANC has been captured by the representatives of an enemy class. It has adopted the strategic plan of that class. Its leadership has shown that it will not let the small issue of democracy get in the way of defending its control. As well as the continued poverty of the majority of the working class, the result of this has been the slaughter of workers.

“It is clear from this picture that the working class cannot any longer see the ANC or the SACP as its class allies in any meaningful sense.”

The Declaration noted that “for more than 20 years we have been urging our members to swell the ranks of the ANC and SACP,” but that “our existing strategy was becoming outdated. Swelling the ranks has merely resulted in delivering more working class victims, like lambs to the slaughter by the ANC's bourgeois leadership.” Consequently, the Congress “calls on COSATU to break from the alliance,” and stated that “NUMSA as an organization will neither endorse nor support the ANC or any other political party in 2014.”

NUMSA's break with the Tripartite
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**Defend Wyatt McMinn,
Defeat “Right to Slave”! . . . 5**





Marikana massacre, 16 August 2012. South African police pose with guns drawn over their victims. Then ANC authorities charged the victims with murder under apartheid-era law.

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Alliance promises to be an earthquake in South African politics, and could even cost the ANC its so-far overwhelming electoral majority. With over 330,000 members, NUMSA is not only the largest trade union on the African continent, it has also been looked to by hundreds of thousands of members of other unions as the main leader of working-class resistance to the increasingly right-wing policies of the ANC government. But more than that, the break puts the need for a genuinely revolutionary workers party front and center. The NUMSA Declaration itself notes:

“The South African Communist Party (SACP) leadership has become embedded in the state and is failing to act as the vanguard of the working class. The chance of winning it back onto the path of working class struggle for working class power is very remote.... For the struggle for socialism, the working class needs a political organisation committed in theory and practice to socialism.”

The Declaration continues:

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“Numsa will explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism as the working class needs a political organization committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa. Numsa will conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism.”

The question is, what is meant by “socialism,” and how do you get there? While the leaders of the National Union of Metalworkers, and many others in South Africa, accuse the SACP of abandoning the struggle for socialism and instead administering capitalism, they have not broken with the Stalinist/Menshevik program that long before Marikana laid the basis for this betrayal.² When speaking of “socialism,” many are calling for different *policies* within the framework of the present South African capitalist state rather than *socialist revolution* to bring down that state. Yet no matter who is sitting in government, capitalism in South Africa is inherently racist and can only be based on the grinding poverty of the black toilers.

What “Post-Apartheid” South Africa?

The African National Congress has been in power for 20 years now, an entire generation, yet for all the talk of a “post-apartheid” South Africa, the country is as unequal as ever – or more so. And much as they despise the racist rulers of the past, many poor and working people are *gatvol*

² See “South Africa: Bloody Mine Massacre Unmasks ANC Neo-Apartheid Regime” (29 August 2012), reprinted in *The Internationalist* special issue, November-December 2012.

voting, to the vast black majority (three-quarters of all South Africans), as well as discrimination against the coloured³ and Asian populations. But the elaborate legal superstructure was devised to *secure a regime of white supremacy based on the superexploitation of black labor which existed long before the institution of formal apartheid in 1948, and which survives essentially intact today*. In fact, unemployment has increased sharply in recent years, reaching 35% of the workforce; real wages of workers have *fallen*, and the degree of economic inequality is notably *greater* today than it was in 1994.⁴

Sure, there are some black managers and even a few CEOs drawn from the ANC (Tokyo Sexwale, Cyril Ramaphosa), the Group Areas Act is gone, and Nelson Mandela moved into the wealthy suburb of Houghton Estate. Yes, there has been some improvement in supplying water, electricity and access to education (which is not free) for the mass of the population, although the

³ The coloured population, often referred to as mixed race, is predominant in the Western Cape province.

⁴ Under apartheid South Africa was, by far, the most unequal country in the world in terms of income distribution, and is even more so today. South Africa’s *Gini coefficient*, in which total inequality (one person has all the income) would be 1.0, rose from .64 in 1994 to .70 in 2008.



Mass revulsion over Marikana massacre didn’t stop South African police from doing it again, shooting on and killing striking farm workers at De Doorn, in Western Cape province, 9 January 2013.

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of which continued to fill the coffers of the white capitalists while superexploiting their black “wage slaves,” paying them even less than the bare minimum needed to live and raise a family. State-owned companies were privatized, financial markets deregulated, tariffs lowered allowing massive imports and consequent de-industrialization, exchange controls eliminated allowing a massive outflow of profits, etc. – all of which were agreed to by the ANC and the SACP.

In fact, the amount of money spent on social grants to poor South Africans pales in comparison to the hundreds of billions of rand in government funds pumped into companies in order to promote Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). The result has been the creation of a narrow layer of BEE tycoons, who have often led attacks on black workers. Cyril Ramaphosa, the former head of the National Union of Mineworkers and quintessence of BEE capitalists, sits on the board of Lonmin. As such on 15 August 2012 he demanded action against platinum strikers at Marikana engaged in “dastardly criminal” conduct. The next day, the police committed the heinous crime. Six months later, the ANC elected Ramaphosa as its deputy president!

So how does the South African Communist Party justify this promotion of black capitalists and the pro-business agenda of the ANC government in which several SACP leaders sit while party members staff every ministry including the police? It’s all in the service of the “National Democratic Revolution,” which “unites ... a range of classes and social strata” and in which “the working class builds its hegemony in every site of power” (*The South African Road to Socialism* [2012]). From the outset, the SACP’s participation in the ANC has been based on the Stalinist dogma of a “two-stage” revolution, in which the first stage is supposedly bourgeois-democratic, or anti-imperialist, or anti-feudal, etc., but definitely not socialist.

In fact, the first tentative engagement with the African National Congress dates back to 1927 when J.T. Gumede headed the ANC, at the same time that Stalin was insisting that the Chinese Communist Party be part of, and subordinate to, the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party then headed by Chiang Kai-shek, who was even made an honorary member of the standing committee of the Communist International. But once he marched into Shanghai in April 1927, Chiang carried out a bloody purge of Communists and set off a “white terror” in which 300,000 CPers and militant workers were killed. In South Africa, the same Stalinist “strategy” turned out to be not a “road to socialism” but the road to the Marikana massacre.

The policy of revolution in stages in colonial and semi-colonial countries has served to promote petty-bourgeois or bourgeois layers to become a new capitalist ruling class, and has over and over again led to defeat for the working class and its allies. In contrast, Leon Trotsky’s perspective of *permanent revolution* held that in the present epoch, the indigenous bourgeoisie is so bound up with reaction and imperialism that even democratic tasks such as national emancipation and agrarian revolution require that the working class take power, backed up by the peasantry, and proceed to international socialist revolution. This was what the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and Trotsky carried out in Russia’s Red October of 1917.

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Not the ANC Freedom Charter But Workers Revolution

In South Africa today, the most advanced sectors of the working class must embrace the program of socialist revolution, and build a genuinely communist, proletarian vanguard party to lead it. This has international dimensions, for uniquely in sub-Saharan Africa, the land of apartheid, old and new, has a millions-strong working class with an industrial, mining and transportation proletariat at its core. NUMSA’s break with the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance could play an important role in this, as could its call for “discussion on previous attempts to build socialism,” for “an international study on the historical formation of working class parties” and for a conference on socialism. This will clearly pose sharp debates.

A key issue will be the whole question of the ANC’s 1955 Freedom Charter and the call for nationalization. While the current ANC and SACP leaders clearly want to get rid of any hint of nationalizations, talking instead vaguely of “socialization,” the Charter calls only for “the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry” to be “transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.” No less an authority than Mandela himself wrote the next year that the “breaking up and democratization of these monopolies” would permit “the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class.” As Mandela made clear, the call of the Freedom Charter is by no means a blow against capitalism.

Throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist leaders and movements have called for and sometimes carried out widespread nationalizations – often portrayed as “socialism” – in order to provide the economic basis for a “national” bourgeoisie by later privatizing assets. Even state-owned companies under capitalism function as capitalist enterprises: just look at PEMEX in Mexico (which buys up companies in Spain) or Petrobras in Brazil (which bought Bolivian refineries, then sought to blackmail the Bolivian government) before it was semi-privatized. Coming from the mouth of Julius Malema, the former head of the ANC Youth League, calls for nationalization could even be a way of bailing out bankrupt BEE black capitalists.

Depending on the context of the class struggle, proletarian revolutionaries may intervene in struggles for nationalization of the mines, banks and energy monopolies like Sasol with demands for their *expropriation without compensation*. They would also warn that this would not be a simple legislative matter, since the ANC, many of whose

leaders are now shareholders in these companies, might well provoke a civil war before permitting it. Such measures will require a workers and peasants government to carry them out, and imposition of workers control by the workers seizing the installations to wrench them out of the grip of the bourgeoisie as part of the fight for workers rule of society as a whole.

Another question will be the program of a “national democratic revolution,” or NDR, which NUMSA leaders with their Stalinist backgrounds still uphold, although sometimes giving it a left twist, referring to a “socialist” or “socialist-oriented” NDR (for example, in their document “Cosatu at the Crossroads” [11 August 2013]). Along with their support for the Freedom Charter, this maintains the conception of a stage prior to socialist revolution in “alliance” with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces aspiring to become a new ruling class. Yet Marxist analysis and historical experience going back to 1848 show that this program is bound to lead to bitter defeat for the workers as the bourgeoisie will not undertake revolutionary democratic measures.

This poses another vital subject, the nature of the Tripartite Alliance as a nationalist *popular front* chaining the workers movement to sections of the bourgeoisie. NUMSA documents are sharply critical of how the Alliance has turned out, but they do not oppose such a class-collaborationist political coalition on principle, quite the contrary. Yet it is crucial to understand, as experience from the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War to Allende’s Unidad Popular in Chile in the 1970s shows, that in negating the political independence of the proletariat the popular front is a roadblock to revolution. It is, as Trotsky put it, “the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch” and “the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism.”

In fact, in taking the ANC to task for resisting “the reconfiguration of the Alliance into a strategic political centre,” and in proposing “the establishment of a new United Front” to coordinate struggles “in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s” as well as to “fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter,” NUMSA is suggesting that a new, slightly more left-wing version of a popular-front alliance be built, one that is not simply a rubber stamp for government policies, as an “alternative”



NUMSA general secretary Irvin Jim.

to the discredited Tripartite (ANC-SACP-COSATU) Alliance. But what is necessary in order to free South African toilers from poverty and centuries of degradation is to break with popular-frontism and to fight *now* for workers power.

Beyond programmatic issues, there is the question of the labor bureaucracy, a relatively privileged petty-bourgeois layer that sits atop the unions and ties them to bourgeois politics. While the NUMSA leadership’s break with the ANC is important and may provide an opening for revolutionary intervention, structurally and socially they are little different than the COSATU tops. It is undoubtedly true that the SACP and ANC got NUMSA ally Zwelinizima Vavi suspended as COSATU general secretary (almost exactly on the first anniversary of the Marikana massacre) because of his criticisms of their pro-big business policies. But Vavi’s defense against charges of using union funds to pay for a trip for him and his family to a Cape Town Jazz Festival was that the expenses were supposed to be paid for by an investment bank.

For his part, NUMSA’s general secretary Irvin Jim, his tough talk against capitalism notwithstanding, is also chair of the NUMSA Investment Company board of directors. And despite his insistence against the SACP that the state is still capitalist, he has threatened to go to the capitalist courts to “seek justice” against the SACP for defamation (“NUMSA National office Bearers’ Statement,” 1 December 2013).

As for the SACP’s defense of the ANC and its policies, these supposed “communists” – reformists since the 1930s – have become part of the capitalist government machinery. Moreover, the SACP has its own capitalist investment fund, Masincazelane, with holdings in at least a couple of platinum mines, as well as in the Gautrain (a high-speed rail link between Pretoria and Johannesburg) which the party had criticized as a costly boondoggle and for bypassing the black townships. Yet SACP deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin, as deputy transport minister, handed over the permit allowing the train to operate for the 2010 soccer World Cup. Justifying his about-turn, Cronin told the *Mail & Guardian* (17 May 2012) he didn’t want to be a “party pooper.”

Build a Revolutionary Workers Party on a Leninist-Trotskyist Program

Of the political groups to the left of the governing coalition, perhaps the most notable is the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM). The DSM was actively involved with the independent workers committees which led the Marikana workers’ struggle earlier that year, aiding them against the blatant strikebreaking actions of the violently pro-government leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the SACP. Seeking to capitalize on this work, in December 2012 the DSM together



That was then: SACP deputy secretary general and deputy transport minister Jeremy (“no party pooper”) Cronin and ousted COSATU general secretary Zwelinizima Vavi.

with the Marikana committees launched the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP). However, the kickoff was a flop, as what was initially planned as a rally in a sports stadium turned into a “quiet” and “modest” meeting “with just 20 delegates present” (DSM press release, 17 December 2012).

While DSM members have been subject to repression, outrageously arrested in Rustenberg by police acting at the behest of the SACP and NUM, and it claims the WASP will not just be involved in elections, the new formation has been built essentially as an electoral vehicle. This is in keeping with the practice of the international tendency with which the DSM is affiliated, the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) led by Peter Taaffe.⁵ For over two decades the British section of the CWI was buried in the Labour Party. In South Africa, the DSM’s predecessor was the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC. In Mexico, Pakistan and elsewhere, the CWI has no compunction about being part of capitalist parties.

Moreover, the WASP has explicitly endorsed the “tactic” of dragging COSATU into the bosses’ courts to overturn the suspension of Vavi as its secretary general (WASP open letter to NUMSA Congress, 13 December 2013). This is a *betrayal* of working-class independence by Vavi’s supporters, as is WASP’s approval. Internal disputes must be settled within the workers movement, not by appealing to the class enemy. Any Marxist knows that the courts are not neutral, yet here are these supposed socialists calling on the repressive organs of the capitalist state to rule against a workers organization. For shame!

Today, the DSM and WASP seek to exploit discontent with the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance which is repressing the workers. But in 1994, their predecessor called to vote to put the ANC under Mandela into office, as the petty-bourgeois nationalist movement turned into a full-fledged bourgeois party. Speaking in New York in May 1994, Peter Taaffe *opposed the call for a workers party*, saying: “The working class in South Africa has to go through the experience of an ANC government. The slogan of a workers party was an incorrect slogan in the period prior to the elections in South Africa. We wanted the biggest possible ANC majority.”⁶

The DSM/WASP continues this policy today, forming an electoral alliance Julius Malema’s Economic Freedom Fighters. The populist EFF is a *bourgeois* political formation, which in its Founding Manifesto (July 2013) looks to repressive capitalist regimes such as Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea as models for South African development, and calls for industrialization by mining and manufacturing “entrepreneurs” (capitalists), etc. Moreover, the EFF declares that “the police are not our enemy” and seeks to “build strategic and working relationships with the cohesive components of the state, particularly the military and the police.” But this *counterrevolutionary* line is not the EFF’s alone.

For genuine Marxists, the concept of a *class line* is key. We seek to build revolutionary workers parties against *all* bourgeois parties and politicians. Social democrats like the DSM and CWI, or Socialist Alternative in the United States, on the other hand, and

⁵ See “‘Socialist’ Elected in Seattle on Platform of Liberal/Populist Reforms,” on page 9 of this issue.

⁶ Quoted in *Workers Vanguard* No. 602, 10 June 1994, at a time when *WV* was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism.

reformist Stalinists like the SACP, seek to gain influence in the capitalist state, contradicting everything that Marx, Engels and Lenin wrote about its nature as an instrument of suppression of the workers by the bosses, no matter who is in the government. This question comes to a head over the matter of the police, the backbone of the state, who carried out the massacre at Marikana. For the CWI, the police are “workers in uniform” rather than the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.⁷

And not just under the ANC. The MWT’s *Congress Militant* (September 1993) ran an interview with the deputy president of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), “comrade Enoch Nelani,” calling for these enforcers of apartheid law and order to be admitted to COSATU (they were). And CWI guru Taaffe in his 1994 speech marveled that “black cops in South Africa who mowed down workers organizing trade unions” are now “organized into a trade union themselves.” He went on: “These very same killers, these very same black police who were tools of the apartheid regime, were radicalized by the situation.” His conclusion: “We can neutralize the forces of the state and win them over.” So much for *State and Revolution*.

It’s a straight line from there to the Marikana massacre. We agree with Trotsky, who wrote in his pamphlet *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (1932): “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.” We demand, *cops out of the unions!* When the DSM/WASP calls for a “mass workers party on a socialist programme,” they mean a social-democratic party with a Labourite program to reform the capitalist state. The League for the Fourth International calls for a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party on the program of permanent revolution. Between these two sharply counterposed positions runs the line between Menshevism and Bolshevism.

There are many thorny tactical issues facing revolutionaries in South Africa today, including the position to take towards COSATU. Earlier some leftists were pushing for workers to leave COSATU, while others were even trying to cajole miners back into the NUM, which had unleashed the murderous repression. Trade-union unity is not an absolute principle. Where there are splits in the bureaucracy that offer an opening for revolutionary Marxism, authentic Trotskyists would seek to intervene. But in whatever trade union or labor federation, we fight to build a class-struggle opposition to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucracy, opposing popular fronts and class collaboration in every guise, seeking to lay the basis for workers councils (soviets) that can be the organizing centers for workers revolution.

The Marikana massacre in South Africa could have the effect that the Bloody Sunday massacre (9 January 1905) had in tsarist Russia, of crystallizing mass indignation and awakening the working class to struggle, touching off the 1905 Russian Revolution. If so, this upsurge will be held back, not aided, by reformist electoralist parties that seek to maneuver with the bourgeoisie. Only unyielding struggle for the program of international socialist revolution can take the struggle forward, to a united socialist states of Africa and a socialist world. ■

⁷ See “Her Majesty’s Social Democrats in Bed with the Police,” in *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009.

Nelson Mandela, 1918-2013

The following article is translated from the upcoming issue of *Vanguarda Operária*, the newspaper of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil*, section of the League for the Fourth International.

6 DECEMBER 2013—At the close of 2013, South Africa has lost Nelson Mandela, one of the most decisive men in that country’s life over the last hundred years, almost a century – roughly the same duration as his life of trials and tribulations – bringing international expressions of sympathy and support due to the scope of his struggle. Mandela suffered persecution and torture of every sort, which only someone with the build of a boxer, which he was, could have withstood. Those who planned and maintained the racist South African apartheid system searched the world, in the best schools, looking for human beings who had been turned into monsters. Many Nazis and fascists gave classes on torturing black men and women activists in particular.

At the head of the African National Congress (ANC), held in the dungeons of the apartheid regime for 27 years, Nelson Mandela stood out and was the biggest personal symbol of resistance in the struggle against apartheid. He aided and came to symbolize the main confrontations of the political struggle against the racists. He was present practically from the beginning, the middle and the end of the aggressive white racist regime embedded in a multitude of 75% blacks, 12% coloureds (mixed race people) and Asians facing an oppressive and privileged layer of 12% whites. At the same time, today Mandela is almost universally hailed as the symbol of “reconciliation,” including by the capitalists and imperialists who supported and profited from the system of apartheid slavery up to the end.

Mandela’s almost century-long resistance without a doubt prevented many from abandoning the struggle. This tenacity, longevity and capacity to bear the struggle in such unequal conditions was inspired in the first place by the capacity of the black population to have experienced, confronted and overcome centuries of chattel slavery on the African continent and beyond. It was there in South Africa that the courageous Zulus defeated the English colonial troops. The Ethiopians with bows and arrows put the Italian fascists on the run, expelling them from their country, humiliating Mussolini and Hitler.

The ANC and Mandela doubtless had contact with the literature that narrated the heroic deeds of Zumbi dos Palmares in Brazil and Toussaint Louverture in Haiti, the greatest expressions in the “New World” of the arduous, protracted and cruel struggle against the enslavement of human beings when this was revived in the Americas in a historical retrogression, since mass slavery had already ended more than five centuries earlier with the fall of the Roman Empire. Palmares, the republic of escaped slaves, resisted for a century and the Haitian revolutionaries inscribed their names in the annals of human history by defeating the powerful army of Napoleon and the other slave powers of the time. Haiti became the only country in the world where



ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu in Robben Island prison, 1986.

there was a victorious slave revolution.

Mandela had rich sources of inspiration and incentive. The South African Communist Party with the support of the former Soviet Union and Cuba provided organization, material and logistical support to the struggle of the ANC, without which apartheid might have survived. But history will also register that Mandela, the South African Communist Party and the ANC did everything possible to keep the struggle against racism in that country confined to the framework of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. As a consequence, the black and coloured population today still lives in poverty, in the racist system of *neo-apartheid* today presided over by the bourgeois popular front of the ANC, CP and the union bureaucracy which upholds the economic domination of the white capitalists.

Mandela’s policies headed up free-market black capitalism within the African National Congress. The class collaboration of the South African popular front prevented socialist revolution in that country, which at various points was entirely possible to achieve, a success that would have spread throughout the continent, delivering its population from terrible suffering and turning the continent into a federation of socialist countries.

Nelson Mandela will probably join the pantheon of African heroes given the international scope that his struggle against the hated South African apartheid achieved. At the same time, he joined those political symbols who, however shining they might seem, turn out to be an empty shell. These are the cases of the former workers Lech Walesa (Poland) and Lula (Brazil), of the Indian Evo Morales (Bolivia), of the black man Barack Obama (U.S.) and similar cases, like the women Michelle Bachelet (Chile) and Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), who may wrap themselves in the most beloved banners of the exploited and oppressed, while their policies lack any revolutionary character and thus they have only managed to prolong the life of capitalism.

The results of the class collaboration of the South African popular front are terrible. The end of apartheid gave way to and prepared the way for the brutal capitalist exploitation and oppression of the country, now governed by an inter-ethnic caste of whites and rich blacks, icons of “neo-liberalism” of the post-Soviet period on the continent, proving for the umpteenth time that *the popular front is a danger for the working class!* Proof of this is the terrible massacre of the miners at Marikana last year by the police of the popular-front government. *The liberation of the black population will only come about through socialist revolution.* ■

Labor Activist Faces Jail for Protesting “Right to Work” Union-Busting Defend Wyatt McMinn, Defeat “Right to Slave”!

No More Wisconsins! Defend Our Unions!

PORTLAND, November 2013 – This past September 5, Cross Trade Solidarity, a labor group in the Portland, OR/Vancouver, WA area, called a rally to protest a meeting of the union-hating “Freedom Foundation.” This right-wing outfit has launched a drive to enact deceptively named “right-to-work” laws in the Pacific Northwest in an attempt to strip away basic union rights. While several dozen picketed outside the meeting at Clark Community College in Vancouver, a number of union members went inside, whereupon the labor-haters showed their idea of “freedom” by calling the police to kick the protesters out.

When the cops arrived and ordered protesters out, Wyatt McMinn, vice president of Local 10 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), responded that he didn’t appreciate being “profiled.” He was immediately arrested and led away in handcuffs on the bogus charge of “trespassing” in this public meeting. At a November 6 hearing in Clark County Court, McMinn pled not guilty to the charge of first degree trespassing. On this outrageous trumped-up charge, the union activist faces up to 364 days in jail and a \$5,000 fine. We urge all supporters of unions and of the rights of working people to come out in support of Wyatt.

Wyatt McMinn most recently spearheaded a campaign for active solidarity by area unions with the locked-out workers of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) locals at grain terminals in Portland and Vancouver. Six union locals passed motions (see box) pledging to sup-



“Union-busting has got to go!” Workers protest September 6 “right-to-work” forum in Vancouver.

port a mass mobilization to defend the port workers, but the ILWU International then put the kibosh on a mass picket. Wyatt was also active in winning the backing of a number of local unions to denounce repression of Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) members (see “Portland Unions Denounce FBI Raids, Grand Jury Witch Hunt of Activists,” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March April 2013).

Cross Trade – set up to bring construction workers from different trades together, defend each other’s picket lines, and promote workers power regardless of jurisdiction – called the September 5 rally in order to expose the union-busters and their anti-worker agenda. The right-wing “libertarians” of the Freedom Foundation,

headquartered in Olympia, Washington rail against “government interference” in private business while seeking to use the government to prevent unions from representing all workers at a workplace, even when this has been agreed to in collective bargaining.

While vituperating against “welfare handouts,” the “right-to-work” hypocrites would outlaw contracts providing for an agency shop, which would make unions foot the bill for freeloaders who enjoy the benefits of union wages without paying dues or agency fees. This would also threaten hard-won union rights like seniority protection and the union hiring hall, while weakening the ability of unions to enforce strikes and pickets.

While posing as defenders of the rights of non-union workers, the Freedom Foundation is funded by anti-union billionaires including the Walton Family Foundation (owners of Wal-Mart), the Sarah Scaife Foundation and other right-wing financiers. The group’s founder, Bob Williams, is closely linked to the American Legislative Exchange Council and other far-right lobbyists funded by the billionaire Koch brothers and the Heritage Foundation. Other Freedom Foundation supporters include Scott Walker, the notorious union-busting governor of Wisconsin, and the right-wing hate-mongering TV commentator Glenn Beck.

It’s no accident that “right-to-work” laws mainly exist in the South where unions are an endangered species. The AFL-CIO has put out materials showing that workers in states with such legislation earn \$1,500 less per year on the average than those in states without such union-crippling laws. But recently “right-to-work” laws have spread to Midwest industrial states such as Indiana and Michigan. Facing



Wyatt McMinn

the right-wing campaign to put such anti-labor initiatives on the ballot in Washington and Oregon in 2014 elections, the short-sighted labor officialdom thinks that by business-as-usual lobbying and legal maneuvers they will go away.

As the “right to slave” forces gear up in several states, the unions have learned the wrong lesson from Wisconsin. There at least you had tens of thousands of unionists in the streets before the labor tops sold out the struggle to the Democrats. Today, with the threat of effectively losing the right for public workers to bargain collectively looming, the leadership of the major labor groups has refused to mobilize to stop it this assault in its tracks. Citing several recent polls which indicate that voters may be in favor of “right to work” laws or are sour on unions, the union tops have stepped back from direct confrontation with right to work groups.

Relying on polls as an indicator of what unions should be doing to mobilize their members is myopic. But more than that, it ignores the fundamental problem: that until the unions do something worth supporting, they won’t gain the trust of the millions of workers who need them. What’s needed instead of an ad campaign or anemic membership outreach is a real mobilization of workers in the streets and in the plants to defend the right to union shops, seniority and simple majority rule for workers forming a union.

The way to stop the union-busting assault of the Koch brothers and their cronies, is to *organize the unorganized by using workers’ power to withhold their labor*. Faced with the labyrinth of anti-labor laws, a fighting union movement would *defy* the likes of the Taft-Hartley ban on “secondary boycotts” and shut down non-union firms

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“Freedom Foundation” against free speech. Suits call cops to throw out workers, arrest labor activist Wyatt McMinn in three seconds after warning.

Drop the Charges Against Wyatt McMinn!

Wyatt McMinn, labor activist and vice president of Painters Union Local 10, is scheduled to go on trial February 6 on the charge of first-degree trespassing for protesting at a public forum of the union-busting “Freedom Foundation.” He is facing up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

Already, several Portland-area unions have passed resolutions calling to “Drop the charges against Wyatt McMinn!” These include IATSE Local 28, ILWU Local 5, IUPAT Local 10, IWW Portland, as well as labor historian Michael Munk.

To add your name to the growing list of endorsers, and to contribute to Wyatt’s defense against the frame-up charges, write to McMinn Defense Campaign, P.O. Box 86902, Portland, OR or call (971) 282-7903. Please make checks or money orders payable to McMinn Defense Campaign. On the Internet: [facebook.com/defendwyattdefeatrighttowork](https://www.facebook.com/defendwyattdefeatrighttowork).

CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS

Liberal Democrat NYC Mayoral Candidate Won't End "Stop and Frisk," Charters or Privatization of Public Education

Despite the Hype, de Blasio Will Be "Bloomberg Lite"

By Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT

The following article was issued as a leaflet on October 29.

In the upcoming November 6 New York City mayoral elections, Democrat Bill de Blasio is sure to clobber Republican Joe Lhota. With polls currently giving de Blasio a 45-point lead (78% to 23%), in a city where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans six-to-one, the outcome is a foregone conclusion. De Blasio has mounted a liberal campaign, calling to raise taxes on the rich (by less than 1%) and criticizing the New York Police Department's "stop and frisk" tactics as racial profiling, while Lhota has run a race-baiting, red-baiting, fear-mongering campaign appealing to conservative billionaires and Tea Party reactionaries. With the prospect of an end to 20 years of Republican mayors, liberals, labor bureaucrats and quite a few would-be leftists are gaga for Bill.

De Blasio has made his campaign theme the "Tale of Two Cities," one for the super-rich and another for those struggling to make ends meet. For his part, on primary night, Lhota said the campaign would highlight "two completely different visions for the future of our city." The media has pitched the contest as the "unapologetic liberal" versus the "hardnosed conservative." One banker labeled the prospect of de Blasio as mayor "terrifying." At a diamond-studded September 11 charity gala of wealthy patrons at the Waldorf-Astoria honoring Michael Bloomberg, a guest cried out, "Mayor Bloomberg should be mayor forever!" (*New York Times*, 11 September). But in reality,

the contrast is not nearly so sharp. *A Mayor de Blasio promises to be Bloomberg lite.*

An alarmed editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* (29 October), "Occupy City Hall," shuddered that "New York voters are about to elect the Occupy movement to run America's largest city." Perish the thought. But if the voice of the titans of high finance endorsed Lhota, the ultra-establishment *New York Times* (27 October), which backed Bloomberg all three times he ran, came out for "Bill Blasio for Mayor." To those who have "already anointed him leader of a national rebirth of left-wing populism," the *Times* retorted, "Hold on." The de Blasio it was supporting was "someone to sustain and build on the 12-year legacy of Michael Bloomberg," and "never mind the revolution."

After campaigning for various competing Democrats in the primary (UFT, Teamsters 237, TWU 100 for Thompson; AFSCME DC 37 and DC 1707 for Liu; RWDSU and 32BJ SEIU for Quinn; 1199 SEIU, CWA 1, UNITE/HERE and PSC for de Blasio), labor officialdom unanimously embraced the Democratic primary winner. That would be no surprise, as the union bureaucracy chains the ranks to the phony "friends of labor" Democrats, except that the UFT tops adopted a position of pro-Bloomberg neutrality the last two times around. (Lot of good it did them.) But the reformist oppositionists in the teachers union also look favorably on de Blasio, although some are wary to say so out loud as it would expose their pseudo-socialist pretensions.

In contrast, Class Struggle Education Workers and the Internationalist Group tell the bitter truth: neither candidate in this election defends the interests of the poor and working people who make this city run, of the African Americans, Latinos,



Bill de Blasio (left) backed Atlantic Yards project of Bruce Ratner (right) to build sports arena in downtown Brooklyn. Hundreds of residents were displaced, but promised "affordable housing" has never been built.



Asians and immigrants who are the targets of racist repression. Democrats and Republicans both defend the interests of capital. And if Bill de Blasio could be portrayed as the candidate of Occupy Wall Street, that is only because that populist movement, when it demanded anything at all, at most sought minor reforms to capitalism rather than to replace the dictatorship of finance capital with the rule of those it exploits and oppresses.

The wide support for de Blasio, who at first was dismissed by the professional pundits as an "unelectable liberal," stems from the fact that millions of working people are hurting badly and fed up with a mayor and government of, by and for the plutocrats. Even by government statistics, unemployment in New York City is over 15%, the poverty rate is over 20% and rising while incomes for the bottom half of the population are falling. Despite a huge public outcry, the racial profiling by the NYPD and attacks on the public schools by the Department of Education continue unabated. But all the Democratic candidate proposes to do is to tweak the Bloomberg policies to make them a little less blatantly offensive.

Income gap? Not enough says the current mayor (whose net worth soared from \$3 billion to \$31 billion during his 12 years in office), claiming it would be a "god-send" if "we could get every billionaire in

the world to move here." Racial profiling? Bloomberg wants more. Although 87% of those "stopped and frisked" by the police are blacks and Latinos, he says they "stop whites too much and minorities too little." If working-class residents of the "outer boroughs" are trapped by snowstorms of inundated by floods, the CEO of NYC tells them to kick back and watch TV (if they have power, that is) or take in a Broadway show (if they can shovel their way out). The race and class arrogance of this would-be master of the universe is boundless.

Republican Joe Lhota, who after leaving the Giuliani administration was a highly paid gofer for the Dolan family (owners of Madison Square Garden and Cablevision), has promised more of the same. He accuses de Blasio of waging "class warfare," of being a "Marxist" and Sandinista, referring to a stint the future Democratic candidate did in the 1980s working for the Jesuits' Quixote Center delivering food, clothing and medical supplies to Nicaragua. (Just imagine what wannabe contra Lhota would have said if de Blasio had worked with the Maryknolls!) Meanwhile Lhota's attack ads on TV are blatant racial fear-mongering, talking about "wilding," the phrase used to frame up the innocent black youths who due to media hysteria and racist police coercion unjustly spent years in jail in the 1989 rape of the Central Park jogger.

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UFT president Mike Mulgrew announces the union's endorsement of Bill de Blasio for NYC mayor, September 18. Marjorie Stamberg of CSEW sought to oppose support to Democrats and call for a workers party at delegate assembly but was denied the floor.

Photos: Steven Lovelkin/Getty Image; Bill Lyons/Staten Island Advance; Seth Wenig/AP

New York Observer/Politicker

Fast Food Workers Need a Whopping Raise, and a Fighting Union!

Class Struggle Against Poverty Wages

Appeals to Democrats Are a Dead End

Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!

5 DECEMBER 2013 – Hardly a day goes by that there isn't another call from the politicians and talk in the media about "doing something" about low wages. Now President Obama is getting in on the act, with a speech trying to whip up support for his health care law after its disastrous inauguration, and backing a Democratic bill to raise the federal minimum wage bit by bit from the present miserable \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour. But that would still be far below what it was 45 years ago in terms of purchasing power, and would still leave millions of workers mired in poverty. The fact is that the capitalists, their politicians and their media mouthpieces will never do anything against the scourge of poverty – unless they are forced to, by us, the workers.

Over the last year and a half there have been a number of well-publicized protests at fast-food restaurants like McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's, and at stores of the vast Walmart chain, the largest private employer in the world. Although they have been billed as "strikes," the number of workers who have actually walked off the job is very small – for obvious reasons, since they face immediate dismissal by their viciously anti-union employers at the least sign of labor militancy. Mostly these have been media events organized by a few unions and foundation-funded NGOs ("non-governmental organizations"). But they have gotten attention and the conditions faced by low-wage workers are so terrible that they could eventually spark something.

If and when that happens, the question will be posed starkly: what next? The vast majority of these protests are actually aimed at influencing the Democratic Party. The rally today in New York City is billed as "New Day New York" and demands "an end to inequality and the tale of two cities." This is a clear reference to last month's election of Democrat Bill de Blasio as mayor and echoes his campaign themes. But the idea that putting a liberal Democrat in charge of City Hall instead of Republican billionaire Michael Bloomberg would end, or even put a serious dent in, inequality is a fairy tale. (To be sure, Bloomberg's arrogance is unmatched: he insisted on finishing his golf game in Bermuda before jetting back to NYC after the Metro-North crash!)

So who is running this "movement" and what is their game plan? The main force behind the Walmart "strikes" is the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union which has funded the groups OUR Walmart and Making Change at Walmart. But rather than a serious drive to unionize Walmart workers, the UFCW's main strategy has been to get Democratic-led city councils to keep the big box stores out of the major cities. As for the fast-food protests, these are mainly led (and financed) by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which is behind Fast Food Forward in NYC and "Fight for \$15" elsewhere in the

country, as well as various pro-Democratic NGOs. Their focus is on pressuring Democratic "elected officials."

This is hardly surprising. Of all the unions in the U.S., the SEIU is most notable for its close ties to the Democrats, practically acting as the labor auxiliary of that capitalist party. (1199 SEIU was the main union backing de Blasio before he won the Democratic primary.) And groups like New York Communities for Change (NYCC, formerly ACORN) and Make the Road are essentially fronts for the Democratic Party. But what exactly do they want the Democrats to do? That's not entirely clear at this point, perhaps even to the SEIU tops led by Mary Kay Henry. It will doubtless include legal challenges to franchise operations, local minimum wage ordinances, promoting "worker centers," and eventually (they hope) signing up lots of dues-paying members.

That the union bureaucracy is making a serious push is clear. A recent article ("Fight for 15 Confidential," *In These Times*, 11 November) by Arun Gupta based on interviews with a number of low-wage organizers and reviewing "hundreds of pages of internal documents from the campaign," reports that the SEIU poured some \$3 million into the coffers of Action Now in Chicago (another former ACORN affiliate), as well as \$2.5 million to NYCC in New York and millions more to public relations firms including Purpose, M+R Strategic Services and BerlinRosen for help with "branding," a social media campaign and communications strategies. If this sounds like some corporate operation, that's no accident: that's how SEIU operates.

For now, what the SEIU tops are after is grabbing market share so that they dominate the low-wage organizing field. In the past their typical strategy has been to pressure employers to agree to "neutrality pacts" to let the union sign up members, and then to negotiate contracts with few benefits and (of course) an iron-clad no-strike clause. In the case of fast-food workers, they have preferred to work through NGOs and worker centers rather than unions, arguing (as do various would-be leftists) that this is a way of getting around the spider's web of anti-labor laws. But once they have a dues base solidified, they will submit to those very laws which the bureaucrats hide behind in order to stave off membership demands for militant action.

It's a whole bureaucratic operation. Gupta's article quotes a number of low-wage organizers detailing how "At the shop level we control the messaging, we control the tactics, we decide what we want to organize around, we motivate the strikers.... If it's been decided at some level that there will be an action on a given day, then it's going to happen. It's just a question of going through the motions of getting people to come to the decisions that they want them to." A call



Internationalist photo

On December 5, two dozen Domino's delivery workers at a pizza outlet in Upper Manhattan left work to demonstrate for a higher minimum wage. When two days later the boss fired a worker, the others stood with him. Supporters from the community, labor activists and others including the Internationalist Group joined nightly protests of up to 200 picketers at the store (above, December 10). Even as Democratic Party city council members and legislators took up the issue, the IG insisted that the Democrats are enemies, not "friends of labor." Under pressure from the state for paying sub-minimum wage, the owner finally gave in and reinstated the fired workers.

for a national "strike" on August 29 was launched at a mid-August convention in Detroit of 700 workers, organizers and staff where they held a stage-managed vote with little or no prior discussion before the event. Workers democracy it ain't.

Some of the organizers have become disillusioned with the rigid top-down control, and worry about what the ultimate outcome is to be. This is also echoed by some on the left who have been involved in the organizing but are a bit queasy about the methods. Big surprise: the SEIU are past masters of bureaucratic class collaboration. Whatever the specifics, any organization they build will not be subject to rank-and-file control. But this critique is insufficient. The bottom line is that *to wage a genuine and potentially successful struggle against poverty wages, it is necessary not only to have union democracy but also its prerequisites: total independence from the capitalists, the capitalist parties and the capitalist state.*

The sorry state of trade unions in the U.S. is not due so much to anti-labor laws as to the unwillingness of union leaders to defy the bosses' legality. *The policy of the labor fakers is class collaboration as opposed to class struggle.* A main reason that grocery unions have not been able to organize upscale non-union outfits is that new hires in non-unionized stores like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's make upwards of \$2 an hour more than those in unionized supermarkets, where they typically start out at the minimum wage and hardly rise from there. Meanwhile, the unions (RWDSU/UFCW) backed the 2012 buyout of A&P even as it

closed stores, because the new owner, billionaire private equity investor Ron Burkle, is a big Democratic Party donor.

At a demonstration outside a Wendy's restaurant on Fulton Street in Brooklyn this morning, protesters chanted "we are the mighty, mighty workers" and "union power." But to mobilize that power, and to wage a serious fight against poverty wages, it is necessary to drive the pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats out of the unions. And while the SEIU, UFCW and NGO officials treat the few low-wage workers they have attracted as props or movie extras to be bussed in for crowd scenes in their media productions, unionizing fast-food workers will take real strike action that requires developing worker cadres with the skills, consciousness and political program to wage a bitter fight against a powerful class enemy.

As the momentum has built up in the fast-food campaign, several reformist left groups have sought to get in on the action, some signing up as organizers. Experiencing the heavy hand of the SEIU/NGO operation has led to some public controversy, notably among supporters of the International Socialist Organization, with some agonizing over the effect on the workers while others side with the bureaucrats to the point of opposing a rank-and-file caucus (see "Assessing the Fight for 15," *Socialist Worker*, 9 September). But mild critics and bureaucratic apologists alike will find that once the media operation is over they will be discarded "like squeezed lemons," with only the hard-core Democratic Party loyalists making it onto the payroll.

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De Blasio...

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What turned the mayoral race around by all accounts, and what distinguished de Blasio from the other Democratic contenders, was his TV ad against “stop and frisk” featuring his son Dante. While the media chatter is all about his (now presidentially sanctioned) afro hairstyle, what grabbed people is that they could see that Dante was precisely the kind of young black man that the cops would go after. The victims of racist stop and frisk were no longer nameless and faceless. Meanwhile, most of other Democrats were tiptoeing around the issue, talking of modifying it. The only Democratic candidate who actually said he would stop “stop and frisk” was John Liu, but he tripped up over a campaign finance scandal.

The fact is that Bill de Blasio is NOT, repeat NOT, calling to end the policy of cops wantonly stopping black and Latino young men on the street. Instead, he explicitly says “Stop and frisk is a valid police tool.” His platform only calls for “meaningful stop-and-frisk reforms.” Meaning what, exactly? Meaning that he will sign a City Council bill against racial profiling and call on the NYPD to “reduce unwarranted stops.” Yet the job of the police is to enforce racist “law and order.” In fact, the entire policy is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution banning “unreasonable searches and seizures.” Any serious opponent of racism and defender civil liberties must demand an *end to all random police stops and entrapment*.

The question of the police is a perfect example of what the Democratic candidate actually stands for. He calls for “community policing,” “focused deterrence” and for “increasing the number of Argus cameras — particularly in high-crime areas in the outer boroughs.” So he wants to blanket the projects in East New York or the South Bronx with police surveillance cameras like they have done to Lower Manhattan. De Blasio praises his role in enacting the “Safe Streets, Safe City” initiative in the Dinkins administration which “significantly expanded the number of NYPD officers on the streets,” and calls for putting *500 more cops* on the streets today by taking them off of civilian duties. This is a program for more focused racist repression, not to end it.

Similarly with de Blasio’s education policies. He does NOT call for an end to privately run “charter” schools or to school closures, only for a temporary pause (moratorium) and opposing “unfair” shutdowns. He calls for charging rent to charters “co-located” in public schools, and for “increasing parental engagement and communication in the co-location process,” instead of opposing and undoing this practice which has caused endless disruption in the service of a program of privatizing public education. So after holding off awhile and paying a token lease, Eva Moskowitz and her ilk will still be able to go about their wrecking operation on the public schools.

In fact, the future Democratic *mayor supports mayoral control* which has done so much damage to New York City’s public schools; he only spouts empty phrases about “involving and listening to parents.” Meaning what, exactly? Meaning he would “allow Community Education Councils an advisory vote on major school utilization changes” and to “provide insight to the Panel for Edu-

cation Policy (PEP).” Big deal. Those of us who defend public education in the interests of working people *oppose mayoral control lock, stock and barrel*, we call for *abolition of the puppet PEP* and for the *schools to be governed by councils of teachers, students, parents and workers*, which would decide on such issues as school closures.

De Blasio recognizes that “unfair suspensions and arrests to solve minor student behavior” are used to “disproportionately hurt students of color and students with disabilities.” But what is his answer? A “Graduated Response Protocol” prior to arrests. So students will still be marched out of school in handcuffs, the police will just “conference” with principals first. The CSEW demands: *cops out of the schools*. De Blasio calls to “improve school transportation,” but he doesn’t say a word about the Bloomberg administration bidding criteria aimed at breaking the school bus workers’ union and replacing qualified drivers and matrons. The CSEW (unlike the reformist oppositions in the UFT) went all out to support the school bus workers strike earlier this year.

Sure, Democrat de Blasio wants universal pre-K, as do Democratic president Obama and Democratic governor Cuomo. Sure, but hardly cutting-edge: ever since Head Start was begun in the 1960s it has been shown that pre-school programs have a major impact on education. He wants school breakfasts more available. Of course — it’s hard for students to learn when they’re hungry. Against bullying and for more after-school programs. Fine, but all this is to sidestep the fact that *there is a war on public education, against teachers and against teacher unions, and that war is being spearheaded by the Democratic Party, from Barack Obama on down*.

As a loyal Democrat, a Mayor de Blasio will carry out that war. He will enforce “the new teacher evaluations mandated by the state,” which have nothing to do with improving education and everything to do with driving out union-conscious experienced teachers. Far from opposing the privatization of public education, he wants to develop “a minimum of 100 community schools” based on the model of Harlem Children’s Zone, the charter run by millionaire Geoffrey Canada. He wants to connect technical high schools to a college, industry or business. This is Obama’s campaign for corporate takeovers of schools, by Microsoft, Motorola and Verizon in Chicago, and by the IBM-connected P-Tech that gutted Paul Robeson HS in Crown Heights.

Contrary to portrayals of de Blasio as a “liberal firebrand” (*New York Times*), a theme which plays well in liberal New York, de Blasio is basically a “mainstream” Clinton Democrat (he was an official in the Housing and Urban Development Department under Bill’s administration and managed Hillary’s Senate campaign in New York). Along with his populist rhetoric, he has been cozy with real estate developers, notably Bruce Ratner, who co-hosted de Blasio’s 50th birthday fundraiser party and who has yet to build any of the promised affordable housing in the Atlantic Yards boondoggle backed by de Blasio.

Since the primary, de Blasio has been assiduously appealing to business tycoons, saying finance is New York’s “hometown industry.” He had a private sit-down with media moguls Murdoch and Zuckerman, as well as with the heads of Goldman Sachs,

Viacom and other top-tier Wall Streeters. And according to the *Wall Street Journal*, de Blasio has raked in far more in campaign contributions from big-ticket donors (\$4.2 million) than has Lhota (\$1.3 million).

Meanwhile, New York City public employee unions are all pushing to “back Bill.” Almost all their contracts have run out, as Bloomberg’s City Hall dragged its feet (and union leaders preferred to wait for the successor to the labor-hating mayor). The powerful Transport Workers Union Local 100 demonstrated October 29 several thousand strong for a new contract, and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) is gearing up its phone-banking operations to get out the vote next week. But as de Blasio poses as the classic “friend of labor” Democrat, even he is saying that there is no way the unions will get full retroactive pay hikes.

As for opposition currents in the unions, an October 25 posting on the ICE (Independent Community of Educators) blog asks, “Is There Room For Optimism Under de Blasio?” Its answer is that a letter from the Democratic candidate to Bloomberg’s puppet PEP calling for a moratorium on school co-locations and closures, “is cause for a little optimism.” An earlier post (“No Tale of Two de Blasios,” 6 October) argued that “The odds of a sell out will increase significantly if we do nothing and just sit back and wait for de Blasio to do right by the public schools.” Since the Democratic soon-to-be mayor supports mayoral control, it called for recommending that he name “strong public education activists” for the toothless PEP. Talk about putting lipstick on a pig!

At a special UFT Delegate Assembly in September on endorsement of a mayoral candidate following the Democratic primary, Marjorie Stamberg, a delegate from District 79 who is an activist of Class Struggle Education Workers, sought to speak against endorsing Democrat de Blasio and to call for a workers party. In the past she has several times called to oppose any candidate with “D” or an “R” after their name on the ballot, or indeed any capitalist candidate. But in flagrant violation of Robert’s Rules of Order, UFT president Michael Mulgrew refused to allow any opposition speaker, and the motion was rammed through, with delegates of the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) either voting for it or sitting on their hands.

The massive discontent in the ranks of labor and among the poor and working people which has fueled the outpouring of support for de Blasio, as happened before with the election of black Democrat Barack Obama in 2008, will inevitably be frustrated. The reason is simple: the war on the unions, on immigrants, on hard-hit African American, Latino and Asian populations in the U.S. are the result not of a policy or even a party, but of the decaying capitalist system, as are the imperialist wars waged by the U.S. in the Middle East. To confront this onslaught, no amount of tinkering or tweaking or “triangulating” by supposedly “progressive” capitalist politicians will make a damn bit of difference.

We need a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government, and we need it now! ■

For further information: E-mail
cs_edworkers@hotmail.com

Visit the CSEW web page:
<http://edworkersunite.blogspot.com>

Poverty Wages...

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An example of a successful campaign to unionize low-wage workers was the struggle at the Hot and Crusty bakery/restaurant on Manhattan’s Upper East Side last year, in which the Internationalist Group and CUNY Internationalist Clubs actively participated. Two months of picketing resulted in a contract with union control of hiring, something almost unheard of in recent years although it was key to building strong unions in formerly low-wage industries like dock workers and the construction trades. Key to victory at Hot and Crusty, even on a small scale, was determination to hold out on the picket line for weeks on end, not relying on the capitalist state or politicians, and bringing out broad labor support. (See “Hot and Crusty Workers Win With Groundbreaking Contract,” *The Internationalist*, December 2012 and other articles at www.internationalist.org.)

Giant corporations like Walmart, McDonald’s and the other wage-gougers are not going to become model “corporate citizens” just because a well-funded labor outfit launches a flashy media campaign. Their entire profits and the entire capitalist system are based on merciless exploitation of working people. Who’s going to pay for the luxury \$35 million luxury Bombardier corporate jet that McDonald’s just bought if not the wage slaves sweating for the minimum wage in its kitchens? The present campaign aims at installing a bureaucracy to keep “labor peace” for the bosses, and that will be so whether the bureaucrats are former Occupy Wall Streeters or seasoned SEIU operatives.

At this morning’s demo outside Wendy’s in Brooklyn, workers chanted, “We can’t survive on \$7.25,” the national minimum wage which is also the minimum in NYC, one of the most expensive cities in the country. Several protesters, added “We can’t survive on \$8.25,” on \$9.25, on \$10.25, and kept on going. They’re right. No nickel-and-dime, penny-ante increase in the minimum wage will do. The only road to actually breaking the cycle of poverty, racism and endless war that is inherent in capitalism is for those organizing low-wage workers to put forward a program of militant class struggle, breaking with the Democrats to form a revolutionary workers party.

Such a program must not limit itself to wages but must take up all the forms of oppression we face. Women are a majority of low-wage and part-time workers, and a large number are single moms. A real fight to defend them must include demands for free, 24-hour daycare. Also, most employees of fast food restaurants are African American, Latino and Asian workers who also face racist repression, like the notorious “stop and frisk” practices of the NYPD. Instead of talking of “reforming” this racist profiling, as mayor-elect de Blasio does, class-struggle militants call for workers mobilization to put an end to “stop and frisk” once and for all.

For the large number of undocumented workers trapped in low-wage jobs, a key demand is for full citizenship rights for all immigrants: everyone should have the same rights. And as U.S. imperialism under commander in chief Obama continues its wars around the world, working-class internationalists fight to defeat the war on working people, “at home” and abroad, through international socialist revolution. A tall order, but it’s the only road. ■

Top Local Democrats Back Kshama Sawant

“Socialist” Elected in Seattle on Platform of Liberal/Populist Reforms

In November, voters in Seattle, Washington elected Kshama Sawant, candidate of Socialist Alternative (SAlt), to an at-large seat on the City Council, preferring her to Richard Colin, the incumbent Democrat who had held the post for 16 years. The bulk of the left cheered in unison. Socialist Action (November 20) declared that, despite differences, Sawant’s election was “as an important victory for the entire socialist movement.” The International Socialist Organization (December 11) saw it as a harbinger of “The electoral opening for the left.” And, naturally, Socialist Alternative (November 20) was ecstatic, headlining an article on their website, “Victory for Socialist in Seattle! – ‘Earth-shattering consequences’ in the US and internationally.”

Curiously, though, the capitalist rulers didn’t feel the ground crumbling under their feet. For all the considerable national media attention, the big business press was remarkably nonchalant about the victory for a nominally Marxist, socialist working-class party. The monopoly *Seattle Times* (26 November) which endorsed her opponent, carried a sympathetic profile of councilor-elect Sawant, quoting her colleagues-to-be, all Democrats, voicing hopeful anticipation of her role on the City Council. “Councilmember Mike O’Brien said adding Sawant to the council means he and other members can be more aggressive passing liberal legislation.” So Sawant’s presence will help pusillanimous Democratic “progressives” screw up their courage!

How does one explain the bourgeois media and politicians’ equanimous reaction? Sawant did not hide her party affiliation in this nominally “non-partisan” race. But Seattle’s “politically potent alternative weekly,” *The Stranger*, marketed to the younger, hipper audience of middle-class café-dwellers, noted in endorsing her that, “Despite her ‘Socialist Alternative’ label, there isn’t anything particularly radical about the core of Sawant’s progressive agenda.” They got that right. Sawant campaigned on a straight liberal/populist program. Her platform was hardly to the left of candidates of the Green Party, a minor capitalist party, which endorsed her, as did the local “Progressive Party,” whose hero is Teddy Roosevelt, the racist butcher of the Philippines.

Sawant’s campaign protested *The Stranger*’s evaluation, while trumpeting its endorsement: “Sawant’s campaign is radical in that it is a direct challenge to the Democratic Party,” it wrote in an August 2 statement. It would be hard not to be, since there was no Republican candidate. But her most prominent campaign issue, the \$15 per hour minimum wage, was endorsed by both major (Democratic) mayoral candidates, the incumbent Mike McGinn, and his victorious challenger, state senator Ed Murray. In fact, Sawant underbid the Greens who have called for a \$16.50 minimum wage while arguing – like many “mainstream” economists – that “enacting a liveable wage would boost the [capitalist] economy.”

What about the rest of Sawant’s platform? The other two key planks were “a rent control ordinance to make housing affordable, and a tax on millionaires to fund transit, education, and other public services” (“How a Socialist Candidate Won an Election in Seattle,” *Socialist Alternative*, 22 November). Rent control is hardly a socialist demand: it was begun by Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II, and continued since then in New York, which has tens of thousands of homeless. A number of California cities (San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, Berkeley and others) likewise have rent stabilization regulations. As for a “tax on millionaires,” this is the bread-and-butter of Democratic liberals to give a populist veneer to their capitalist politics.

In fact, the most prominent candidate who campaigned for a “millionaire’s tax” in the November elections was New York City’s mayor-elect, Democrat Bill de Blasio. Sawant’s election has been linked by various liberal commentators to de Blasio’s victory (see “Kshama Sawant’s City Council victory reflects broad trends,” in *The Nation*, 16 December). The would-be socialists also saw the parallels: the ISO (December 16) wrote that “De Blasio ... ran a campaign that successfully painted him as a populist-challenger to the pro-Wall Street agenda of previous administrations.” And SAlt (November 22) headlined, “De Blasio Campaign in New York Creates Huge Expectations – Millions are Looking for a Left Alternative.”

The election of both Sawant and de Blasio has been portrayed as “the Occupy movement goes to the polls.” Of course, the ISO, SAlt et al. argued that de Blasio would turn his back on his campaign themes once in office. But the fact is that the liberal Democrat and the “democratic socialist” campaigned on similar themes. In fact, SAlt’s “how to” article on the election win highlighted the importance of “Democrats for Sawant.” This outfit included the former treasurer of the local Democratic Party who said, “Kshama Sawant’s positions on issues are far closer to King County Democrats than Richard Conlin’s actual record.” Another of the Democratic Party “activists” supporting Sawant was the former chairman of the King County Democrats.

The fact that the “socialist” candidate could garner support of a segment of the Democratic Party officialdom reflects the fact that Socialist Alternative – like Socialist Action, the International Socialist Organization and the other left groups supporting her candidacy – are reformist social democrats who support the capitalist system. They just want to throw in a few reforms to make it a little more “people friendly.” When they talk of socialism they mean a social-democratic “welfare state” on the European post-World War II model, with “public ownership” of various industries and utilities. They have no intention of carrying out a socialist revolution to bring down the capitalist state – their ambition is to administer it.

This is brought to the fore over the issue



Ted S. Warren/AP

Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative candidate elected to Seattle city council.

of the police. In the fine print of Sawant’s election fliers there is a call to “build a mass movement against police brutality and racial profiling,” and to “create an elected civil review board with full powers over the police.” No mention of the position of Socialist Alternative and its international organization, the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), that police, the armed fist of the capitalist state that unions confront on the picket lines, are supposedly fellow workers (see “Her Majesty’s Social Democrats in Bed with the Police,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009). Tell that to the Occupy Wall Street activists who were pepper-sprayed, beaten and their homes searched by the Seattle Police Department.

As for civilian review boards, these exist in various places with no effect whatsoever such as New York City, the “stop and frisk” capital of the U.S., or the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, where a BART cop shot Oscar Grant in cold blood. The idea that the capitalist ruling class would allow its racist enforcers to be subject to genuine “democratic control” by their victims is a deadly illusion. Even where police chiefs are supposedly elected, this guarantees nothing. The infamous immigrant-hunting Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Maricopa County, Arizona has been elected five times by popular vote. No civilian review board would stop the SPD from murdering native American woodcarver John Williams or strangling and beating African American Leo Etherly.

Sawant’s platform also calls for the Seattle City Council to “campaign for immediate, unconditional citizenship rights for all undocumented immigrants.” This could be a step forward, but full citizenship rights won’t be enacted by a city ordinance. It will require a tumultuous class struggle led by a workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed. In contrast, SAlt has for many years acted as cheerleaders for Ralph Nader, a virulent nationalist immigrant-basher who told the *American Conservative* (21 June 2004) that he opposed legalization. Moreover, SAlt’s co-thinkers in England were in the leadership of a chauvinist

strike at an oil refinery where hundreds of workers demanded “British Jobs for British Workers.”

Sawant received a fair amount of labor support, including endorsements from AFT Local 1789 at Seattle Central Community College where she teaches economics; from AFSCME Council 28 of Washington state employees; from IBEW Local 46 electrical workers, and from a number of Seattle-area union officials. Of course, endorsements by labor bureaucrats, who generally support the Democrats, don’t indicate a radical program. But a video of Sawant speaking to a November 18 rally of Machinists at Boeing has been billed as a call for workers to seize the plants. Not so. What she actually called for is for “Boeing to be under democratic public ownership by workers, by the community.” That is something quite different from workers control.

An article on the Sawant campaign’s web site, “Why Socialism,” calls for “taking the top 500 corporations that dominate our economy ... into public ownership and placing them under the democratic control of elected representatives of workers, consumers, and the community at large.” It argues, “We already have some essential industries that are publicly owned under capitalism that provide a glimpse of how socialism could work.” Actually, not. Under capitalism, nationalized industries are still subject to the laws of the market, and the dictates of capitalist governments. The National Health Service in Britain was never really socialized medicine, and under both Labour and Conservative administration its services have been slashed.

Socialist Alternative’s equation of “public ownership” of top corporations with socialism is not some local aberration. SAlt’s mentor, Peter Taaffe, leader of the CWI and of the Socialist Party in Britain, wrote in his treatise on *The State* (1983): “If the next Labour government introduced an Enabling Bill into Parliament to nationalise the 200 monopolies, banks and insurance companies.... A peaceful socialist transformation of society, would be entirely

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Free Abortion on Demand!

Ecuador: Populist President Correa Attacks Women's Right to Abortion

20 DECEMBER 2013 – There is an onslaught against women's right to abortion underway, extending from the U.S. to Central and South America. This is notably the case in Nicaragua, El Salvador and now Ecuador, all three countries under supposedly leftist governments: the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the PAÍS (Proud and Sovereign Fatherland) Alliance respectively. Like the international drive to privatize public education, this offensive against women cannot be viewed as an isolated case in each country. Even more grotesque is the fact that it is not right-wing governments who are spearheading this concerted attack against women, but rather governments that claim to be "progressive."

Case in point, Ecuador's president Rafael Correa, a bourgeois populist who came to office in 2007 and was just reelected for a third term: claiming to lead a "civic revolution" of nationalist policies and social reforms,¹ Correa recently let loose a tirade to squelch any talk of reform on abortion. "Let them say what they want, but I will never legalize abortion," he thundered, accusing women legislators from his PAÍS Alliance of "disloyalty" and "treason" for proposing to permit abortion in cases of rape. If they persisted, he threatened to resign as president, and even after they backed down, the authoritarian leader who describes himself as a "humanist, Catholic and leftist" demanded that the deputies be sanctioned and possibly thrown out of office.

Correa's virulent opposition to legalization of abortion was immediately saluted by some of the most reactionary forces. The head of Ecuador's Episcopal Conference, Monsignor Antonio Arregui, hailed the president's vituperation against abortion, in particular the "courage and nobility in the

¹ See "Civic Revolution or Workers Revolution? Ecuador Needs a Workers, Peasants and Indian Government," *The Internationalist* (December 2007)

way he expressed himself." The Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco, promoting the legacy of the ultra-rightist Catholic nationalist and misogynist Spanish dictator, joined the chorus of praise. The fact that Correa was not alone among "leftist" nationalists in the region, was not lost on the imperialist press. The Madrid daily *El País* (26 October 2013) headlined an article, "The Pious Left of Latin America."

Against this unholy alliance of right and "left" against women's rights, the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International call for the *repeal of all laws penalizing or restricting abortion*, and fight for *free abortion on demand*, in safe, high-quality medical facilities. Whether to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is for the woman, and her alone, to decide, for it is her body and she will bear the consequences. *Bishops and capitalist politicians, hands off! We call to defend abortion clinics* and to mobilize against the reactionary bigots who would endanger and ruin the lives of women (and even murder abortion providers) in the name of the "right to life" of an embryo or fetus, which is not a separate being but a developing organism that is biologically united with and dependent on the woman.

The issue of the right to abortion in Ecuador is quite concrete: according to the World Health Organization and the national Health Ministry, an estimated 125,000 abortions are performed annually in the country – 350 a day in a country of 15 million people. Complications due to clandestine abortions are the third most frequent cause of death for women. In a recent study of 18,000 Ecuadorian homes by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) and the Ministry of the Interior, one out of four women aged 15 and above have experienced sexual abuse, and six out of ten women have suffered domestic abuse. Hospitals report that they receive around 20,000 to 30,000 women each year due to complications from



Women's rights activists form "red carpet" in front of Ecuador's Legislative Assembly on September 27 demanding decriminalization of abortion.

back-alley abortions.

Since 1971, the Penal Code of Ecuador has stipulated, under Sections 441-447 of Article 149, that abortion can be legal only in cases where the life of the woman is seriously endangered and for rape victims who are mentally impaired. Otherwise, under current law any medical personnel performing the abortion face two to five years jail, and the woman could be imprisoned for one to five years.

The current session of the legislative assembly has been devoted to Correa's project for a global overhaul of Ecuador's criminal laws. Among the proposals of the COIP (Integral Organic Penal Code) was a new Article 150, which would sanction medical professionals in *all* cases that involve terminating a pregnancy. In response, on October 10 Alianza País (AP) legislator Soledad Buendía appealed for the decriminalization of abortion in cases of rape. Another AP assemblywoman, Paola Pabón, proposed a motion to permit abortion during the first trimester (12 weeks) in the case of a victim of rape, and to reject the proposed Article 150. As they spoke, activists of the Front for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights demonstrated outside.

Around 7 p.m., the Assembly took a short recess. However, that then led to tabling the motion until the next day, and later that night President Correa went live on Oramar TV with his diatribe:

"When they talk of decriminalizing abortion, the constitution clearly says to the contrary, defend life beginning with conception. Anything that goes against that is simply treason.... I will never approve the decriminalization of abortion beyond what's in the current law. What's more, if these betrayals and disloyalty continue ... I will resign from office."

Along with the praise of Archbishop Arregui of Guayaquil, Guillermo Lasso, leader of the right-wing bourgeois opposition

CREO, chimed in with his total support for the president. Reeling under the blowback, the next day in the Legislative Assembly, Paola Pabón capitulated. In her speech of surrender, after first saying to Correa that "with the immense affection we have for you, we say that this time you are wrong," she continued: "to maintain the unity of this parliamentary fraction [of the AP] ... I withdraw my motion."

Not content with forcing the withdrawal of the motion, "tough guy" Correa insisted that the AP sanction Pabón, Soledad Buendía and Gina Godoy. And in fact, the three assemblywomen were suspended from their posts for the entire month of November for daring to propose even this extremely limited liberalization of laws against abortion. While this public humiliation of the women lawmakers had an unmistakable male chauvinist tone, it also reflected the increasingly authoritarian character of Correa's presidency, in which all manner of left-wing dissent is subjected to state repression.

Criminalization of Social Protest in Correa's Ecuador

Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa gained a certain reputation as a champion of liberty earlier this year in hinting at the possibility of granting asylum to Edward Snowden, the whistleblower who revealed the massive spying on civilians by the U.S. National Security Agency. Correa has also celebrated the 2008 Constitution he sponsored as an example of "participatory democracy." Yet on the day the Constituent Assembly that wrote the Constitution opened, Correa's government unleashed a brutal assault on the Amazonian parish of Dayuma where indigenous rebels had the temerity to block a road, shutting down oil production. That pattern, of spouting democratic rhetoric while repressing social protest, has continued ever since.



Ecuador's president Rafael Correa with Catholic pope Francis, ferocious opponents of abortion. It is the woman's right: *politicians and clerics, hands off!*

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!



Internationalist demonstrators outside Salvadoran consulate in New York, June 5, protesting refusal to permit therapeutic abortion for “Beatriz.”

The authoritarian actions by the populist Correa have escalated sharply in his third term, after winning the February presidential election in a landslide (57%). In June, the *summus pontifex* of the Andean republic launched his offensive against independent movements of workers, peasants, Indians and leftists with presidential Decree 016. Their membership, finances, statutes and political statements would henceforth be subject to state control. Under this decree, labor unions are now banned from making political statements or supporting candidates. Likewise for indigenous groups, so that the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) is now forbidden to work with the bourgeois political party, Pachakutik, it spawned.

This imposition of state tutelage of all social movements was then backed up by heavy-duty judicial repression, accusing leftists of “terrorism” and “sabotage.” Last year Pachakutik legislator Pepe Acacho and Shuar Indian leader Pedro Mashiant were sentenced to 12 years in prison on these trumped-up charges for leading a 2009 protest in which a Shuar professor was killed in a clash with the police. Another Pachakutik deputy, Cléver Jiménez, was sentenced to 18 months in jail along with two union leaders under Article 494 of the penal code ordering imprisonment for those who insult or falsely accuse government authorities. Even high school students have been arrested for protesting.

The Struggle for the Liberation of Women

In the end, the reform of the Ecuadoran penal code was approved by the National Assembly on December 17. The proposed Article 150, which would have punished medical professionals for performing any abortion whatsoever, was dropped. But the previous law banning more than 99% of all abortions was maintained, with slight modifications. Even as opinion polls show two-thirds of the public supporting the right to abortion in case of rape, the legislators refused to permit abortions even in the case of girls age 14 and under. This defeat for women’s rights was the result of submission to the dictates of the president and the bourgeois parties.

Not only did the Alianza PAÍS legislators capitulate before Correa’s threats, so did much of the supposedly socialist left. Demonstrating outside the National Assembly as the issue was being debated, a spokeswoman for the Juventud Comunista del Ecuador (JCE), called for permitting abortions for young girls, “but she made clear that it [the movement] would continue to support the government program focusing

on improving social, educational and living conditions through dialogue” (*El Telégrafo* [Guayaquil], 14 December 2013). Some “dialogue”! Anyone who dissents from the president’s line is accused of “treason,” and those who protest in the streets against it are jailed for “terrorism” and “sabotage”!

The Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista del Ecuador (PCMLE) supported the call for “decriminalization of abortion, for which women’s organizations and left-wing political groups have fought for decades” (*En Marcha*, 1 November 2013). That is interesting coming from a party that displays on the front page of its newspaper an effigy of Stalin, who in 1936 outlawed abortion, reversing the Bolshevik legacy.² The PCMLE may even call to “Defeat Capitalist Rule to Achieve Women’s Liberation” (*En Marcha*, 4 March 2011). But as arch-Stalinists, it poses the issue essentially as one of democratic rights, without going to the roots of female social inequality in the family. (It is also practically silent on the issue of homosexual rights.)

The pioneer socialist Charles Fourier declared that the degree of emancipation of women is a key measure of the degree of social progress in a society. Already in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), the founders of modern communism spoke of the abolition (*Aufhebung*), or superseding of the family in order to “do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.” Friedrich Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), traced women’s oppression to the rise of class society, in which the institution of the family arose in order to transmit property, turning the woman into the property of her master. Recognizing this, the victorious Bolsheviks championed the emancipation of women from domestic slavery.

In Latin America today, abortion is still banned in almost all instances except for Cuba and, with restrictions, a few other places (Guyana, Puerto Rico and recently Uruguay and Mexico City). As we have stressed before, while the right to abortion is a democratic right it will not be made a reality for all women without hard class struggle leading to a socialist revolution. The opposition of Rafael Correa and other “left-wing” populists to women’s reproductive rights is part of their support for capitalism, despite all their phony rhetoric about introducing “21st century socialism” without expropriating capital. As Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin noted in his article “Soviet Power and the Status of Women” (1919):

² See Leon Trotsky, “Thermidor in the Family,” in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

Defend South Korean Workers Against Anti-Union Repression

Ever since coming to office a year ago after elections that were heavily manipulated by South Korea’s military/police apparatus, the government of Park Geun-hye has sharply stepped up repression against its perceived opponents. The president, daughter of the former dictator Park Chung-hee who ruled South Korea with an iron hand from 1961 to 1979, has taken particular aim at South Korea’s militant trade unions.

In late October, the government outlawed the Korean Teachers Union (KTU) on the grounds that it refused to expel members who had been dismissed by the authorities. Then when the Korean Railway Workers Union (KRWU) struck against threatened privatization of the the national KORAIL system at the beginning of December, the Park government went after the union with a vengeance.

Some 500 strikebreakers were hired by KORAIL, all strikers (over 8,000 workers) were fired, and on December 17 police conducted a “search and seizure” operation at KRWU offices in the capital, Seoul. Five days later, 4,000 police were mobilized to storm the headquarters of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) seeking to arrest the leaders of the KRWU.

The KCTU responded with a call for a general strike beginning on December 28. On that day more than 100,000 workers and opponents of the authoritarian government rallied in Seoul and other major cities. Hundreds of students joined in, as did 500 KTU members. However, the next day the KRWU called off the rail strike, at 22 days by far the longest in South Korea’s history.

In the U.S., a solidarity rally was

called in the San Francisco Bay Area on December 28 by the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee and supported by a number of reformist left groups as well as by the Doro-Chiba rail union in Japan. The TWSC demanded immediate release of jailed unionists, reinstating strikers, halting privatization of the rail system and for the resignation of the Park government.

To be replaced by what, exactly? In effect this was a call for a general strike to put in a government of the bourgeois opposition, the Democratic Party (DP) and Unified Progressive Party (UPP). But replacing one capitalist government by another will not put an end to strikebreaking and anti-labor repression. The TWSC also called for “a working class party that represents their political interests.”

But South Korea already had the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), which in 2011 folded into the UPP. And what about North Korea, an inescapable issue on the divided peninsula, one which split the DLP? South Korean workers don’t need another reformist labor party but a workers party that fights for revolutionary reunification of Korea through socialist revolution in the capitalist South and workers political revolution in bureaucratically deformed workers state in the North.

The fact that even a general strike was not enough to win the Korean railway workers’ struggle underscores that today simple trade-unionism, no matter how militant, is incapable of winning gains from a decaying and increasingly repressive capitalist system. Workers need a leadership based on a program of revolutionary class struggle.

“In words, bourgeois democracy promises equality and liberty. In fact, not a single bourgeois republic, not even the most advanced one, has given the feminine half of the human race either full legal equality with men or freedom from the guardianship and oppression of men... Bourgeois democracy is democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, exuberant promises and the high sounding slogans of freedom and equality.”

Marxists understand that under capitalism, the system of private property and production for profit places severe limits to genuine social equality of women. As we noted in an article in defense of a young woman, “Beatriz,” denied the right to a therapeutic abortion in El Salvador: “It is no coincidence that the first country to legalize abortion was Soviet Russia, in 1920, as a result of the October Revolution.” In fact, the Bolsheviks introduced “free abortion on demand,” just as the League for the Fourth International calls for today. We noted that “the oppression of women will not be abolished by mere legislative reforms,” and raised a working-class program pointing to the need for a socialist revolution, including demands for:

- Free, 24-hour day care centers;
 - Equal pay for equal work;
 - Separation of church and state;
 - Unrestricted right to divorce;
 - Full rights for homosexuals, and against interference of the state in consensual sexual relations;
 - Abolition of all obstacles, legal or de facto, preventing access to skilled jobs;
 - Socialization of household work;
 - Free, high-quality socialized medicine.
- “Down with El Salvador’s Abortion Ban!” *The Internationalist* (June 2013)

Just as the fight for decriminalization of abortion is linked to the struggle against the repressive policies of the Correa government, the struggle for women’s liberation cannot be separated from the broader struggle against the social oppression engendered by capitalism. In Ecuador, women workers, indigenous women and Afro-Ecuadorian women will be key leaders of socialist revolution. Women fighters for the oppressed have played a key role throughout the history of Ecuador, particularly in the struggles of the indigenous peoples. Manuela León led the December 1871 revolt in Yaruquies, Chimborazo while Juana Calcan led an uprising in 1899 in Pesillo in northern Ecuador with her infant daughter Lucia Lechón on her back.³

In the 20th century, Dolores Cuacuango was an organizer of the peasant unions of Cayambe, founder of the Ecuadorian Indian Federation (FEI), a pioneer of bilingual indigenous education, a leading fighter for women’s rights and a leader of the Communist Party, as well as a champion of equality for black and mixed-race Ecuadorians. As Trotskyists, we fight for the program of *permanent revolution* to emancipate the working class and all the oppressed, including poor peasants, indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians, fighting for a *workers, peasants and Indian government* to begin the socialist revolution. Particularly today, with one-tenth of Ecuador’s population forced to emigrate, that revolution can only be completed on an international scale.

For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! ■

³ Marc Becker, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador’s Modern Indigenous Movements* (2008)

No Justice in the Racist Capitalist System

Workers Revolution Will Avenge Trayvon Martin

The following article is abbreviated from the full text, which is available on the Internet at www.internationalist.org.

JULY 2013 – The image of Trayvon Martin in his hoodie will remain forever etched in the memory of this generation of youth and many others – as were Emmett Till and Medgar Evers for earlier generations – as the symbol of unrelenting racist terror in America. We will never forget how Trayvon was lynched by a bigoted, hate-filled vigilante, for the “crime” of *walking while black*. And then again in the courts where prosecution, defense, judge and jury worked together to produce a *legal lynching*.

“The whole damn system is guilty” chant demonstrators at protests around the country. Damn right, and that system is *capitalism*. As capitalist politicians seek to exploit his memory to push their reactionary agendas, Trayvon’s legacy to us is the challenge to bury this inhuman regime that produces endless poverty, racism and war. We the working people and oppressed, without whose labor the system could not function, are its gravediggers. Our task is to fight for *workers revolution to avenge Trayvon and all the victims of racist terror*.

When Trayvon Martin was murdered in Sanford, Florida in February 2012 at the age of 17 by racist vigilante and wannabe cop George Zimmerman, a wave of anger swept the country as millions expressed their outrage. Black families felt a cold chill, fearing that their son or brother could be next to die. Then, when Zimmerman was declared “not



“We are all Trayvon Martin!” Demonstrators march in Harlem, July 14, to protest acquittal of racist vigilante George Zimmerman who murdered Trayvon Martin.

guilty” on July 13 after a grotesque parody of a trial, in which Trayvon was murdered all over again, tens of thousands took to the streets to protest the racist verdict.

Across the U.S., young people, older people, black, white, Latino came out to denounce this abomination. The day after the verdict was announced, thousands marched in New York City stopping traffic and shutting down Times Square shouting, “We are all Trayvon Martin.” As some continued north to Harlem, police arrested 14. In Los Angeles protesters occupied the Interstate 10 freeway and then marched onto Crenshaw Boulevard where L.A. police shot into the crowd with rubber bullets. A week later, protests were held in over 100 cities nationwide.

You couldn’t miss the message sent by the acquittal in the Florida trial. A racist killer stalks and murders an unarmed black teenager walking home with a soft drink and candy, and the killer gets away with it: *this is a declaration of open season on young African American men*. Young people came forward to make their first speech in public, saying “I feel like this puts a bulls-eye right on my back.” Many felt it in their gut: the verdict is an indictment of a racist injustice system that sends millions of black youth to prison while letting racist murderers go free.

At New York’s Union Square on Sunday, July 14, protesters joined the Internationalist contingent in chanting “Trayvon’s dead, Zimmerman’s free, that’s what they call democracy.” And again the next day as we marched on the courts at Foley Square chanting, “Racist system – another black victim.” At a rally on 125th Street in Harlem, people expressed their appreciation for Internationalist Group signs saying “Stop Racist Murder from Afghanistan to Florida and N.Y.” and “Stop and Frisk = American Apartheid.”

Anticipating an explosion of anger, police from New York to California were in full riot mode. President Barack Obama issued a statement saying “we are a nation of laws, and

a jury has spoken.” But people wouldn’t shut up. After nights of angry protest in black areas of Oakland and Los Angeles, Obama went before television cameras, again calling to accept the jury’s verdict, adding “that’s how our system works.” But this time he spoke in personal terms of the experience of young black men facing hostility and suspicion.

Many older African Americans said they appreciated the recognition from the White House of the continuing painful reality of what Obama timidly called “racial disparities.” Even as he claimed “things are getting better,” despite all evidence to the contrary, he was forced to admit “It doesn’t mean that we’re in a postracial society,” as was widely proclaimed following the election of the first black president. But this kind of “I feel your pain” talk reminiscent of Bill Clinton left even many of his supporters dissatisfied.

Obama was right about one thing: “that’s how our system works” – *the murderous system he represents and presides over*. In this case, even a liberal black commentator like Charles Blow has to admit that “The Whole System Failed Trayvon Martin” (*New York Times*, 16 July). But what is that system? Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” law wasn’t even used in this case, while police procedure and rigged court proceedings are only part of it. *It was racist American capitalism that lynched Trayvon, and then lynched him again in the courtroom*.

From the time of slavery, the bedrock on which it was founded, the U.S. capitalist economy has claimed countless black lives and will continue to do so until it is swept away. The Supreme Court’s cancellation last month of the key section of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, part of a general rolling back of the limited gains of the civil rights movement, is part of that system. So is the municipal bankruptcy of black Detroit, principally the result of the closure of the auto plants in the 1980s, leading to mass unemployment of black workers and vast population loss.

Speaking for the IG at the July 14 Harlem rally, Charlie Morán, an immigrant worker, said a TV reporter had questioned our sign saying “Trayvon Martin Was Lynched – No Justice in the Capitalist Courts.” Voices in the crowd exclaimed, “Yes!” One cried out, “that’s what they’re doing to black boys.” Our comrade continued:

“No question about it, legal lynching is what this is all about, in the U.S.A., and it has been for the past three hundred years. Even if we have a black president in the White House, nothing has changed. Democrats, Republicans, they’re not

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Internationalist contingent in NYC protest against racist acquittal of Zimmerman, July 15.

**Mobilize Workers Power to Shut Down “Stop & Frisk”!
For the Right of Armed Black Self-Defense!**



(Right) “Clinton, Democrats Push Sweatshops in Haiti!” say protesters at December 21 NYC demonstration supporting Haitian workers. (Left) Bill Clinton and U.N. secretary general Ban Ki Moon at Multiwear factory at Sonapi industrial park, March 2009. Multiwear pays workers less than \$5 a day.

tory which makes t-shirts for Montreal-based Gildan Activewear (the largest t-shirt manufacturer in the world) receive one cent (US\$.01) for every six shirts their module produces, which would mean producing 3,600 t-shirts just to make the minimum US\$7 daily minimum wage. They actually make an average of US\$5.55.

The WRC report noted that pay was even lower at the Caracol industrial park inaugurated in October 2012 with great fanfare (and the presence of Bill and Hillary Clinton, movie star Sean Penn, fashion designer Donna Karan and Haiti’s current and former presidents) as the U.S.’ main contribution to Haiti’s post-2010 earthquake reconstruction, although it is 100 miles from the quake zone. The Caracol complex (factory, power plant, housing, and future port) was paid for almost entirely by U.S. AID and Inter-American Development Bank funds. Its only tenant, the Korean SAE-A corporation, vowed to be globally competitive “without compromising on labor and environmental standards. Yet workers there make only US\$4.67 a day.

Haitian workers literally cannot live on these starvation wages. Moreover, any conceivable increase in the minimum wage decreed by the government (only to be ignored by the employers) won’t even come close to a living wage. Claims by manufacturers and retailers that this low pay is necessary to remain competitive and that they would go bankrupt if it was significantly raised are hogwash. They could *quintuple Haitian garment workers’ wages* and only add a few cents to the cost of producing a t-shirt that sells for US\$5 to \$50 retail. But it is inherent in capitalist exploitation that the bosses will not concede even such a minimal amount unless forced to do so by the action of the workers.

Appeals to the “conscience” of the giant retailing corporations and sweatshop factory owners are useless. The bosses perfectly understand the truth spelled out by Karl Marx in *Capital*, that their profits derive entirely from the surplus value represented by the difference between what workers are paid for their labor time and what they produce with their labor. Following the publication of the WRC study, Gildan and Fruit of the Loom announced that they would instruct their contractors to pay the minimum wage (*Toronto Star*, 18 November). But that is peanuts, and Hanes and other retailers refused. Lobbying by liberal groups like United Students Against Sweatshops may win a concession or two, but even that liberal activism has fallen off of late.

What’s required is the mobilization of workers’ power in class struggle, but not just Haitian workers. We’re not dealing with a few fly-by-night contractors. Any serious attempt to raise Haitian garment workers’ pay would likely be met by the “multinational” corporations switching to suppliers in even lower-wage countries, notably Bangladesh and Cambodia. Strikes would be brutally attacked by the “United Nations” occupying force, the MINUSTAH, which acts as mercenaries for U.S. imperialism in suppressing unrest in its Haitian neo-colony. And even legislative action to raise the minimum wage would face massive resistance by the American embassy, which despite Haiti’s small population is the fourth-largest U.S. mission in the world.

A trove of confidential U.S. government cables released in 2011 by the WikiLeaks Internet transparency group revealed a massive embassy operation behind the employer rollback of the 200 gourde (\$5) minimum wage law in 2009. A 17 June 2009 cable from U.S. chargé d’affaires Thomas Tighe to his boss Hillary Clinton said that a “200 Haitian gourde minimum wage would make the [assembly] sector economically unviable and consequently force factories to shut down” and “would devastate the industry and negatively impact the benefits of the Haitian Hemispheric through Opportunity Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE II)” (“WikiLeaks Haiti: Let Them Live on \$3 a Day,” *The Nation*, 1 June 2011).

Going back to the dictatorial regime of Jean-Claude (“Baby Doc”) Duvalier in the 1980s, the U.S.’ “development strategy” for Haiti has always focused on low-wage factory labor. The most immediate effect of this policy was to devastate food production, as hundreds of thousands of impoverished peasants flocked to Port-au-Prince in search of jobs. When the Haitian garment industry was decimated (going from 100,000 jobs to less than 10,000, in good part because of the embargo on Haitian imports backed by liberal Democrats after the Haitian Army’s 1990 ouster of the populist priest-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide), the former workers remained in the capital’s shantytowns which were devastated in the 2010 quake.

Bill Clinton confessed to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2010 that U.S. policy of gutting Haitian agriculture and forcing massive imports of cheap food staples “may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas,” but the consequence was a “loss of capacity to produce a rice crop in

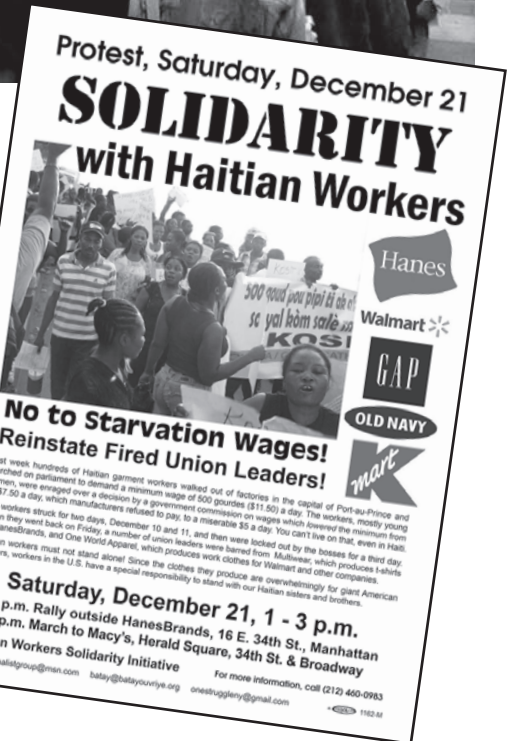


Haiti to feed those people because of what I did.” Nevertheless Bill and Hillary are still pushing the policy of starvation-wage factory labor, tourism and agro-industrial export crops in the north. To this has now been added mining, searching for gold in the hills of Quisqueya as the avaricious Spanish conquerors did in the early 1500s (in the course of which they committed genocide against the indigenous Taino population).

Ever since the modern *conquistadores* of U.S. imperialism first invaded Haiti in 1915, they have pursued economic policies that condemn Haitian workers to endless misery, whether it was producing sugar cane then or t-shirts today. In order to escape from this endless cycle of poverty, it is not enough to pressure the rubber-stamp Haitian parliament or pliant Haitian presidents to pass laws which are never enforced. It is necessary to defeat not only the sweatshop oligarchs like Charles Henry Baker but also their imperialist sponsors. And that requires common class struggle by workers in neo-colonies like Haiti and the Dominican Republic together with their class sisters and brothers in the imperialist heartland.

A real struggle to massively raise wages would have to shut down the entire Haitian export apparel industry. To prevent manufacturers from simply shifting production elsewhere, it would require active support *action* by U.S. unions, from garment and retail workers to dock workers. Such a campaign requires breaking with the Democrats – the party of Bill and Hillary Clinton, whose policies are a direct cause of Haitian poverty – and a fight to build a class-struggle workers party. In Haiti it means confronting all the bourgeois parties, including the populist Lavalas movement of Aristide, which seeks to silence the struggle to raise the minimum wage. And it requires driving out the MINUSTAH mercenaries who enforce imperialist law-and-order.

In Haiti, the leftist Batay Ouvriye has led protests over the minimum wage, won a union contract at the free trade zone in Ouanaminthe on the Dominican border and is seeking to build unions among garment workers in Port-au-Prince and the Caracol industrial park. B.O. rightly recognizes the “permanent crisis” in Haiti reflects “the historical incapacity to realize a bourgeois national project.” Yet while opposing the *grandon* landowners, the corrupt *granmanjè* (big eaters) who feed off the state,



the remnants of Duvalier’s *macoutes* and other bourgeois sectors and recognizing “the imperialists’ objective of exploiting Haitian workers’ sweat and blood,” B.O. does not go beyond simple trade-unionism and talk of a “people’s camp.”

In a lengthy essay analyzing the various bourgeois forces (“The Nature of the Transformation Occurring in Haiti Today,” May 2011), Batay Ouvriye summed up its program by calling for the “popular masses,” “all genuine progressives” and “the people’s side” to be clear that “faced with the failure of the ruling class and all the corrupt politicians, the workers’ interests are the INTERESTS OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY!” This is false and leads ultimately to the same dead-end as the bourgeois populism of Lavalas. In contrast, Leon Trotsky stressed that the working class can become “the leader of the *subjugated nation*,” standing in the forefront of the struggles of the downtrodden masses against imperialism and its Haitian slave drivers.

To do so, the most conscious sectors must cohere a party of the proletarian vanguard to fight for workers rule on a program of *permanent revolution*, in which the democratic objectives grow over into socialist measures and the revolution is extended internationally to the imperialist centers. Only on that basis will it be possible to actually put an end to the starvation wages and endemic poverty that have plagued Haiti since it became the first successful slave revolution in history, inspired by the French Revolution of 1789-1894 and in turn inspiring slave revolts from the Caribbean to the United States. Only in this way will it be possible to finally break the colonialist/imperialist blockade that the first black republic of the Americas has faced ever since. ■

Obama Backs Off, But the Threat Remains

Defend Syria Against U.S. Imperialist Attack!

28 SEPTEMBER 2013 – In the early morning hours of August 21, there were a series of explosions in the Ghouta region of Syria, to the east of the capital Damascus. Immediately afterwards, there were reports of dozens and later hundreds of victims showing signs of poisoning by chemical weapons. The fact was particularly notable as only two days beforehand a United Nations inspection team had arrived and was billeted only 4 miles from the site. In record time the Internet was inundated with videos uploaded by opponents of the regime showing bodies – many of them women and children – without visible wounds. The rebels and the imperialist press in unison blamed the government of Bashar al-Assad for the massacre.¹

The attack took place almost exactly one year after U.S. president Barack Obama declared that if Syrian government used chemical weapons it would be crossing a “red line,” which would result in a *direct* military intervention by the United States. As was to be expected, immediately following the attack there was a mounting outcry for the Western powers to “punish” Assad by bombing Syria. The leaders of France and Britain let loose with war cries and, after several days of hesitation, Obama announced he intended to attack the Near Eastern country. The Pentagon shifted its military deployment, placing ships of the Sixth Fleet off the Syrian coast from where they could launch Tomahawk cruise missiles.

Nevertheless, the attack has not been carried out, yet. Along with highly placed imperialist voices who warned against wading into the Syrian quagmire, there was an additional factor that the imperialist strategists overlooked at first: the deep-seated aversion in the U.S., British and French populations to yet another military adventure in the region after the fiasco of the wars and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Taking stock of the popular opposition, British legislators stunned everyone by voting against undertaking a “humanitarian” military assault. And when Obama asked for the support of Congress, a defeat there was taking shape as opinion polls showed

75% of the population opposed to an attack.

Facing the threat of a direct military strike by the U.S. against Syria, there were protest demonstrations in many cities. Virtually the entire left limited itself to saying “Hands off Syria,” which let them join with bourgeois liberal “doves,” as well as covering up the responsibility of the social-democratic reformists who, in the name of a non-existent “Syrian Revolution,” support the Islamist rebels who are clamoring for Western intervention. In contrast, the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, raised the slogans, “Defeat U.S. imperialist war!” and “Defend Syria against imperialist attack!” While maintaining our *political* opposition to the authoritarian Assad regime, in the face of imperialist assault it is necessary to take sides *militarily* with the semi-colonial country under attack.

Anticipating an imminent defeat in Congress, with a likely majority in both houses voting against attacking Syria, the Obama administration launched a trial balloon suggesting that Assad could avoid being bombed if he got rid of his chemical arsenal. In order to keep up appearances, as well as the tattered U.S. “credibility” after 12 years of war in the Middle East, it fell to Russia to formalize the proposal. The Syrian government quickly accepted, and agreed to ratify the international convention against chemical weapons. After some diplomatic horse-trading, on September 27 the U.N. Security Council approved a motion calling for the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons stocks, with the threat of unspecified “consequences” if it did not comply.

Let us be clear: Syria has the right to possess and use any weapon to defend itself against the imperialist marauders, and its Zionist allies who keep the Palestinian population under its military boot and occupy Syrian territory (the Golan Heights). In reality, the Syrian arsenal was conceived as a response to the Israeli military juggernaut, which has *hundreds* of nuclear warheads and probably the largest stocks of chemical (and biological) weapons in the Middle East. We also defend the right of Iran to develop



Internationalist photo

Internationalist contingent at Sept. 7 NYC protest against U.S. threats to bomb Syria.

nuclear weapons in the face of threats of attack by the U.S. and Israel. And in any case, whatever accumulation of chemical weapons Syria may have, it is nothing compared to the thousands of tons in the U.S. arsenal.

We should not forget that the United States is the only country in the world which has used nuclear weapons in war, murdering between 170,000 and 250,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in 1945; that five months earlier it slaughtered more than 100,000 residents of Tokyo which chemical incendiary bombs; that in the Korean war, U.S. military forces (disguised as U.N. troops) dropped thousands of tons of napalm on the North, killing hundreds of thousands of Koreans; that from 1963 to 1973, the U.S. dumped thousands of tons of napalm and herbicides like Agent Orange on the Vietnamese population, killing some 400,000

people and resulting in 500,000 congenitally malformed babies.

Nor should we forget that if Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Iranian troops, it was because “for years the imperialists actively supplied Iraq with chemical and biological agents, built the factories to produce CBW arms, fed Baghdad intelligence data on where to use them, and dispatched agents to the battlefields to check up on their usage” (see the Internationalist pamphlet, *The Great Chemical Weapons Hoax*, May 2003). But that didn’t stop the imperialist warmongers from using the imaginary existence of “weapons of mass destruction” as a pretext to invade Iraq (during which they used a new bomb, the Mark77, similar to napalm, against Iraqi troops).

In the Syrian case, we can already conclude that the allegation that the Assad government used chemical weapons against the population is a *lie*, designed to unleash and justify imperialist attack. A lie not because the Syrian regime categorically denies having done so, nor because it is incapable of “killing its own people” – its bombings of urban areas has certainly killed thousands of civilians – but

because there isn’t a single trustworthy piece of evidence indicating that the government did it²; because it had no interest in doing it, above all at that time and place when the recently arrived U.N. inspectors were present and knowing that this would trigger an imperialist attack; and because there are a number of reports suggesting that it was the rebels (who had plenty of reason to do it) who unleashed chemical agents.³

It would not be the first time that the United States had used a lie to launch an imperialist war. In fact, it almost always does it. Let’s not forget the explosion in the Navy warship *Maine* which furnished the *casus belli* for the U.S. invasion of Cuba in 1898; the supposed Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964, later disavowed, which was used

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Footnotes:

¹ Note: This article was written in late September 2013. Since then considerable additional evidence has come to light strongly suggesting that it was Islamist insurgents who unleashed chemical weapons on the population of the East Ghouta area of Syria. This includes: (a) U.N. weapons experts testimony of the low quality of the sarin gas; (b) videos of Liwa al-Islam rebel fighters on August 21 launching rockets visually identical to those found at impact sites while wearing gas masks; (c) U.N. investigators’ reports of several other uses of gas likely by anti-regime insurgents; (d) calculations by weapons experts of the rockets’ trajectories indicating they could have been launched from rebel-held areas; and (e) multiple reports of communications by high-level U.S. intelligence officials saying the Syrian government was not responsible for the attacks, and of a U.S. government intelligence report indicating al Nusra Front had chemical weapons capability. See Seymour Hersh, “Whose Sarin?” *London Review of*

Books, 8 December 2013; United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, *Final report*, 12 December 2013; and “Conclusion” from website whoghouta.blogspot.com.

² The “Report on the Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in the Ghouta Area of Damascus on 21 August 2013” transmitted by the U.N. Investigative Commission on September 13 indicates that: (a) all the victims presented to the investigators were previously chosen by the rebels and that the doctors who attended them were rebel sympathizers; (b) in the area where the victims showed the highest level of exposure to sarin gas, Moadmiyah, the investigators found *no* environmental samples which showed any evidence of sarin, indicating that there was no attack in this area and suggesting that the victims were brought from another place; (c) the rocket whose trajectory has been extrapolated by “experts” of the “non-governmental organization” Human Rights Watch, which is close to the U.S.

State Department, shows no indications of having transported sarin; and (d) that in the cases of munitions in other places where there were traces of sarin, there were indications that these and other potential evidence was “moved and possibly manipulated,” according to the investigators (“Questions Plague UN Report on Syria,” *Al-Akhbar* [Beirut, Lebanon], 23 September).

A U.S. expert on chemical, biological and nuclear weapons who has worked in the past for the White House described as “strange” the reports of convulsions without prior less-severe symptoms, and above all the reports that 78% of the victims presented experienced a loss of consciousness while in previous cases of sarin poisoning this is an extremely grave condition that occurs shortly before death, and therefore is rarely the case with survivors.

Veteran reporter Robert Fisk reported (*The Independent* [London], 22 September) that “grave doubts are being expressed by the UN and other international organisations in

Damascus that the sarin gas missiles were fired by Assad’s army.” Fisk quotes a member of a Western NGO saying, “if Assad really wanted to use sarin gas, why for God’s sake, did he wait for two years and then when the UN was actually on the ground to investigate?”

³ Among these are the statement by two rebel fighters to a reporter that they had received arms from Saudi Arabia that they did not understand and that using them incorrectly detonated an explosion; and the statements by a Belgian professor to the Brussels newspaper *Le Soir* and by a reporter of *La Stampa* of Torino, Italy, both of whom had supported the Syrian rebels, that while they were held hostage by Islamist groups they overheard a conversation in English via Skype in which rebel officials “said that the operations with gas in the two neighborhoods of Damascus were carried out by the rebels as a provocation in order to induce the West to intervene militarily,” and that “according to them the number of dead was exaggerated.”

Social-Democratic Pawns Beg for U.S./NATO Arms

Brazil: Leftists in the Camp of Pro-Imperialist Syrian Islamists

The following article is translated from the upcoming issue of *Vanguarda Operária*, newspaper of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil*, section of the League for the Fourth International.

The raging communal civil war in Syria and imperialist threats have put the would-be socialist and communist left to the test. Following a formula they adopted during the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt that began the “Arab Spring,” the large majority of leftists in the West have backed, and continue to support, what they falsely call the “Syrian Revolution.” Their opportunism leads them to chase after whatever movement is popular, even when this turns out to be reactionary. But as it has become increasingly evident that all the Syrian armed rebels are fighting to establish an Islamic regime, and internal divisions mount between openly pro-imperialist forces and *jihadis* (holy warriors) who support Al Qaeda, these inveterate tailists are caught in a dilemma.

From early 2011 on, the opportunist left and the entire bourgeoisie agreed on declaring the fall of Ben Ali in Tunis and Mubarak in Cairo to be *revolutions*, even though the military was the core of the regimes both before and after. In the face of setbacks since then, such as the ouster of Egyptian president Morsi (of the Muslim Brotherhood) by the army last July and the subsequent massacres, these leftists have sought refuge in the myth of a “revolutionary process” which supposedly is still underway. But as the predominance of bloodthirsty Islamists among the Syrian “rebels” has become so evident that it is worrying the imperialists, many pseudo-socialists have been backpedaling a bit in their unconditional support for the armed opposition.

And when at the end of August, U.S. president Obama threatened to bomb Syria as a reprisal for the supposed use of chemical weapons against the population by the regime of Bashar al-Assad, these opportunist leftists felt compelled to distance themselves from the “rebels” who vociferously demanded that the Pentagon rain death on Syrian cities. But not all of them felt ashamed to be allied with openly pro-imperialist elements. The Brazilian Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado (PSTU – United Socialist Workers Party),¹ in particular, demanded that the imperialists supply heavy weapons. The PSTU literally said:

“Thus we hold that it is imperative to push for the broadest mobilization to demand that the governments of our countries, and all governments around the world, even of the imperialist countries, immediately send modern heavy weaponry ... to the

¹ The PSTU, with several thousand members and control of a trade-union federation (CSP-Conlutas) claiming a membership of 600,000, is the largest party of the Brazilian (not so) “far left.” It is also the leading section of the Liga Internacional dos Trabalhadores-Quarta Internacional (LIT – International Workers League-Fourth International) which was founded by the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno and is largely present in various countries of Latin America.



Brazilian PSTU places itself in the “camp” of pro-imperialist Islamist insurgents in Syria. Above: U.S. Republican Senator John McCain poses in May 2013 with Free Syrian Army leader General Salim Idriss (center right), who participated in rebel massacre of at least 190 Alawite villagers in August. Flanking them are two leaders of FSA’s Northern Storm Brigade, Mohamed Nour and Abu Ibrahim, who earlier kidnapped Lebanese Shiite pilgrims.

rebel militias of the FSA [Free Syrian Army] and the Local Coordinating Committees, without any conditions whatsoever.”

–PSTU, “To Call or Not to Call for Arms from Imperialism?” (14 October 2013)

The same document explicitly states:

“The LIT [the international to which the PSTU is affiliated] demands and would accept weapons and ‘planes’ from ‘France and the United States,’ or from any other government, for the rebel camp in general, even if most of these arms would go to the bourgeois leaders of this camp....”

And in another document, the LIT demands: “anti-aircraft missiles, tanks with modern technology. This kind of weaponry can only be obtained if it is provided by governments of the region and by the imperialist governments.”

–Declaration of the Executive Committee of the LIT (27 September 2013)

You can’t be clearer than that. The PSTU, the main party of the Liga Internacional dos Trabalhadores (LIT – International Workers League) which follows the political line of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno, along with being an apologist for pro-imperialist sectors of the “rebel camp” in Syria, is offering its services as a pawn of imperialism, in particular U.S. imperialism, the main oppressor of the peoples of the world today! Unfortunately for the Morenoites, White House and Pentagon strategists don’t answer to the wishes of some screwed-up “left” social democrats in Brazil. Even the “Socialist” president of imperialist France doesn’t seem interested. The longed-for F-16 fighter bombers and Rafale jets won’t be arriving. What a pity!

Carried away by the arms race in Brazil, already the fifth largest weapons exporter in the world, could the PSTU perhaps ask for some Super-Tucano planes produced by the Brazilian aircraft company Embraer, a favorite in counterinsurgency operations? Or some

Astro II missiles and Guar armored personnel carriers produced by Avibrs? The question becomes interesting when one realizes that the unionized workers at these companies are represented by the Metal Workers Union of So Jos dos Campos (in So Paulo state), affiliated with the Conlutas union federation led by the PSTU? Let us note in passing that for all the PSTU’s (rather mild) criticism of Brazil’s intervention in Haiti, with all “due respect” for ex-president Lula, who was elected with its votes, it has never called to *drive out* the occupation troops and it has never *blocked production of the munitions* used to suppress the Haitian population (as well as the impoverished *favela* neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro and So Paulo).

But the government of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT – Workers Party) under Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff also doesn’t put much stock in the “critical” collaboration of the PSTU “comrades.” On the other hand, we of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB – Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil), section of the League for the Fourth International, call for *workers action to expel Brazilian troops from Haiti, and the Military Police from the Rio favelas*. We have even won the approval of this call by various unions (notably the SEPE-RJ and CNTE teachers unions) over the resistance of the PSTU/Conlutas. On Syria, the LFI doesn’t support either side in the current communalist civil war, opposing both the authoritarian Assad regime and the Islamist insurgents. But in the face of threats of attack by the Western powers, *we defend Syria, a semi-colonial country*, against imperialist aggression (see article on page 15 of this issue).

The policies of the PSTU/LIT are chock full of apparent contradictions. It claims to “always have been against imperialist intervention,” at the same time as it “demands of governments the sending of arms and materiel to the Syrian resistance.” Not being

simpletons, they know full well that this in itself would be a military intervention, one that the imperialists would only undertake in order to control the rebel forces (as in Libya). And to which “Syrian resistance” should the arms be sent? To “hard-line” sectors who reject the siren song of imperialism? No, the PSTU recognizes that these fellows want “a new dictatorship by Al Qaeda” (which it claims is “Assad’s fifth column”). So it calls for arms to the Free Syrian Army, which they admit “has never done anything except repeatedly clamor for imperialist intervention.” Imperialist arms for imperialist puppets!

Another curious inconsistency: in Syria the LIT calls for arms to the FSA, many of whose components (such as the Farouk Battalions) are well-known to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood. But in Egypt, after the overthrow of President Morsi and the seizure of power by the army at the beginning of July and the ensuing crackdown on the Brotherhood, the LIT shamefully demanded: “No democratic rights or right of expression for the Brotherhood and its political leaders so long as they are mobilizing for Morsi’s return!” (Declaration of the LIT, August 15). However, what at first sight appears to be a contradiction is cleared up when one considers that imperialism supports the FSA in Syria and the military regime in Egypt. The LIT “critically” tails after “democratic” imperialism.

How does the PSTU/LIT justify this outrageously pro-imperialist policy? It distortedly quotes Trotsky on the Spanish Civil War. What an insult to the great Russian revolutionary, who always fought against imperialism! In Spain during 1936-39 there was an attempted workers revolution which was smashed by the fascists and militarists on Generalissimo Franco’s side, and by the bourgeois democrats and Stalinists (with help from the anarchists) on the Republican side. Workers occupied the factories, formed workers militias, collectivized the agricultural estates. There is nothing of that in Syria today. Quite the contrary, there is *no* workers mobilization, and instead *all* the factions of the armed “resistance” have committed massacres along religious lines.

At the beginning of the uprising against the Assad regime there were, for a few weeks, mass demonstrations initiated by secular oppositionists, “armed” with their laptops, iPads and iPhones to send out information to social networks. They were not entirely peaceful, as is often claimed, and over the course of the spring of 2011 they took on an increasingly religious character, starting out from Sunni mosques with the cry for *jihad* (holy war), *Alahu akhbar* (god is great). However, in the face of heavy (but inconsistent) repression by the regime, the resistance was soon dominated by armed bands, some of them openly religious militias and others (of the phantom FSA) made up mainly of Sunni deserters from the Syrian Army who were fighting against the “Alawite regime,” referring to Assad’s

religious sect.

The PSTU/LIT refers to a “*democratic revolution*” in Syria. Aside from the fact that this Morenoite slogan is diametrically opposed to Trotsky’s policy of *permanent revolution* and reproduces the Stalinist schema of “two-stage” revolution (first bourgeois democracy, later for socialism), the armed “resistance” in Syria is not democratic – not by a long shot. When the PSTU/LIT and others claim that there is a secular wing of the armed resistance, and when they go on to identify this with the FSA, this is a gross lie. Among the hundreds of armed groups, almost all seek to erect an Islamic regime, in which their sect’s version of *sharia* (Islamic law) would hold sway. This is inherently anti-democratic, for women who defend their rights, for other religions and those who are not religious, for minority Islamic sects and those in the Sunni majority who don’t want to live under the dictatorship of non-elected *sharia* courts. Those armed groups which don’t openly declare themselves Islamist are, for the most part, bands of thieves.

Among those who preach Islam as a political system, the bourgeois press refers to supposedly “moderate” Islamists, many of them linked to the Muslim Brotherhood; to *salafists*, who seek to impose a radical version of *sharia*; and to *jihadists* who call for holy war against infidels. But the reality is that even the large majority of the “moderate” Sunni Islamist bands are *takfiri*, meaning that they accuse other Muslim sects of being apostates, a crime potentially punishable by death. The “moderates” seek to subjugate the Shiites, Druzes, Alawaites, etc., along with the Christians, while “radicals” like the Al Nusra Front or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) want to expel or even annihilate minorities, particularly the Alawite communities, which form a base of the support for the regime.

Therefore a victory of the Syrian “resistance” would produce at least a massive expulsion of the Alawite population from the cities and predominately Sunni regions, if not from the country as a whole, and most likely massacres on a grand scale. The population is well aware of this danger, and for that reason many who in different degrees oppose the Assad regime prefer it to the “rebels.” The Morenoites seek to cover up this reality, prettifying the FSA and the Local Coordinating Committees, which are in fact militarily subordinate to the dominant Islamist bands (and whose electronic equipment is furnished by the U.S. government.)

An example: in its declaration of September 27, the LIT says that “the rebels have achieved victories in Aleppo and Latakia.” The supposed “victory” in Latakia was a massacre of the Alawite population in several mountain villages of the district. And this massacre – which took place in the first half of August, and in which at least 190 civilians were slaughtered, among them 57 women, at least 18 children and 14 elderly men – was praised as a victory by none other than the commander of the FSA, General Idriss, who personally took part in it along with his units.² Thus the PSTU/LIT is praising “communal/religious cleansing” of the worse sort. *The Morenoites identify as “resistance” to the “bloody despot” Assad the forces who have carried out pogroms like the Black Hundreds did against Jews in tsarist Russia, and they*

² See the report by Amnesty International, “You Can Still See Their Blood”: Executions, Indiscriminate Shootings, and Hostage Taking by Opposition Forces in Latakia Countryside (October 2013).



Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

PSTU hails “unity of action” with imperialism against Qaddafi. Above: NATO launches war on Libya in March 2011 by bombing government supporters near Benghazi.

even applaud the pogrom.

The LER and the Fracción Trotskista: Centrists Trapped in the Syrian Quagmire

The Morenoites of the PSTU/LIT claim that all opposition to their policy of “unconditional support” to what they say is “the armed struggle of the Syrian people” against Assad amounts to the same line as the “Stalinist, and especially Castro-Chávez” position of considering the Syrian regime a paragon of anti-imperialism. They have a lot of trouble when the criticisms of their pro-imperialist policies make reference to the program and heritage of Trotsky. The need to protect its left flank, including against questioning in its own ranks, explains the PSTU’S lengthy October 14 polemic, adorned with 34 citations in footnotes, against the Liga Estratégica Revolucionária (LER – Revolutionary Strategy League), the Brazilian section of the Fracción Trotskista led by the Argentine PTS (Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas – Socialist Workers Party).

In this polemic, referred to above (“To Call or Not to Call for Arms from Imperialism?”), the PSTU returns to disputes over the war in Libya. The LER/FT responds (“The LIT Sinks in the Complex Syrian Scenario,” 14 November) by recalling that after the assassination of Qaddafi (by “rebels” on the NATO payroll), the LIT declared that it “effusively greeted” this “tremendous political and military victory of the Libyan people and for the entire revolutionary process which is shaking the Arab world.” The LER/FT also quotes how the LIT justified its support to the mercenary gangs alleging that “there was a unity in action between imperialism and the masses to defeat Qaddafi” (“The People in Arms Destroying the Qaddafi Regime,” statement of the LIT, 25 August 2011). Hailing NATO bombs as “unity in action with imperialism” – what a monstrous perversion of everything Lenin and Trotsky stood for! What shamelessness of these camp followers of imperialism!

The LIT insists over and over in comparing the Syrian situation today with that of Spain during its Civil War of the 1930s, which is absurd. The LER/FT responds that there are big differences between the two cases, underlining that the working

class is not leading the struggle in Syria, which is obvious to all. But in the polemical exchange, the LER hesitates to make the basic point that the armed “resistance” to the Assad regime isn’t even *bourgeois-democratic*. Thus it says “we are in agreement with the general content” of the LIT’s position on demanding arms from imperialism, it only insists that the arms should be “in favor of the working and popular masses, in the framework of a developing revolutionary process.”

Defending itself against the charge of being abstentionists in the Syrian civil war, the FT only wants the LIT to distance itself a bit more from the bourgeois leadership of the phantom “FSA” and the other figureheads chosen by the imperialists to head up the armed resistance, who are now more marginalized than ever. But genuine Trotskyists faced with a reactionary insurgency aided indirectly by imperialism against an authoritarian regime, which is also reactionary, would say clearly that the working people should struggle against both sides, but that if imperialism takes control of the rebel side, proletarian revolutionaries would, while maintaining their political independence from the Assad regime, *defend Syria against the imperialist onslaught*.

Thus unlike the LER/FT we of the LQB and the League for the Fourth International oppose sending imperialist arms to the reactionary bands of the Islamist insurgency in Syria. If the imperialists in fact it supplied the heavy weaponry demanded by the LIT, we would be in opposite trenches from the Morenoites. Recall that in the 1980s, when Moreno & Co. hailed the CIA-aided *mujahedin* in Afghanistan, in particular because it threatened the Soviet Union, our tendency saluted Soviet intervention and proclaimed “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” And when Gorbachev ordered the pullout of Soviet forces in 1989, a betrayal which contributed greatly to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR, we formally proposed to the Afghan government to send an international brigade to join the fight against the imperialist-backed mercenaries supported by the Morenoites.

The LER/FT’s critique of the PSTU/LIT is partial, due to the origins of the Fracción Trotskista in the Morenoite tendency. The LER/FT says that the policy followed

by the PSTU is “semi-stageist,” when it is perfectly obvious that the latter’s policy of a “democratic revolution” is the quintessence of the reformist “stageism” of the Stalinists and Mensheviks which has always led to defeat for the working class. The LER/FT says that the policy of the PSTU is “semi-campist,” when in fact it is centered on identifying the (bourgeois) “progressive military camp” in order to then swear allegiance to it, instead of calling for workers action against their immediate enemies according to their *class* interests.

After breaking with the Morenoite current in 1988 in the course of the split-up of the LIT following the death of its founder the year before, the FT distanced itself from various of Moreno’s theses, to the point of criticizing “the revisionist elements contained within ‘Morenoism.’” But even though the FT rejects the anti-Trotskyist conception of a “democratic revolution,” which demonstrated its bankruptcy in the counterrevolutionary wave that swept East Europe and the USSR during 1989-92; and even if it recognizes that this theory and Moreno’s other revisions of the Transitional Program amount to a rejection of Trotsky’s permanent revolution, these ex-Morenoites preserve a methodology focusing on democratic demands and a series of historical positions inherited from Morenoism.

Thus the FT calls on popular non-proletarian forces to undertake actions which rightfully fall to the working class (for example, calling for the Zapatistas or even the bourgeois opposition leader López Obrador in Mexico to lead general strikes). It continues Moreno’s “frontist” policy of constantly calling for electoral fronts of various opportunist forces, such as the Workers and Left Front (FIT) in Argentina with its entirely reformist program; calling for a vague “political tool of the working people” in Venezuela rather than for a workers party on a revolutionary program to combat Chávez-style populism; or running a candidate in Rio de Janeiro on the slate of the arch-reformist PSOL (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade – Party of Socialism and Freedom) right after the PSOL stabbed the Rio teachers strike in the back.

With such practices, the Transitional Program and the struggle to forge a revolutionary vanguard based on Trotsky’s permanent revolution are relegated to the archive of historical references, without concrete expression today.

Concerning Syria, beyond the correct points made against the LIT, what does the FT call for? It rejects the chimera of a (bourgeois) “democratic revolution,” but constantly refers to a “revolutionary process” that began in the “Arab Spring,” without specifying its class character. It criticizes the LIT for calling for a “free and sovereign Constituent Assembly” (a demand which the FT itself raises in just about every place and circumstance, from Oaxaca to Chile). But then the LER/FT calls to “impose a revolutionary Constituent Assembly,” only saying that this must be guaranteed by a “workers and peasants government.” But if in Syria the working class is not acting as a force in the struggle, as the FT rightly says, what reality does this slogan have?

The FT doesn’t want to cap its “democratist” program with a call for “democratic revolution,” yet its program is centered on democratic demands like the LIT (Constituent Assemblies everywhere) and shies away from calling for workers revolution. It wants to leave the outcome open whereas

the LIT puts forward an explicitly bourgeois program. Why this vagueness on the part of the FT? A key is its mention of the “Iranian Revolution” of 1979 as a “great revolution (in the Marxist sense) ... despite the reactionary leadership of the ayatollahs.” This short phrase sums up a betrayal laden with consequences for the world proletariat. *There was no Iranian revolution in the Marxist sense*, of the overthrow of the rule of one class by another, but the substitution of one bourgeois dictatorship (of the shah) by another (of Khomeini), with a toll of tens of thousands of leftists killed.

The Morenoites share with the vast majority of the left internationally a heavy responsibility for this bloodbath. The FT writes of the “Iranian revolution of 1979, in which the working class played a decisive role in the overthrow of the Shah with a general strike and built workers *shuras* (councils), which even appeared in sections of the fractured armed forces.” What is true is that the workers general strike played a key role, but from the beginning of the insurrection and even beforehand, almost all the ostensibly Marxist groups capitulated to Khomeini, allowing the ayatollahs and mullahs to take power. They immediately proceeded to arrest workers leaders, stone women who did not wear the veil, and massacre Kurds and other minorities.

The *shuras* which existed in many workplaces did not mobilize against these attacks, not even against the Islamic constitution, and in a matter of a few months they were effectively suppressed. The thesis that there was an initial progressive revolution, based on workers councils, which only later was smashed by Islamic reactionaries, is an invention by the opportunist left to cover up its own capitulation, based theoretically in the reformist concept of a “two-stage” revolution, in which the first step would be “democratic” or “anti-imperialist” and thus could be led by a cleric. Moreno himself, like many others, had already called for more than a decade for the slogan of a (*bourgeois*) “Arab Revolution.”

Our tendency, at the time the international Spartacist tendency, was unique on the left in calling at the key moment for “Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs!”

A second noteworthy absence in the FT’s polemic against the LIT on Syria is any indication that in the face of an imperialist attack it would call to defend the semi-colonial country. To be sure, it writes, “Down with Imperialist Intervention in Syria!” (*Palavra Operária*, September 2013). But then, so does the PSTU. The FT ends its article with a call for “the broadest possible campaign against imperialist military intervention in Syria, and for the revolutionary overthrow of Assad” – nothing about the *defense of Syria* against the imperialist aggressors. This hole is not accidental. In a subsequent article, the LER criticizes us for having called for the defense of Libya, even under Qaddafi’s rule, against the attack by the NATO imperialists. It writes:

“Some tendencies of a Spartacist origin criticize the possibility of tactical-military alliances with rebel sectors in Libya not in order to prettify Qaddafi as an ‘anti-imperialist’ leadership, but from the viewpoint that imperialist military intervention foretold a war of national oppression, on the basis of which revolutionaries should supposedly place themselves in the military camp

opposed to this intervention with an independent political program. This logic is erroneous because it doesn’t take into consideration that even though the uprising against Qaddafi was diverted and controlled by bourgeois leaderships allied with imperialism, it continued to be, on this basis – of being the protagonist of spontaneous mass actions – more fruitful to struggle politically to raise up a vanguard section of the working class with a policy independent of the various bourgeois factions.”

–“The Syria Crisis and the Need for a Revolutionary Policy,” *Palavra Operária*, October 2013

In the first place, let us recall that, as we showed in detail at the time, the uprising against Qaddafi was dominated from the outset by monarchist and Islamist elements, in close collaboration with the imperialists (see articles in *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011, including “Libyan Showdown” and “Libya and the Opportunist Left”). There wasn’t even a brief interval of a few weeks when secular liberal elements predominated, as occurred in Syria; there were no “spontaneous mass actions” which were later diverted, the Libyan uprising was reactionary from the very first moment. And when NATO attacks, it was not a tactical question (“fruitful” or not) but a *matter of principle* to defend Libya, even under the despot Qaddafi, against the imperialists. As Lenin wrote in 1915:

“For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, India on England, Persia or China on Russia, and so forth, those would be ‘just,’ ‘defensive’ wars, irrespective of who attacked first; and every Socialist would sympathize with the victory of the oppressed, dependent, unequal states against the oppressing, slave-owning, predatory ‘great’ powers.”

–V.I. Lenin and G. Zinoviev, *Socialism and War*

The duty of defending the oppressed country against the imperialist power also does not depend on the character of the respective governments. When Italy invaded Ethiopia in the 1930s, Trotsky defended the African country even though it was governed by the emperor Haile Selassie, a feudalist with serfs and even a slave-owner. In our times, we defended Iraq under Saddam Hussein against the imperialist invaders in 2003, and defended the Sunni and Shiite insurgents to the extent that they fought against the occupation troops.

We don’t doubt that there will be those who have fought for the last three years against the repressive regime who will refuse to defend Assad’s Syria against a U.S. attack. In fact, the friends of the empire are not limited to the FSA or the CNS (Syrian National Council): there exists today a whole layer of Syrian activists who are dependent on or have been rewarded by imperialism. But in the Syrian population there will be many who will come to the defense of their country against an imperialist and Zionist attack.

Trotskyism vs. “Campism”

Beyond that, it is evident from the brief polemic against us that the LER/FT accepts the LIT’S methodology of identifying with a “military camp.” Neither we over Libya and Iraq, nor Trotsky in the Spanish Civil War, enrolled in one “camp” or the other. It is only a *military bloc*, to point our guns in the same direction, against a common enemy. And as Trotsky indicated, in his pamphlet, *Spain: Last Warning* (1937) – written after, and in

light of the repression against the Barcelona workers by the Republican and Stalinist police during the May Days – this can change. If the imperialists were able to conciliate the two camps, the workers could well have seen themselves facing Republican army general Miaja and Franco together.

The methodology of *camp*s is sharply counterposed to the *class* policy of the Trotskyists. This fundamental revision of Marxism was borrowed by Nahuel Moreno from Michel Pablo, then secretary of the Fourth International. At the beginning of the 1950s, in his article “Where Are We Going” (January 1951) and other documents, Pablo divided the world into two camps in anticipation of a third world war, the imperialist and the Stalinist, and called to take up position in the latter. With this opportunist political line, he abandoned Trotskyism and the struggle for a revolutionary proletarian vanguard, leading to the split of the Fourth International and its organizational destruction as the world party of socialist revolution.

Particularly when in the late 1950s the Pabloites’ “campism” was extended from the Stalinist bureaucracy to embrace other non-proletarian forces (Algerian nationalists and Cuban Castroites), this policy attracted Nahuel Moreno because it fit perfectly with his own practice, starting with his “deep entry” in the “camp” of General Juan Perón. His adaptation to Peronism was succeeded by tailing after Guevarism, Maoism, social democracy, Sandinismo and other currents then in vogue. Finally, consecrated by his thesis of a “democratic revolution,” his odyssey culminated in the combination of reformist electoralism and trade-union bureaucratism, marking his definitive integration into the capitalist system, whose prime example is the Brazilian PSTU.

As we already indicated, the FT and the LER have not broken totally with Morenoism. They preserve much of his heritage at the same time as they reject various of his most flagrantly anti-Trotskyist theses. Reflecting this outlook, they treat the PSTU and LIT as some kind of misguided revolutionaries who could be put back on the right track by rereading Trotsky. Far from it. Do a tabulation. If we add up the LIT’s support to Cuban *gusano* counterrevolutionaries, to the Venezuelan *escuálido* reactionaries, to the Brazilian police and even military police; its hosannas for NATO’s “victory” in Libya, its call to deny democratic rights to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its call for imperialist arms to the pro-imperialist “rebels” in Syria, the sum isn’t even centrism (as the FT describes the LIT).

The PSTU and LIT are shameless reformists who support the capitalist system. Their policy on Syria is a powerful proof. Their real existence in the interstices of the trade-union bureaucracy provides the material basis. Refusing to see this reality produces a centrist political blindness on the part of the FT with potentially disastrous consequences. Consider the fate of the Iranian Trotskyists in 1979 who thought they were fighting inside the revolutionary camp. What will be the fate of Syrian activists who follow the same logic today?

Trotskyism is not a policy of constant adaptation, the registered trademark of Morenoism; the Fourth International is the party of intransigent opposition, against imperialism, against all wings of the bourgeoisie, and against opportunism, the senile sickness of ex-communists.

These days the ill-fated Holy Alli-

ance between “democratic” bourgeois and pseudo-socialists in the Middle East, which has diverted struggles for the last three tumultuous years, is beginning to come apart. The working masses need genuine Trotskyism, which fights for permanent revolution, for workers in the region – particularly the powerful Turkish proletariat – to take power at the head of all the oppressed, to open the way to a socialist federation of the Middle East in which all peoples will have a place, including an Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state and a united socialist Kurdistan. ■

Trayvon...

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friends of the working class, they’re not friends of Latinos, of black people. Also Mumia Abu-Jamal is still in prison. He was 30 years on death row. We need to mobilize power, the power of the working class to stop this legal lynching, to stop the murder of our black brothers and sisters, of our Latino brothers and sisters.”

At the same rally, Sándor John, speaking on behalf of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, recalled the 1857 Dred Scott case, of a slave who was taken to a so-called “free state” and then sued for his freedom:

“The Supreme Court not only said it was ruling against him, but he had no right to sue in the courts. Those Supreme Court lynchings in black robes said, and I quote, that black men had ‘no rights which the white man was bound to respect.’ Trayvon Martin’s case shows that this is still true today. And it will be true until we overthrow this capitalist system.”

Racist Vigilante, Racist Police, Racist Town, Racist Courts

At the trial and in recent coverage in the “mainstream” (bourgeois) media, there has been a cover-up of the racism of the killer vigilante. Yet although race and racism were at the heart of the stalking and murder of a 17-year-old black youth by a white vigilante, none of this came up in the trial. Trial judge Debra Nelson ruled out any mention of “racial profiling,” even though the charge was second-degree murder, which is defined as killing with spite, hatred or ill will. And even though tapes of Zimmerman’s 911 calls about suspicious persons were admitted as evidence, 100% complaining about blacks, the prosecution never used them and never referred to his blatant racial profiling in its closing arguments.

While the state deliberately ducked the issue of racism, leaving even some bourgeois media incredulous, Zimmerman’s counsel Mark O’Mara is a foaming racist who tried every smear and distortion he could get away with to put the *victim* on trial. Portraying Trayvon as a violent aggressor, he used a foam dummy as a stand-in for Zimmerman, crushing it with his large body, and raining blows on it, cracking its head repeatedly on the imaginary concrete, supposedly representing the 158-pound Trayvon Martin pummeling 250-pound George Zimmerman! Yet this surreal outrage was permitted by the judge and not objected to by the prosecution.

The special prosecutor in the Zimmerman case, Angela Corey, also prosecuted a black woman, Marissa Alexander, who got 10-20 years in prison for firing a pistol in the air trying to ward off her dangerous husband, against whom she had a restraining order. Yet white vigilante Zimmerman kills an innocent black youth and goes free. The jury, too, was racist, and had not one African American among the six women. That alone

is prima facie evidence of discrimination in a city that is 30 percent black. But the state accepted this outrage.

During the impaneling, when one potential juror said Trayvon should not have been out at night, reflecting racist opinion in this “sundown town,” the judge overruled the prosecution’s objection and seated her. Another juror, B37, called the peaceful protests over the killing “riots,” yet she was seated without objection from the state. After the verdict, B37 told journalist Anderson Cooper that Zimmerman was driven to kill by “vandalism,” that he “profiled” Trayvon because of his hoodie, and that Trayvon as well was “responsible” for his own death.

Throughout, not only did the prosecution avoid the key issues and really damning evidence against Zimmerman, it made so many “mistakes” that the inescapable conclusion is that it never tried to win the case. The fact is that the state never wanted this case, taking six weeks to charge Zimmerman with anything, and only sought to appease the outcry. Lead prosecutor Corey, appointed after weeks of massive protests, said as much following the verdict: “What we promised to do was get this case in front of a jury, and give Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman their day in court.” How wonderfully even-handed! Of course, there is a difference: Trayvon is dead and never got to speak, while his murderer (whose lies were repeated by all sides) is free.

In fact, George Zimmerman was not really put on trial, Trayvon Martin was. All parties in this travesty of a trial (defense, police, judge, prosecution and jury) worked together to convict the innocent, unarmed black youth of his own death and to absolve the killer who was guilty as hell of first-degree (premeditated) murder. Of course, police gun down African Americans and Latinos with impunity all the time. The only reason there was even a mock trial here was due to protests, and because sectors of the ruling class want to reinforce the state’s monopoly of armed force.

Gun Control Kills Blacks

And after the verdict, they’re still at it. The bourgeois liberal establishment is trying to channel outrage into a campaign against Florida’s “Stand Your Ground Law” and similar statutes everywhere. And since that law was never invoked in this trial, they claim it “colored” the proceedings and take aim at the right of self-defense generally. “Certainly it [the Zimmerman case] is about race,” admits a *New York Times* (15 July editorial), even though that subject was banned from the trial. But what’s key, it argues, is to get guns out of the hands of the populace.

The population – black, white or other – would then be left defenseless, while in fact it is the police who gun down far, far more black and Latino young men than vigilantes. Obama remarked in his July 19 appearance before the TV cameras, “I just ask people to consider if Trayvon Martin was of age and armed, could he have stood his ground on that sidewalk? And do we actually think that he would have been justified in shooting Mr. Zimmerman?” Our answer is Trayvon was being stalked by a racist potential killer who was armed and dangerous, and if the hunted youth feared for his life and was armed, *he would absolutely have been justified in shooting Zimmerman.*

In that case it is virtually certain that the black youth would be tried and convicted of murder, no matter what the law, because

of the pervasive racism of American society. As for a supposed “duty to retreat,” if Trayvon had sought to flee it’s a good bet that Zimmerman would have put a bullet in his back. This case was never about self-defense, it was a cold-blooded execution. The killer got out of his vehicle with his gun to make sure that *this* “punk” didn’t “get away.” Facing threatening racists, any black person anywhere has the right of self-defense.

As we have stressed before, *gun control kills blacks* (see “Who Controls the Guns?” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013). Malcolm X was more than right when he said black people have the right to defend themselves “by any means necessary.” We noted in our earlier article about Trayvon Martin:

“[T]o call for the capitalist state to control firearms ... is to suggest that the police are or could somehow be neutral or even favorable to the black, Latino, Asian and immigrant population when they are in fact the greatest force of oppression. From the White Citizens Councils of the 1960s to ‘community watch’ groups today, vigilantes get their power from their connection to the state. And following the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP and Bogalusa, Louisiana Deacons for Defense¹ in the 1950s and ’60s, to fight them *we stand for the right of black armed self-defense.*”

Currently Democrat Jesse Jackson is calling to boycott all things Florida to induce the state legislature to overturn the “Stand Your Ground” law, while Democrat Al Sharpton is calling to put pressure on the Justice Department to charge Zimmerman with civil rights violations. These are deliberate attempts to divert protest away from the struggle against racist terror, which is centrally the work of the police, and to channel anger into support for the Obama administration. This will do nothing to win justice for Trayvon Martin and will likely lead to a demoralizing dead end.

What Is to Be Done?

The lesson is reaching quite a few people that “black faces in high places” change nothing essential about how this country operates. So now we have a black president in the highest place in American politics. Yet as an older African American demonstrator told *The Internationalist* at a July 20 NYC rally at 1 Police Plaza: “Obama’s talking about people’s sons and all the while his drones are killing dark-skinned children in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” while “here we are in the shadow of this huge perpetrator of death” against black people in New York, the NYPD.

Meanwhile, Obama’s government wages a deadly vendetta against Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden for telling the truth about U.S. war crimes and massive spy-agency surveillance. Yet at a protest rally on July 15, a leader of the

¹ The Deacons successfully faced down the KKK in the racist bastion of Bogalusa, Louisiana. See “Bogalusa 1965: Deacons for Defense,” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013 and the vivid portrayal in the film *Deacons for Defense* (2003), starring Forest Whitaker and Ossie Davis.



Thousands marched on Times Square in NYC July 14 to protest not guilty verdict.

Workers World Party (WWP) called to hold Obama’s top cop Eric Holder to his word about a federal investigation. In response to this and chants of “No justice, no peace,” Class Struggle Education Workers activist Marjorie Stamberg remarked:

“There is no justice in this system. We only have faith in our own independent organizing of the working class and the oppressed. We’re the ones who have the power – TWU, UFT, 1199, all the unions of the working people, the students, the parents, all of us, we have the power to stop the wheels of production. We need a revolution, a workers revolution – that is how we are going to get justice for Trayvon Martin and all the victims of this racist capitalist system.”

Given the depth of the anger, some left groups have struck a more radical posture than usual. The Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) has been popularizing the slogans “the whole damn system is guilty” and “revolution, nothing less.” But the RCP is cagey about what that system is: since their political strategy is to ally with liberals who might be scared off by too-strident denunciations of capitalism. In line with liberal “discourse” they talk of white supremacy in terms of ideology and discrimination, separate from the material roots of black oppression. As for the “revolution,” that boils down to “getting into BA,” meaning Bob Avakian Thought, the pompous declamations of a megalomaniacal Stalinist-cultist jerk. The radical rhetoric masks what is at bottom warmed-over liberal idealism.

The oppression of African Americans is not due to the undifferentiated domination of white people in general, or simply the result of racist ideas. The *ideology* of racism emerged from the *material oppression* of the black population, going back to slavery and continuing – as Northern capitalists came to terms with their Southern brethren, betraying the Civil War’s promise of black freedom – to the present day. It is the product of *capitalist rule* which can only survive by dividing the working class and all the exploited, conceding a few privileges to petty-bourgeois and “labor-aristocratic” sectors, and then using those to foster massive racism. This poisonous false consciousness must be fought wherever it appears, but it can only be eliminated through multiracial class struggle and sweeping away its material basis by workers revolution.

Both liberals and many self-proclaimed

socialists and communists have dealt with the *effects* of black oppression, raising an exclusively democratic program to eliminate discrimination without touching the fundamentals of capitalism which forcibly confine the descendants of slaves to the bottom of U.S. society. Yet every time there has been an advance in democratic rights, sooner or later a new mechanism of subordination is instituted. After the abolition of slavery in the Civil War, the brief democratic period of Radical Reconstruction was soon replaced by rigid “Jim Crow” segregation, which lasted almost a century, up until the 1960s.

When the segregationist Southern laws were overturned as the result of the mass social struggle of the Civil Rights movement, this did not change the hard realities for black residents of the impoverished ghettos of the North, where inequality was not *de jure* but written into the economic laws of capitalist society. When the ghettos erupted in massive upheavals, these were put down with military force, and soon the racist capitalist rulers hit on a new method of keeping the black people down. A petty-bourgeois layer would be fostered and even a tiny black bourgeois elite, epitomized by Obama, while the mass of poor blacks, particularly young black men, would be criminalized.

This has led to a huge expansion of the prison system, currently holding 2.4 million prisoners (plus tens of thousands of immigrants in concentration camps awaiting deportation), while millions more ex-prisoners are denied basic rights. This diabolical system, in which up to a third of young black men are in prison, on parole or probation, was particularly aided by racist anti-drug laws. The basic purpose is social control. As Michelle Alexander writes in her book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New Press, 2012):

“[T]he most important parallel between mass incarceration and Jim Crow is that both have served to define the meaning and significance of race in America. Indeed, a primary function of any racial caste system is to define the meaning of race in its time. Slavery defined what it meant to be black (a slave), and Jim Crow defined what it meant to be black (second class citizen). Today Mass Incarceration defines the meaning of blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals. That is what it means to be black.”

In today’s America, the more enlightened bourgeois ideologists admit that race

is a social construction, not a biological reality, at the same time as they argue as if race is some kind of eternal category that “causes” racial oppression. For Marxists, Alexander’s observation underscores the bitter fact that since black oppression is part of the material reality of capitalism in this country, the ruling class has repeatedly found new forms of control and subjugation of the African American population, whose struggle for genuine liberation proves, time and again, to be incompatible with a society based on exploitation.

A *working-class* fight against the criminalization of black and Latino youth is urgently needed. That includes mobilizing the power of labor, African Americans, Latinos and all defenders of democratic rights to *shut down* the police practice of racial profiling known as “stop and frisk” which has led to 4 million arbitrary searches of New Yorkers. The racist intent of this policy is so blatant that even though 87 percent of those stopped are black and Latino, plutocrat mayor Bloomberg complains that *not enough* blacks and Latinos were stopped!

A small taste of workers action against racist police terror occurred in October 2010 when Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down the port of Oakland, California for a day to protest the slap-on-the-wrist manslaughter conviction of transit cop Johannes Mehserle who *murdered* young black worker Oscar Grant on New Year’s Day 2009 (see “ILWU Shuts Ports Demanding Justice for Oscar Grant,” *Revolution* No. 8, April 2011).

Hopefully protests over the racist lynching of Trayvon Martin will continue. Yet to have an effect, the key is the political direction and leadership of such protests. As Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton push gun control, various reformist groups that call themselves socialist seek liberal allies by calling (as does Michelle Alexander) for a “new civil rights movement.” This will solve nothing – the old civil rights movement came to a dead end precisely because, in accepting the limits of capitalist society and reform politics, it could not rip out the roots of black oppression.

The legal lynching of Trayvon Martin is the system functioning as it is supposed to. The fundamental task of the courts and cops is to maintain and defend the property and power of the social class that owns this society: the capitalists. To unleash the power of the working class that can bury capitalism requires a *political struggle to free labor, blacks and all the oppressed from the shackles chaining them to the Democratic Party* and to build the nucleus of a *multiracial revolutionary workers party*.

As one of the Internationalist speakers at the July 14 Harlem rally said:

“I want to be frank here. It’s not just Florida. What about Ramarley Graham, where was he? In this city. What about Abner Louima? Tortured by the police, by the racist NYPD. What about Amadou Diallo? What about Alberta Spruill? What about Sean Bell? What about Anthony Baez? It’s not just Florida, it’s not just the Deep South, it’s not just Up South up here, it’s all around this country. So we need to mobilize a greater power than their power of terror, and their dirty imperialist wars, and their filthy racist murder machine, whether they be in white sheets, blue uniforms or the black robes of the of the Supreme Court of death. That power is the power of the working class, to overthrow this racist capitalist system. Only then will we begin to get justice.” ■

Sawant...

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possible.” This directly contradicts the basic Marxist analysis of the capitalist state, no matter what its form and who administers it, as an instrument of the suppression of the working class and all the exploited by capital. For workers to rule, this state must be smashed.

SAlt has its origins in the former Militant tendency in Britain, which for decades was buried inside the social-democratic Labour Party. Faced with the rise of blatantly pro-capitalist “New Labour” leaders like Tony Blair, who argue that “there is no alternative” to “neo-liberal” free-market capitalism, Taaffe’s Socialist Party harks back to the “Old Labour” traditions, including the famous Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution calling for “common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.” Yet this would leave the *state* intact. And as we noted, like all social democrats, no matter how “militant,” Taaffe and his followers seek to administer the capitalist state. What’s more, when the chance has arisen, they have done so.

Today Sawant’s program calls for “no layoffs or attacks on public sector unions.” Really? An article on “Why We Run Socialist Candidates” by Tom Crean in *Socialist Alternative* No. 1 (September-October 2013) declares: “In Liverpool, England in the mid-1980s, our sister organization played the leading role in the establishment of a socialist majority on the city council,” and that “The Liverpool socialist council, backed up by mass demonstrations and strikes of the city’s workers, refused to impose cuts as dictated by the Thatcher government...” Actually, as part of a struggle with Thatcher & Co., the “Liverpool socialist council” *terminated the contracts of tens of thousands of municipal workers!* As Taaffe himself has written:

“The Labour group [in the Liverpool council] decided on the ‘tactic’ of issuing 90-day redundancy notices to the 30,000 strong workforce to gain that period as a breathing space in order to build the campaign.... However, the issuing of ‘redundancy notices’ turned out to be a major tactical error.”

—Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn, *Liverpool – A City That Dared to Fight* (1988)

This is the utterly reformist tradition that Socialist Alternative follows, even as it tries to cover itself with the revolutionary mantle of Trotskyism. While not so blatant, the program of piecemeal reforms to capitalism is common to the ISO, Socialist Action, Freedom Socialist Party and all groups of the social-democratic spectrum. Since they have largely interchangeable programs, the question arises, why don’t they join together, or at least support each other’s candidates? When SAlt proposed to the ISO that it endorse Sawant’s 2012 campaign for the state legislature, the ISO dismissed it as “shoe-string effort.” Yet as it dawned on them that Sawant might win for city council, the ISO switched gears and effusively endorsed her.

But then, opportunism is the name of the game for the reformist pseudo-socialists. The absence of revolutionary substance is precisely what appealed to *The Stranger*, which usually backs Democrats, in endorsing Sawant. It noted “one of the biggest contrasts between Conlin and Sawant: The politics of the possible. Sawant doesn’t talk revolution like your typical clown-variety

socialist...” This bourgeois seal of approval was proudly reproduced on votesawant.org. Certainly Sawant stayed well away from the dreaded “R-word.” Yet in this epoch of decaying capitalism, with social programs and union gains under assault across the board, the “politics of the possible” are a lie. The ruling class will not bestow lasting reforms on the working people and the oppressed, and any advances will be the product of hard class struggle pointing to socialist revolution.

While SAlt, SA, ISO, FSP et al. may make a ritual tip of the hat to Lenin and Trotsky, their practical politics are quite different from those of the Bolshevik leaders. To be sure, Marxist revolutionaries do not reject using the platform of bourgeois elections and parliaments – always making it clear that this is the terrain of the class enemy, that workers and the oppressed cannot peacefully take power through the ballot box – in order to expose the crimes of capitalism, dissipate illusions in bourgeois “democracy” and agitate for socialist revolution. Writing on the Bolsheviks’ election campaign to the tsar’s toothless Duma, Lenin declared: “the substance and mainspring of the Social-Democratic election platform can be expressed in three words: for the revolution!” (“The Election Campaign and the Election Platform,” October 1911).

As Trotskyists, the Internationalist Group calls to break with all the capitalist parties, and to oust the pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats who chain workers to the Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism. We call for building a workers party, not a milk-sop parliamentary labor party as in Britain, but a revolutionary workers party to lead the exploited and oppressed in class struggle. This is very different from the SAlt/SA/ISO/FSP social democrats who, although they may sometimes run their own candidates, look to the formation of a (bourgeois) “third party,” what Sawant called a “mass political alternative to the two-party system.” This is why they all look to the likes of Ralph Nader or the Greens while spouting populist rhetoric.

The election of Socialist Alternative candidate Kshama Sawant to one of nine positions on the Seattle City Council with 93,000 votes reflects wide discontent with the Democratic Party of Obama and the Clintons, which mimics the Republicans on virtually every issue. But that discontent is reflected as well in liberal/reformist enthusiasm for Democrat de Blasio in New York. Sawant declared that “I think we have shown the strongest skeptics that the socialist label is not a bad one for a grassroots campaign to succeed.” Red-baiting certainly doesn’t have as much political mileage as it used to, but as the reformists look to the ballot box with cookie-cutter social-democratic campaigns, revolutionary communists look to the class struggle.

Electing a “socialist” in a one-party Democratic town like Seattle may liven up the city council, but don’t count on much more. Sawant’s first action as councilwoman-elect has been to announce that she will join the mayor-elect’s “Advisory Committee of business and labor leaders” to discuss the \$15/hour minimum wage. The clear purpose of this class-collaborationist committee is to water down and delay any action, since the June deadline for its report would make a ballot initiative on the issue next to impossible. A class-struggle program to fight poverty wages would be to organize low-wage workers into a fighting union that could undertake real strike action. But that won’t be decided in the city council.

The inglorious history of “municipal socialism” is symbolized in the U.S. by the “sewer socialism” of Milwaukee’s racist Socialist mayor, Victor Berger. In France on the other hand, the “red belt” of working-class suburbs surrounding Paris were administered by Communist-led city councils for over half a century, and some still are. While housing projects were built, with the mass unemployment produced by capitalism, these turned into high-rise ghettos besieged by the cops. In Britain’s cities, Labour-led councils were common, but Thatcher hobbled them by sharply restricting their finances. “Think globally, act locally” may be a watchword of liberals, but tinkering with local issues is not a road to revolution. Over a century ago, Lenin wrote:

“The bourgeois intelligentsia of the West, like the English Fabians, elevate municipal socialism to a special ‘trend’ precisely because it dreams of social peace, of class conciliation, and seeks to divert public attention away from the fundamental questions of the economic system as a whole, and of the state structure as a whole, to minor questions of local self-government.”

As capitalism spirals downward, the U.S. is mired in the fifth year of economic depression, with wages continuing to fall and millions of workers unemployed so long that the government has written them out of the workforce. Obama’s “affordable health care” act has ensured mega-profits for insurers, increased premiums for union workers, and is cutting off funds for hospitals that serve the uninsured, notably undocumented immigrants. “Immigration reform” is a dead letter, while Obama has deported almost two million people. Even as Washington’s global clout declines, it keeps raining death from the skies with its drones. Yet far from fighting imperialism, the social democrats all support the Syrian “rebels” who are clamoring for U.S. support.

The struggles for the immediate needs of workers and the oppressed must be linked to the fight to forge a revolutionary workers party. The reformists talk about “change” not revolution, about corporations not capitalism, about the 99% rather than the working class, and SAlt would have us “imagine 200 Occupy candidates running for Congress this year.” Social democrats promote illusions in bourgeois democracy and the supposed reformability of capitalism. Genuine communists, in contrast, use the capitalist electoral platform – and every other venue – to prepare our class for decisive battles to sweep away the exploiters and oppressors. As the 1912 election platform of the Russian Bolsheviks proclaimed, they participated in elections “in order to prepare an army of class-conscious fighters for a new Russian revolution.”

As it fights against poverty wages, unaffordable housing and health care, a communist campaign would emphasize that the imperialist war abroad and the war on workers here is one and the same. Only international socialist revolution that smashes the capitalist state and raises the working class to power can overcome the deepening impoverishment of the masses, by instituting a global planned economy, freed from the constraints of private property. As a metastasizing police state spreads its cancer everywhere, repressing the oppressed and spying on everyone, only the working class in power can put an end to wage slavery and rescue human culture from mounting barbarism. ■

Petraeus, ROTC Out! Drop All the Charges – Cops Off Campus! Smash CUNY Board of Trustees' Drive to Ban Student Protest!

The following leaflet was issued on 21 November 2013. For extensive coverage of the struggle this past fall against militarization of the City University of New York – particularly the hiring of war criminal and former CIA director David Petraeus and the reintroduction of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps – see the newspaper of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, *Revolution* No. 10, October 2013.

Closely linked to its drive to militarize CUNY, the Board of Trustees has launched a head-on assault on the most basic rights of everyone who works and studies at the City University of New York. Cooked up in secret, its proposed “expressive conduct” policy has a laughable name – but the attack is dead serious. What they’re trying to ram through is an outright *ban on student protest*.

This attack must be denounced, defied, and defeated, by massively and militantly exercising the very rights they’re trying to take away. **ALL OUT ON NOVEMBER 25**, when a range of groups have called to demonstrate against the Board of Trustees meeting being held at Baruch College (Lexington and 25th St.) beginning at 3:30 p.m.

What’s needed is *mass, militant mobilization* of students, teachers and workers – drawing in sectors of the city’s multi-millioned working class, and the oppressed population that faces racist police repression on a daily basis – to *smash* the attack from these arrogant, unelected and increasingly dictatorial representatives of the city’s capitalist elite.

As the CUNY Internationalist Clubs have documented in our paper, *Revolution*, the trustees have been following a script written by the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing business think tank. In the past months, the CUNY tops have:

- Hired war criminal David “Death Squad” Petraeus and reinstated the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps.
- Unleashed violent police repression, targeting protesters for beatings, arrest and prosecution.
- Seized the Morales-Shakur Center at City College while locking down the campus.
- Suspended CCNY activists, banned them from campus, then had them jailed and charged by the District Attorney and NYPD.
- Pushed the “expressive conduct” policy aimed at banning and criminalizing campus protest.

We demand that all the charges and disciplinary measures be dropped. Restore the Morales-Shakur Center. All cops off campus!

Together with militarization, the bankers, real-estate speculators and union-busters who make up the Board of Trustees seek the privatization, elitization, “whitening” and corporatization of CUNY. The BoT and administration can’t be reformed or made to “represent us” – they must be *abolished*. CUNY should be run by elected councils of students, teachers and workers, with *open admissions and no tuition*. The importance of bringing in the power of the multiracial



CUNY Internationalist Clubs banner at November 25 protest outside Board of Trustees meeting against administration’s attempt to outlaw student protest.

working class is shown by CUNY’s own history – open admissions was originally won when militant student protest gained key backing from city labor.

Formed in the struggle against CUNY’s “anti-immigrant war purge” in 2001, the Internationalist Clubs win students to the fight for socialist revolution. There is no way to “liberate CUNY for the people” under the capitalist system of exploitation, racism and war. Nor will racist police brutality be ended by Bill de Blasio and the Democratic Party of imperialist commander-in-chief Obama (whose favorite general is David Petraeus). Workers and youth can’t wage effective struggle against attacks from the capitalist

government if they are chained to the capitalist politicians that run that government. And with even a fraction of the resources it poured into backing de Blasio, the PSC faculty/staff union could and should mobilize many of its 25,000 members against the BoT’s attacks. Everyone must understand that we are facing a crucial battle.

To unchain the power of NYC’s labor and oppressed, the *political* fight must be waged – against all forms of capitalist politics, for a revolutionary workers party. The struggle against militarization and repression at CUNY can and will be won as part of the fight for the workers to take over society here and around the world. Join us in that fight! ■

No Criticism of Democrats at Petraeus Protests? Nonsense See With Your Own Eyes How They Lie

By now many people know that the formerly Trotskyist Spartacist League is in the habit of distorting, falsifying and just plain lying about the positions of the Internationalist Group. What they cannot stand is that we have continued to uphold the fundamental positions of Trotskyism that the SL has increasingly abandoned as it slides deeper into centrism and cynical despair. Most striking about this is that they make claims that anyone can see are false.

A clinical example is the utterly false assertion by the SL that in protests against the reintroduction of the U.S. military’s Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and the hiring of war criminal David Petraeus to “teach” at the City University of New York this fall, the IG and the Ad Hoc Committee Against the Militarization of CUNY, in which the CUNY Internationalist Clubs have played an active role, were silent about the Democratic Party.

An article in the SL’s *Workers Vanguard* (4 October) stated, “The IG is only too happy to ditch its paper opposition to the Democrats for the sake of joint statements of unity with liberals and reformists.” SL supporters would brazenly claim that we were “ducking the issue of the Democratic Party”

while standing in demonstrations where there were multiple signs, chants and speeches denouncing the Democrats.

Once again at a November 8 rally at City College to protest the suspension of two activists of the Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee and the seizure by the administration of the Morales-Shakur Center, a speaker for the SL said: “The Internationalist Groups [sic] over here, which claims to be Marxist, said not one word opposing the Democrats for most of the semester, in order to maintain their bloc with other reformist student groups, like the RSCC.”¹

SLers later claimed that the reference to “most of the semester” was stuck in since earlier during the rally IG supporter Sándor John had attacked the Democrats. Yet not only did we denounce the Democratic Party and Democratic president Barack Obama in one speech after another since the beginning of the semester, so did our published materials and our signs, which, unfortunately for the SL, can be verified by anyone who looks at the photos shown here.

¹ Both can be seen on a videotape of the rally at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A5imjyiduU>.

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Protest at October 16 gala at John Jay College against David Petraeus, the former CIA director, former Afghanistan and Iraq U.S. occupation forces commander and war criminal hired to “teach” at CUNY.

Demonstrations Against War Criminal Petraeus and Militarization of CUNY



August 31



September 3



September 9



September 16



September 17



September 23

Internationalist photos

See How...

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In fact, the flier we put out when Petraeus's appointment was announced in the spring, which was widely distributed during the protests this fall, denounces the "Democratic/Republican war party's endless colonial carnage."² This leaflet is reprinted in the CUNY Internationalist Clubs' newspaper *Revolution* (October 2013), along with other articles detailing the crimes of the Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism, notably in the Vietnam War.

Moreover, beginning at the very first protest this semester, on August 31 over U.S.

² Available online at <http://www.internationalist.org/petraeusoutofcuny1304.html>.

war threats against Syria, we had numerous signs denouncing the Democratic Party. Our chant, "Remember Hiroshima, remember Vietnam, Democratic Party, we know which side you're on," was one of the most popular then and in every protest since then. This slogan was also prominently displayed on IG signs, along with others including:

- "Against the Democrat/Republican Party of Imperialist War – Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!"
- "Petraeus, Obama, Bush, Steele, Kerry, Clinton – Imperialist War Criminals"
- "Against the Democratic/Republican Party of Imperialist War: For Workers Revolution"

Many of the same signs can be seen in our video "Police Attack CUNY Protest

Against War Criminal Petraeus" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUw7109XepM>) – despite SLers' brazen claims that the video shows no signs against the Democrats.

The pathological pattern of prevarication seeks to cover the SL's centrist political degeneration, manifested most spectacularly in their support for the 2010 invasion of Haiti by U.S. imperialism under Democratic commander in chief Obama. After months of vociferously defending this imperialist line, and shrieking denunciations of the IG for opposing the occupation, the SL made a self-criticism, without trying to get to the roots of this betrayal.

Meanwhile, their falsehoods and slanders against the Internationalists continue.

Leon Trotsky's Transitional Program ends with the memorable call:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives – these are the rules of the Fourth International."

For the latter-day Spartacist League, this has all been turned on its head – their guidelines are to be false in little things as in big, to lie to the masses, to turn their back on the class struggle, to run away when the hour for action arrives – in the service of a political program that runs ever more clearly counter to that of the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky. ■

Defend Wyatt...

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with mass picketing. But to do that, and defeat union-busting outfits like the Freedom Foundation, a class-struggle leadership must replace the sellout labor bureaucracy now sitting atop the unions. And when our brothers and sisters stand up to the anti-union bullies, all of labor must support and defend them.

The local AFL-CIO wouldn't support the September 5 picket initiated by Cross Trade Solidarity. Speaking at an October 26 fundraiser for his defense campaign held at the Musicians Local 99 Hall in Portland, Wyatt reported that the response of labor officialdom was "ignore it, don't worry about it, don't fight these people, don't show up, we've got it taken care of." Yet when "we showed up it was really exciting to see the ILWU out there, the Carpenters, the Painters and all these different unions that have jurisdictional issues, who fight all the time over nonsense, coming together to actually fight over real problems, which is the right wing *and the Democrats*."

"In my experience," McMinn continued, "one of the biggest roadblocks in the organized labor movement is the AFL-CIO bureaucracy." At the September 2013 state AFL-CIO convention in Bend, Oregon, where McMinn was a delegate, the bureaucrats advised attendees that in talking about "right-to-work" not to mention unions, "because unions don't poll well." "I think that's the problem with organized labor," Wyatt summed up. "We don't attack enough. We should be proud to be in unions, even if that's the minority." The way to defeat "right to work" is by showing up to oppose them wherever they raise their heads, and also to "fight the bigots who hide under the Tea Party banner," such as the American Freedom

Party, outright Nazis who have begun to organize in Portland.

But in order to mobilize the unions to take action, it is necessary above all to break with the Democrats and oust the bureaucrats who chain the workers to the capitalist laws and political parties. As an Internationalist Group banner at the defense meeting/fundraiser proclaimed: "Capitalism Can Not Be Reformed – Build a Revolutionary Workers Party." ■

Defend Syria...

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to launch U.S. bombing of North Vietnam; and the case of the non-existent weapons of mass destruction used to justify the attack on Iraq, to cite only a few of the most notorious examples.

For now, in the face of popular opposition, reticence by the military and possibly by the increasingly evident fact that anti-Western *jihadi* forces (holy warriors) are in now the forefront of the armed rebels, Obama has put "on hold" his intention of attacking Syria. But that does not eliminate the threat. From 2005 on, public opinion polls in the U.S. showed a majority of the population was against the Iraq war and in favor of withdrawal of the troops, but U.S. forces stayed for six more years. At any moment, and for reasons that have nothing to do with Syrian reality, the Pentagon could launch its cruise missiles in order to rain death on Damascus and other Syrian cities.

As internationalist communists we do not fight for a different "foreign policy" for the Yankee empire but rather for its defeat, to smash imperialism. That requires the mobilization of the world working class to sweep away the capitalist system, which in its death agony unleashes one war after another and which constantly generates poverty, racism and the social oppression suffered by the vast majority of the planet's

population on the basis of the exploitation by a tiny bourgeois minority of the working people who produce all the wealth. The League for the Fourth International calls for the formation of workers parties in every country on the Leninist and Trotskyist program of the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the program of international socialist revolution. ■

Ecuador...

sigue de la página 24

siguiente, retirándose bajo el ataque, Paola Pabón capituló en la Asamblea Legislativa. En su discurso de rendición, después de apelar a Correa ("con el inmenso cariño que te tenemos, te decimos que esta vez te estás equivocando"), continuó: "por la unidad de esta bancada... retiro mi moción".

No contento con haber forzado el retiro de la moción, el "tío duro" Correa insistió en que AP sancionara a Pabón, Soledad Buendía y Gina Godoy. Y de hecho, las tres asambleístas fueron suspendidas de sus puestos durante todo el mes de noviembre por haberse atrevido a proponer esta liberalización extremadamente limitada de las leyes contra el aborto. Aunque la humillación pública de estas legisladoras tiene un inequívoco tufo machista, refleja también el carácter cada vez más autoritario de la presidencia de Correa, en la que toda forma de disidencia izquierdista está sujeta a represión estatal.

Criminalización de la protesta social en el Ecuador de Correa

El presidente ecuatoriano Rafael Correa ganó cierta reputación como defensor de la libertad hace unos meses al sugerir la posibilidad de dar asilo a Edward Snowden, quién reveló el masivo espionaje contra civiles realizado por la Agencia Nacional de Seguridad de los Estados Unidos. Correa también ha celebrado la Constitución que patrocinó en 2008 como ejemplo de "democracia participativa". Sin embargo, el día que inició sesiones la Asamblea Constituyente que escribió la Constitución, el gobierno de Correa lanzó un brutal ataque contra la parroquia amazónica de

League for the Fourth International

LFI, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Internationalist Group/U.S.

Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.
E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com
New York Tel. (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711
Portland Tel. (971) 282-7903

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Brazil: write to Caixa Postal 084027, CEP 27251-740, Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil
Rio de Janeiro: write to Caixa Postal 3982, CEP 20001-974, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil
E-mail: lqb1996@yahoo.com.br

LIVI/Deutschland

Germany: write to Postfach 74 06 41, 22096 Hamburg, Germany

Grupo Internacionalista/México

México: write to Apartado Postal 12-201, Admón. Postal Obrero Mundial, CP 03001, México D.F, México
E-mail: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx
Tel. Mexico City: 55-3154-7361; Guadalajara: 33-1752-6643; Oaxaca: 951-129-2086

Dayuma, donde rebeldes indígenas habían tenido la temeridad de bloquear un camino, paralizando así la producción de petróleo. Este patrón, consistente en escupir retórica democrática mientras reprime la protesta social, ha seguido desde entonces.

Las acciones autoritarias del populista Correa se han intensificado considerablemente en este, su tercer período, tras haber obtenido un triunfo aplastante en las elecciones presidenciales de febrero (con un 57 %). En junio, el *sumo pontífice* de la república andina lanzó un ataque contra movimientos independientes de obreros, campesinos, indígenas e izquierdistas mediante el Decreto Presidencial 016. Su personal, finanzas, estatutos y declaraciones políticas estarían, a partir de entonces, sujetos al control estatal. Bajo este decreto, los sindicatos obreros tienen ahora prohibido hacer declaraciones políticas o pronunciarse a favor de candidatos. Lo mismo vale para los grupos indígenas, de modo que la Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (CONAIE) tiene ahora prohibido trabajar con el partido político burgués Pachakutik, que aquella engendró.

La tutela estatal sobre todos los movimientos sociales ha sido impuesta mediante una fuerte represión judicial que acusa a los izquierdistas de “terrorismo” y “sabotaje”. El año pasado el legislador de Pachakutik Pepe Acacho y el dirigente indígena shuar Pedro Mashiant fueron sentenciados a 12 años de cárcel sobre la base de tales acusaciones debido a que dirigieron una protesta en 2009 en la que un profesor shuar murió en un enfrentamiento con la policía. Otro diputado de Pachakutik, Cléver Jiménez, fue sentenciado a 18 meses de cárcel junto con dos dirigentes sindicales bajo el Artículo 494 del Código Penal que ordena el encarcelamiento de aquellos que insulten o acusen falsamente a autoridades gubernamentales. Incluso estudiantes de bachillerato han sido arrestados por protestar.

La lucha por la liberación de la mujer

A final de cuentas, la reforma del Código Penal ecuatoriano fue aprobada en la Asamblea Nacional el 17 de diciembre. La propuesta de artículo 150, que habría castigado a los profesionales médicos por la realización de cualquier aborto, fue eliminada. No obstante, con pequeñas modificaciones se conservó la ley previa que prohíbe el aborto en el 99 por ciento de los casos. A pesar de que las encuestas de opinión muestran que dos terceras partes de la población apoyan el derecho a abortar en caso de violación, los legisladores se rehusaron a permitir los abortos incluso en el caso de niñas de 14 años y menos. Esta derrota para los derechos de la mujer fue resultado de la sumisión a los dictados del presidente y de los partidos burgueses.

No sólo los legisladores de la Alianza PAÍS capitularon ante las amenazas de Correa, sino que lo hizo también buena parte de la izquierda supuestamente socialista. Durante una protesta afuera de la Asamblea Nacional cuando se debatía la cuestión, una portavoz de la Juventud Comunista del Ecuador (JCE) llamó por permitir el aborto para las niñas pequeñas, “aclaró que seguirá apoyando el proyecto político gobiernista, que se enfoca en mejorar las condiciones sociales, educativas y del buen vivir a través de propuestas de diálogo” (*El Telégrafo* [Guayaquil], 14 de diciembre). ¡Vaya “diálogo”! ¡Cualquiera que disienta de la línea del presidente es acusado de “traición” y quienes protestan en las calles en su contra

son encarcelados por “terrorismo” y “sabotaje”!

El Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista del Ecuador (PCMLE) apoyó el llamado por la “despenalización del aborto, reivindicación por la que han luchado por décadas las organizaciones de mujeres y políticas de izquierda” (*En Marcha*, 1 de noviembre). Esto es interesante, viniendo de un partido que despliega

en la primera plana de su periódico la efigie de Stalin, quien en 1936 proscribió el aborto, revirtiendo así el legado bolchevique.² El PCMLE puede incluso llamar por la “derrotar el dominio del capital para alcanzar la liberación de la mujer” (*En Marcha*, 4 de marzo de 2011). Pero como lo archiestalinista que es, el PCMLE presenta la cuestión como una de derechos democráticos, sin ir a las raíces de la desigualdad social de la mujer en la familia. (También es prácticamente mudo en lo que toca a los derechos de los homosexuales).

El pionero socialista Charles Fourier señaló que el grado de emancipación de la mujer es una medida clave del nivel de progreso social en una sociedad. Ya en el *Manifiesto Comunista* (1848) los fundadores del comunismo moderno hablaron de la abolición (*Aufhebung*) o superación de la familia para “acabar con la situación de la mujer como mero instrumento de producción”. Friedrich Engels en *El origen de la familia, la propiedad privada y el estado* (1884) explicó la opresión de la mujer sobre la base de la aparición de la sociedad de clases, en la que la institución de la familia surgió para transmitir la propiedad, convirtiendo así a la mujer en propiedad de su amo. Al reconocer esto, los bolcheviques victoriosos lucharon por la emancipación de la mujer de la esclavitud doméstica.

En América Latina hoy en día, el aborto sigue prohibido en prácticamente todos los casos, excepto en Cuba y, con restricciones, en otras pocas jurisdicciones (Guyana, Puerto Rico, y recientemente Uruguay y la Ciudad de México). Como hemos señalado antes, aunque el derecho al aborto es un derecho democrático, será necesaria una dura lucha de clases rumbo a una revolución socialista para hacerlo realidad para todas las mujeres. La oposición de Rafael Correa y otros populistas “de izquierda” a los derechos reproductivos de las mujeres es parte de su apoyo al capitalismo, a pesar de toda su falsa retórica acerca de la implementación del “socialismo del siglo XXI” sin expropiar al capital. Como señaló el dirigente bolchevique Vladimir Lenin en su artículo “El poder soviético y la situación de la mujer” (1919):

“La democracia burguesa promete de palabra la libertad y la igualdad. Pero en la práctica ni una sola república burguesa, ni la más avanzada, ha otorgado a la mujer (la mitad del género humano) plena igualdad de derechos con los hombres, ante la ley, ni ha liberado a la mujer de la dependencia y opresión de los hombres.... La democracia

² Véase León Trotsky, “Terminador en el hogar” en *La revolución traicionada* (1936)



Protesta frente al consulado de El Salvador en Nueva York, el 5 de junio de 2013, contra la prohibición del aborto hasta en el caso de la joven “Beatriz” cuya vida estuvo en peligro.

burguesa es la democracia de las frases pomposas, de las palabras solemnes, de las promesas liberales, de las consignas grandilocuentes sobre libertad e igualdad”.

Los marxistas entienden que bajo el capitalismo, el sistema de la propiedad privada y de la producción para la ganancia, hay severos límites para la genuina igualdad social de la mujer. Como señalamos en un artículo en defensa de una joven mujer salvadoreña, “Beatriz”, a quien se le negó el derecho a practicarse un aborto terapéutico: “No es casual que el primer país en legalizar el aborto fue la Rusia soviética, en 1920, a raíz de la Revolución de Octubre”. De hecho, los bolcheviques implementaron el “aborto libre y gratuito”, que es por lo que la Liga por la IV Internacional llama hoy en día. Señalamos que “La opresión de la mujer no será abolida por medio de meras reformas legislativas” y presentamos un programa obrero que apunta a la necesidad de una revolución socialista que incluye las siguientes reivindicaciones:

- guarderías gratuitas, accesibles 24 horas del día;
- pago igual por trabajo igual;
- la separación del estado de la religión;
- el derecho irrestricto al divorcio;
- plenos derechos para los homosexuales, contra toda intromisión del estado en las relaciones sexuales consensuales;

- abolición de trabas, legales o de facto, que impiden acceso a empleos calificados;
- socialización del trabajo doméstico;
- medicina socializada gratuita y de alta calidad.

–“Contra la prohibición del aborto en El Salvador” (suplemento especial de *El Internacionalista*, junio de 2013)

Así como la lucha por la desdiscriminación del aborto está ligada a la lucha contra las políticas represivas del gobierno de Correa, la lucha por la liberación de la mujer no puede separarse de la más amplia lucha de clases en contra de la opresión social producida por el capitalismo. En Ecuador, obreras, indígenas y afroecuatorianas serán dirigentes clave de la revolución socialista. Las luchadoras a favor de los oprimidos han jugado un papel fundamental a lo largo de la historia de Ecuador, particularmente en las luchas de los pueblos indígenas. Manuela León dirigió la revuelta de diciembre de 1871 en Yaruquies, Chimborazo, en tanto que Juana Calcán dirigió en levantamiento en 1899 en Pesillo en el norte de Ecuador con una hija pequeña, Lucía Lechón, en su espalda.³

En el siglo XX, Dolores Cuacuango fue organizadora de los sindicatos campesinos de Cayambe y fundadora de la Federación Ecuatoriana Indígena, pionera de la educación indígena, destacada luchadora a favor de los derechos de las mujeres y dirigente del Partido Comunista, así como defensora de los ecuatorianos negros y mulatos. Como trotskistas, nos basamos en el programa de la *revolución permanente* para emancipar a la clase obrera y a todos los oprimidos, incluyendo los campesinos pobres, los pueblos indígenas y los afroecuatorianos, luchando por un *gobierno obrero, campesino e indígena* que inicie la revolución socialista. Hoy más que nunca, ya que en la actualidad la décima parte de la población ecuatoriana ha sido forzada a emigrar, la revolución sólo puede ser completada a escala internacional.

¡Liberación de la mujer mediante la revolución socialista!

³ Marc Becker, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements* [Indígenas e izquierdistas en la creación de los modernos movimientos indígenas de Ecuador] (2008)

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¡Aborto libre y gratuito!

Ecuador: Correa ataca el derecho de la mujer al aborto!

20 de DICIEMBRE de 2013 – Actualmente hay una ofensiva contra el derecho de la mujer a abortar, que se extiende desde EE.UU. hasta Centro y Sudamérica. Son notables los casos de Nicaragua y El Salvador, a los que ahora se suma Ecuador, tres países con gobiernos supuestamente izquierdistas: del Frente Sandinista para la Liberación Nacional (FSLN), el Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) y la Alianza PAIS, respectivamente. Como en el caso de la campaña internacional para la privatización de la educación pública, esta ofensiva contra la mujer no puede tomarse aisladamente en cada país. Aún más grotesco es el hecho de que no son gobiernos derechistas los que encabezan este ataque concertado en contra de la mujer, sino gobiernos que dicen ser “progresistas”.

Un caso emblemático es Ecuador, donde el presidente es Rafael Correa, un populista burgués que llegó a la presidencia en 2007 y que acaba de ser reelecto por tercera vez. Jactándose de dirigir una “revolución ciudadana” mediante políticas nacionalistas y reformas sociales,¹ Correa recientemente soltó una amenaza con el propósito de impedir la menor consideración de una reforma a la legislación sobre el aborto. “Que hagan lo que quieran, pero jamás aprobaré la legalización del aborto”, tronó, al acusar a legisladoras de su Alianza PAIS de “deslealtad” y “traición” por haber propuesto la legalización del aborto en caso de violación. De persistir en el empeño, Correa amenazó con renunciar a la presidencia, e incluso

¹ Véase nuestro artículo “¿Revolución “ciudadana” u obrera? Ecuador necesita un gobierno obrero, campesino e indígena”, *El Internacionalista* (diciembre de 2007)

después de que las legisladoras retiraron su propuesta, este autoritario dirigente que se describe a sí mismo como “humanista, católico y de izquierda” exigió que las diputadas fueran sancionadas y, posiblemente, destituidas.

La virulenta oposición de Correa a la legalización del aborto fue inmediatamente aplaudida por algunas de las fuerzas más reaccionarias. El presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal de Ecuador, monseñor Antonio Arregui, alabó el vituperio presidencial contra el aborto, y en particular “la valentía y la nobleza de ánimo con que habló”. La Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco, que promueve el legado del ultraderechista católico nacionalista y misógino dictador español, se unió al coro de alabanzas. El hecho de que Correa no esté solo entre los nacionalistas “de izquierda” que atacan el derecho al aborto no pasó inadvertido en la prensa imperialista. El diario madrileño *El País* (26 de octubre) tituló un artículo “La izquierda beata de América Latina”.

En contra de esta profana alianza de derecha e “izquierda” en contra de los derechos de la mujer, el Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional llaman a *derogar todas las leyes que penalizan o restringen el aborto* y a luchar por *aborto libre y gratuito*, en condiciones seguras y en instalaciones de cuidado médico de alta calidad. Terminar o no con un embarazo no deseado es una decisión que atañe exclusivamente a la mujer, pues se trata de su cuerpo y es ella quien tendrá que lidiar con las consecuencias. *Obispos, políticos capitalistas: ¡saquen las manos! Llamamos a defender las clínicas de aborto* y a la movilización en contra de los fanáticos reaccionarios



Alianza por la Solidaridad

Activistas forman una “alfombra roja” frente a la Asamblea Legislativa ecuatoriana el 27 de septiembre exigiendo la despenalización del aborto.

que amenazan con arruinar las vidas de las mujeres (e incluso con asesinar al personal médico que practica abortos) en nombre del “derecho a la vida” de un embrión o un feto, que no es un ser separado, sino un organismo en desarrollo que está unido biológicamente a la mujer, de la cual depende.

El problema del derecho al aborto en Ecuador es bien concreto: según la Organización Mundial de la Salud y el Ministerio de Salud nacional, un estimado de 125 mil abortos son practicados cada año en el país (es decir, unos 350 diarios en un país de 15 millones de habitantes). Las complicaciones derivadas de abortos clandestinos representan la tercera causa de muerte para las mujeres. En un estudio reciente realizado por el Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC) y el Ministerio del Interior en 18 mil hogares ecuatorianos, una de cada cuatro mujeres de 15 años o más ha sufrido abuso sexual, y seis de cada diez han sufrido abuso doméstico. Hospitales reportan que reciben cada año a entre 20 y 30 mil mujeres debido a complicaciones resultantes de abortos clandestinos.

Desde 1971, el Código Penal de Ecuador ha estipulado, bajo las secciones 441-447 del Artículo 149, que el aborto puede ser legal sólo en casos en los que la vida de la mujer está seriamente en peligro, así como para víctimas de violación con “discapacidad mental”. En los demás casos, según la ley en vigor, el personal médico que practique un aborto enfrenta una pena de entre dos y cinco años de cárcel, en tanto que la mujer puede ser encarcelada entre uno y cinco años.

El actual período legislativo de la Asamblea Nacional ecuatoriana ha tenido como

objeto discutir la iniciativa de Ley propuesta por Correa para ajustar globalmente el código penal. Entre sus propuestas para un Código Orgánico Integral Penal (COIP) se encontraba un nuevo Artículo 150 que sancionaría a los profesionales médicos en *cualquier* caso en que estuvieran involucrados en la terminación de un embarazo. En respuesta, el 10 de octubre la legisladora Soledad Buendía de la Alianza PAIS (AP) se pronunció por la descriminalización del aborto en caso de violación. Otra asambleísta de la AP, Paola Pabón, propuso una moción para permitir el aborto durante el primer trimestre (12 semanas) en caso de que lo solicitara una víctima de violación, y para rechazar el propuesto artículo 150. Mientras hablaba ante la Asamblea, activistas del Frente por la Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos se manifestaban afuera.

En torno a las 7 p.m., la Asamblea tomó un breve receso. Sin embargo, eso luego resultó en la posposición de la discusión de la moción hasta el día siguiente. Esa misma noche el presidente Correa apareció en vivo en Oromar TV con su diatriba:

“¿Dónde se habla de despenalizar el aborto? Por el contrario, la Constitución dice defender la vida desde la concepción. Cualquier cosa que se aparte de esto es simplemente traición... Yo jamás aprobaré la despenalización del aborto más allá de lo que consta en las actuales leyes. Es más, si siguen estas traiciones y deslealtades... yo presentaré mi renuncia al cargo.”

Junto con la alabanza del arzobispo Arregui de Guayaquil, Guillermo Lasso, dirigente de la derechista oposición burguesa del CREO, expresó su total apoyo al presidente. Al día *sigue en la página 22*



El presidente ecuatoriano Rafael Correa y el papa católico Francisco, furibundos adversarios del aborto. ¡Políticos y clérigos, saquen las manos!

EFE

¡Liberación de la mujer mediante la revolución socialista!