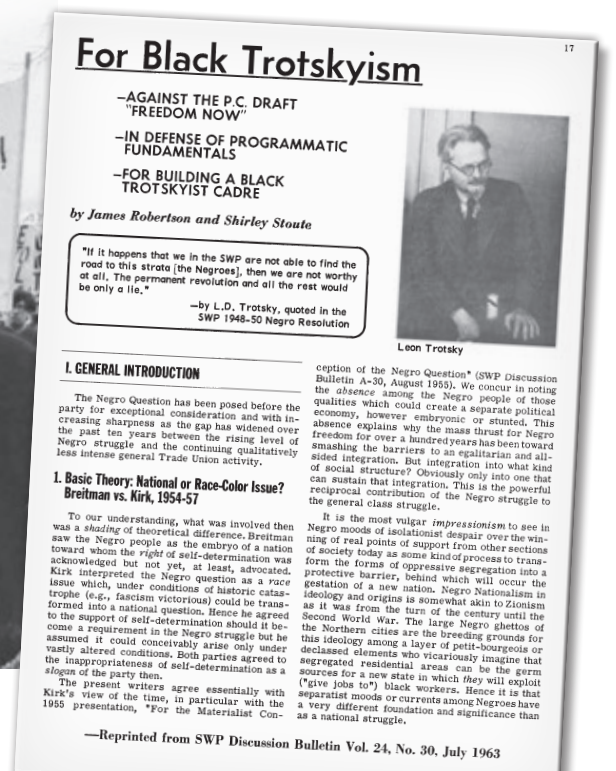


Liberalism: Dead End for Black Liberation

For Black Trotskyism



Boston busing crisis, 1974: Against the liberals, Spartacists raised communist program to fight against segregation. Inset: 1963 document of Revolutionary Tendency, precursor of SL, attacked Socialist Workers Party's refusal to fight for leadership of black struggle.



For a Multiracial Vanguard Party!

The following is an edited version of the report by SL/U.S. National Chairman Erica Jones on the black question, given at the 16th National Conference of the SL/U.S.

The title of this presentation is "For Black Trotskyism (II)." Thanks, Donau, for the suggestion.

I thought it would be good to begin this report by talking about a discussion I had earlier this week with the International Executive Committee delegation and a number of comrades on the current slate proposal. It came off a discussion I had

about Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the Revolutionary Blackout Network (RBN). I argued that I didn't think that RBN was a black nationalist organization because they don't argue like hardened "down with whitey" nationalists. And, yeah, they may be an all-black group, but that doesn't mean they are nationalists. What's wrong with an all-black organization, we call for black transitional organizations? This was completely wrong!

First, I was being totally soft on RBN. They are not calling to build an inte-

grated party, they are calling for a black-led group with "allies," not dissimilar to the Panthers, and we have to argue how that is counterposed to what's *necessary* to win black liberation, that is, building a *multiracial Leninist vanguard party*. That is the *only* basis on which to build a Leninist party in the U.S. This fundamental point *must* be motivated in counterposition to what RBN is pushing. We're not gonna be able to win any black workers or activists to Trotskyism by tailing them on this question.

Second, our call for a transitional organization of the black struggle is based on its standing as a connecting link between the *party* and the broader masses. It is an application of our fight for revolutionary integrationism. Its purpose is to facilitate winning black Trotskyists—and not just black Trotskyists, but white Trotskyists, too—to our party. It's about cutting through the racial divide and building unity in the class based on a revolutionary program to fight black oppression. As we

continued on page 7

Editorial

SL/U.S. National Conference: Return to Road of Lenin and Trotsky!

In this period of growing turmoil, many have been driven to action, but despite their efforts, everything just keeps getting worse. After nearly a decade of BLM protests, not a damn thing has changed for black people, with the vicious and deadly beating of Tyre Nichols being but the latest reminder. Although millions were mobilized by the

Sanders presidential campaign, health care remains a miserable joke for the masses, who lack access and coverage and are plagued by colossal costs. Access to abortion continues to evaporate despite widespread protest sparked by the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, and the status of women has only declined since many were thrown out of work and forced back into the home during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Union organizing efforts at Amazon, Starbucks and elsewhere are all caught in an endless web of legal battles, and Biden spiked the rail strike with the flick of a pen. For all the anger against the Trump regime and the state

of society, the only outcome of the "resistance" was the installment of yet another bourgeois overseer.

Why haven't conditions improved, but have only worsened for black people, workers, women and youth? The heart of the matter is leadership. The current disastrous situation is the result of the bankrupt strategy of the treacherous union bureaucracy and the fake socialists. At every step, they have betrayed the aspirations of workers and the oppressed by building trans-class alliances, searching for saviors among the political representatives of the class enemy, relying on the repressive apparatus of its state

and always staying within the bounds of the capitalists' social and economic system. Any and all such alliances with liberal bourgeois forces are guaranteed to bury struggle in defeat.

Enough of these sham, dead-end solutions! There is a way forward. This seminal issue of *Workers Vanguard* provides the answers and the way out of this impasse. It is the product of the recent SL/U.S. conference, which crucially reaffirmed the need to provide revolutionary leadership of today's struggles against the SL/U.S.'s previous abdication of this duty. To meet even the most

continued on page 2



Editorial...

(continued from page 1)

basic urgent needs of workers and the oppressed, an independent class struggle must be waged in opposition to the capitalists and their state, which defends their rule. All the liberal and reformist roadblocks must be cleared, because they hamper the struggle, pull its punches, mislead, disorganize and undermine. A non-revolutionary leadership will only disarm any movement in the face of its inevitable clashes with the capitalist state. It will be taken in by the promises of the bosses' lying politicians and hamstrung by its quest for a courteous compromise with capital. Workers need their own party, a revolutionary vanguard party leading their struggles today in a way that will further their fight for power and an end to capitalist wage slavery and oppression.

For a Communist Opposition to the Popular Front

The main conference document "The Leninist Vanguard Party vs. the Anti-Trump Popular Front" (see page 3) powerfully reasserts that only a communist leadership can advance the major struggles facing the workers and oppressed—the struggle for black liberation, the trade-union struggle, the struggle for women's emancipation, the struggle for health care—by exposing how liberalism is a complete dead end. Years of economic ruin of the working class under Democratic Party rule paved the way for the election of the overtly reactionary Trump. Layers of white workers and the petty bourgeoisie were taken in by the right-wing populism of Trump.

The Democrats pushed at a fever pitch, and still push today, the false polarization

that society is divided between "progressives" and "reactionaries." To alibi themselves, Democrats put the blame for racism and the other ills of capitalist society on Trump and his supporters. The document shows how the Democrats used hypocritical moral outrage over real fears of Trump to win back support: "because Trump is a racist, vote for the Democrats...who preside over the wanton police murder, mass incarceration and forcible segregation of the black masses in every major city, who deported record numbers of immigrants during the Obama administration, destroyed busing and welfare, and require racial oppression for the stability of their rule."

The Democrats' opposition to Trump merely represented tactical disagreements with the Republicans over the most effective way to carry out the exploitation of the working class, racial oppression and imperialist plunder. Their purpose was to propel themselves back into the White House. The Democrats' objections to Trump don't represent the interests of the workers and oppressed, which are counterposed to the perspectives of both bourgeois parties.

Trump reaction needed to be fought. It was the duty of Marxists to counterpose a communist program of action that would set class against class. The main conference document demonstrates that a communist movement against Trump was what was necessary to break through the false polarizations, to defend the working class against Trump's attacks and to split the popular front, which is a political bloc of the left with the bourgeoisie. It was a criminal betrayal that those who claim to be "socialists" and say they stand for "class independence" supported the liberals' "resistance," explicitly or implicitly. Centrist organizations like Left Voice, the

Internationalist Group and the Spartacist League/U.S. (at the time) all screamed "revolution" and "break with the Democrats" in words, but in deeds sought to mobilize labor as part of the "resistance" and push movements, like BLM, which they recognized as liberal, to the left. They refused to mobilize workers and youth on a counterposed communist program, which criminally left the leadership of the masses in the hands of the liberals.

Centrist calls to "break with the Democrats" and for an "independent workers party" are entirely compatible with a pro-capitalist social-democratic program. An organizational break with the Democrats without a political break with the programs of the trade-union bureaucracy, BLM, Sanders and all the treacherous tendencies pushing a non-revolutionary program would lead the struggles of the workers and the oppressed into the same dead end. A nominally independent, social-democratic party would necessarily betray the working class because seeking to reconcile the irreconcilable interests of the exploited and the exploiters always means sacrificing the needs of the workers. The only way to chart an independent road forward for the working class is under a leadership that knows that the interests of the capitalists must be *defeated* and will organize all the struggles of the working class to prepare its fight to take control of the whole society.

After years of capitulating to the "anti-Trump" popular front, the SL/U.S. began to implode when it crossed the class line with the article, "For Socialized Medicine" in WV No. 1170 (21 February 2020), opening up a protracted struggle by the non-resident International Secretariat against the section's revisionism. This article was published at the height of the Democrats' primary battle over the best candidate to defeat Trump. Bernie Sanders and his main campaign slogan "Medicare for All" were wildly popular among many workers and youth angry at the lack of access to and the poor quality of health care. The role of "progressive" Democrats like Sanders is to prevent social explosions by pushing false promises to channel discontent back into the confines of the Democratic Party.

Instead of counterposing the struggle for free, quality health care to Sanders and the popular front around him, WV built support for his campaign. While the article had many criticisms of Sanders and called for a revolutionary workers party, it never said, "Don't vote for Sanders," or that support to him was an obstacle to advancing the fight for better health care. WV's lame headline "No Illusions in Sanders' 'Medicare for All'" was so opportunist that people buying the paper said they also supported Sanders with criticism. The article went so far as to denounce the Nevada Culinary Workers Union tops as divisive to the workers movement because they opposed his health care campaign promise in favor of Biden's scheme (see page 6).

The health care monopolies are one of the most powerful sectors of the U.S. bourgeoisie and aren't about to give up control over their markets and profits. From the workplace to home, in every way workers' need for safe conditions and good health runs up against the interests of the entire capitalist class. To get any real improvement to health care requires a struggle that goes outside the bounds of what is acceptable to liberals like Sanders, who defend the underlying property relations that are the source of the problem. Sanders's liberal program of trying to amicably curb the worst excesses of the capitalist medical system amounts at best to the most limited and ineffectual measures and ensures that he capitulates to the slightest opposition. Only a leadership committed to the overthrow of bourgeois rule can advance the health care struggle, drawing the class line in opposition to the fake socialists and labor misleaders who betray this fight by tying workers and the oppressed to Sanders.

Supporting the Sanders campaign was just the straw that broke the camel's back. The root of the SL/U.S.'s implosion was

the conscious rejection of the fight for revolutionary leadership today. This was done with the justification that the current period is too backward and the level of class struggle too low. So, until the period changed and revolution was on the agenda, the role of the party was relegated to being a pressure group on non-revolutionary forces. Reducing the role of the party to fighting for more militant trade-union struggle and being left critics of liberal-led struggles as supposed first steps forward is the very definition of fighting for reformist leadership. The backwardness of the period, the betrayals by the reformist leaders of the working class and the retreat of the workers movement in the Trump years only underscore that workers need not only more struggle but communist leadership of those struggles.

The utter betrayal of labor and the left during the COVID-19 pandemic starkly showed that the struggle for communist leadership is a matter of life and death. Workers needed to fight for more health care, better conditions, and control of their safety against the bosses, who made the workers bear the burden of the crisis and locked everyone at home as a cheap and reactionary way to stave off the collapse of their completely decrepit health care system. This conflict of class interests posed only two paths with no centrist option: struggle against the capitalist state's monopoly on health and safety and combat the "national unity" blackmail that forced workers to submit and sacrifice, or support the bourgeoisie's reactionary health measures.

Union bureaucrats and the left went the latter route, imbibing in the bourgeoisie's blackmail and serving up workers to suffering and slaughter. After a year of capitulating, the International Communist League issued a statement of revolutionary opposition to the lockdowns that kicked off the protracted struggle to rearm the entire International, including the SL/U.S.

Black Liberation Requires Communist Leadership

The conference presentation "For Black Trotskyism" (see page 1) shows how only a multiracial Leninist vanguard party can advance the struggle for black equality and achieve the unity of the working class across racial lines. This is the decisive question for the success of the American revolution. The bourgeoisie keeps black people forcibly segregated at the bottom in order to keep society divided along race lines, obscure the class line and maintain its rule. The struggle for black freedom requires going up against fundamental capitalist interests, and that won't happen under the leadership of the liberals who defend the capitalist order. A prime example is BLM, a bourgeois-liberal movement that appeals to capitalist politicians to recognize that "black lives matter." The whole basis of BLM's program is cop reform, which leads black people to defeat because it involves them in the machinery of the capitalist state that enforces racist repression and segregation. All BLM was successful at was channeling black protest into the arms of the Democratic Party.

The presentation explains how anti-racist liberalism, which was pervasive during the Trump years and underlies BLM's program, is the Democratic Party's preferred method of divide-and-rule. The program of the liberal anti-racist activist is to seek alliance with the supposedly "anti-racist" wing of the bourgeoisie against the "unenlightened" white people

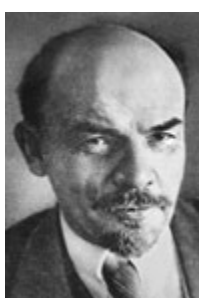
continued on page 15



TROTSKY

Lenin Against Liberalism

In October 1912, when "Two Utopias" was written, Lenin's Bolsheviks had decisively split from the Mensheviks, whose fundamental politics were to rally the working class in support of the liberal bourgeoisie. Lenin fought for independent class struggle not only against the tsarist autocracy, which was backed by the pogromist Purishkeviches, but also against the liberals, whose deceptions were and are an obstacle to any such struggle.



LENIN

The liberal bourgeoisie in general, and the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia in particular, cannot but strive for liberty and legality, since without these the domination of the bourgeoisie is incomplete, is neither undivided nor guaranteed. But the bourgeoisie is *more* afraid of the movement of the masses than of reaction. Hence the striking, incredible *weakness* of the liberals in politics, their absolute impotence. Hence the endless series of equivocations, falsehoods, hypocrisies and cowardly evasions in the entire policy of the liberals, who *have to* play at democracy to win the support of the masses but at the same time are deeply anti-democratic, deeply hostile to the movement of the masses, to their initiative, their way of "storming heaven," as Marx once described one of the mass movements in Europe in the last century.

The utopia of liberalism is a utopia of impotence in the matter of the political emancipation of Russia, a utopia of the self-interested moneybags who want "peacefully" to share privileges with the Purishkeviches and pass off this noble desire as the theory of "peaceful" victory for Russian democracy. The liberal utopia means day-dreaming about how to beat the Purishkeviches without defeating them, how to break them without hurting them. Clearly, *this* utopia is harmful not only because it is a utopia, but also because it *corrupts* the democratic consciousness of the masses. If they believe in *this* utopia, the masses will never win freedom; they are not worthy of freedom; they fully deserve to be maltreated by the Purishkeviches....

The liberal utopia is a veil for the self-seeking desire of the new exploiters to share in the privileges of the old exploiters....

Clearly, the Marxists, who are hostile to *all and every* utopia, must uphold the independence of the class which can fight feudalism *with supreme devotion* precisely because it is not even one-hundredth part involved in property ownership which makes the bourgeoisie a half-hearted opponent, and often an ally, of the feudal lords.

—V.I. Lenin, "Two Utopias" (October 1912)

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DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: Michael Davissou

PRODUCTION MANAGERS: François Donau, Jake Jots

MANAGING EDITOR: Jeanne Mitchell

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

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CORRECTION

In "World Socialism Is the Only Solution" (WV No. 1176, 29 May 2020), the caption for the *Socialist Appeal* announcing the founding of the Fourth International misidentifies the issue as Vol. II, No. 1, 1 January 1938. The actual issue is Vol. II, No. 46, 22 October 1938, published right after the Fourth International was established that September.

SL/U.S. 16th National Conference

The Leninist Vanguard Party

vs.

the Anti-Trump Popular Front



Left: Workers in Petrograd, June 1917, raise Bolshevik demands, including “Down With the Ten Capitalist Ministers! All Power to the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies!” Right: Anti-Trump protest, Chicago, November 2016. Fake socialists build popular front in service of capitalist Democrats.

The following is the main document of the 16th National Conference of the Spartacist League/U.S.

1. The 2016 election of Republican Donald Trump, an overtly reactionary capitalist politician, was a product of intensifying contradictions of decaying U.S. imperialism. His election represented a right-wing backlash against the liberal status quo. Almost a decade of Democratic Party-administered misery, years of foreclosures, the loss of six million industrial jobs since 2000, crushing student and health care debt and general anger at the political dynasties of the bourgeoisie paved the way for Trump. While Obama bailed out the banks, for the working class and oppressed, the 2008 economic crisis was disastrous. Millions who had hoped for change had those hopes dashed, and they turned to the putrid populism of Trump. His anti-globalization posture, anti-immigrant ravings, trade-war threats against China and promises to bring back jobs and “drain the swamp” appealed to a layer of workers and the petty bourgeoisie who were fed up with the lot they had been left in by the previous administration. Trump’s racist bombast offered a scapegoat for the economic anxieties of these layers, and his vulgar indignation toward his political opponents found resonance with those who were devastated by the Democrats and were sick of the suits in Washington.

2. Trump was supported by sections of the capitalists who had benefited the least from the Obama years, like the steel, coal and energy bosses. Another section of the ruling class disagreed with his “America First” protectionism that pulled the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and his less hawkish approach toward Russia. Under Trump, the Republicans sought to ratchet up the imperialist rape of Mexico through renegotiating NAFTA, but the Democrats initially thought the cost of renegotiating the existing rape outweighed the benefits. Both parties stand firmly for the militarized border and the degradation, deportation and caging of immigrants—they simply differ on the efficacy of the optics when chanting about a wall and the tone of the anti-immigrant

rhetoric. Both parties fully agree that the Chinese deformed workers state must be destroyed—they simply differ on the most efficient method of waging their offensive. While Trump openly gave a wink and a nod to the fascist scum crawling in the crevices of the crumbling economy, the Democrats preside over the same social system that breeds them, and as well hold them in reserve to be unleashed against the workers in times of crisis. They just think embracing Confederate flags and Klan hoods isn’t a good look while they maraud around the world supposedly in the name of “freedom and democracy.” On every fundamental question, the two wings of the bourgeoisie fly together. The Democrats simply saw Trump’s racist bravado and provocations against NATO allies as an impediment to the pursuit of their imperialist interests and were concerned that Trump might tarnish the image of U.S. imperialism. However, the differences within the bourgeoisie were merely tactical disagreements about how to best carry out the exploitation of the working class and imperialist plunder. The Democrats’ objections to Trump don’t represent the interests of the workers and oppressed, which are counterposed to both bourgeois perspectives.

3. To regain their rule, the Democrats rallied their disenchanted constituencies with maudlin moral outrage at Trump’s indecency. Because Trump is a misogynist, vote for Democrats...who support the Hyde Amendment, whose program is responsible for the erosion of abortion access, and who represent the class that maintains women’s oppression. Because Trump is a racist, vote for Democrats... who preside over the wanton police murder, mass incarceration and forcible segregation of the black masses in almost every major city, who deported record numbers of immigrants during the Obama administration, destroyed busing and welfare in the 1980s and ’90s, and require racial oppression for the stability of their rule. Because Trump didn’t pay his taxes, vote for Democrats...whose policies have led only to economic ruin and immiseration for the masses. The Democrats’ supposed “fight” against Trump was nothing but a cynical media

circus around Russiagate, tawdry tabloid scandals and empty speechifying about the sanctity of American democracy. Neither their parades nor their righteous proclamations did a damn thing to defend the workers and oppressed against Trump’s attacks. Their only purpose was to lure the electorate back to their side and reclaim the imperial presidency so they could administer their brutal class dictatorship with the demeanor they desire. The AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the rest of labor officialdom were instrumental in lining up workers for this goal.

4. Throughout this period, and today, there is polarization within the Democratic Party between the “progressive” and “establishment” wings. The “progressive” wing only represents a tactical difference over how to most effectively seduce the support of those they subjugate. Their program to “fight Trump” was to make a better electoral case for the Democratic Party. The “establishment” Democrats had a losing strategy in the election in 2016. Hillary Clinton’s campaign wasn’t even compelled to offer crumbs to the masses who had been crushed under years of her party’s rule, instead declar-

ing that America was “already great” and denouncing her detractors as “deplorable.” Sanders and “the Squad” found the stodgy strategy of screaming about Trump being Putin’s puppet less than sufficient. Instead, they believed the masses would be better baited with bombast against the “billionaire class” and promises of health care and debt relief. But these “progressives” have no intention of even waging so much as a scuffle within their party to fulfill the promises they make on the campaign trail. They dutifully abide by the discipline of their party, lawyering for the likes of the less popular Pelosi and Biden and serving the interests of the ruling class. Both wings agree on all fundamental questions of administering capitalist rule. Despite this, liberals and the left were lovestruck by the song and dance of these “progressives,” who try to give the program of their imperialist party more pizzazz.

5. It was a criminal betrayal that those who claim to be “socialists” and say they stand for “class independence” supported the liberals’ “resistance,” explicitly or implicitly. Bound by the glue of “anybody

continued on page 4

Liberalism: Dead End for Black Liberation

For Black Trotskyism

Spartacist League Forum

Saturday
May 6
3 p.m.

Brooklyn Friends
Meeting House

110 Schermerhorn St., Brooklyn

Take 2, 3, 4, 5 train to Borough Hall
or A, C, F, R train to Jay St./Metrotech.

For information: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

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For a Multiracial Vanguard Party!

Leninist Party...

(continued from page 3)

but Trump” and “lesser-evilism,” they tied the workers and oppressed to a wing of the bourgeoisie and its predatory rule. From sanctuary cities to Bernie-mania, the Women’s Marches and #MeToo, to the “fight against fascism,” Black Lives Matter (BLM) and national unity in the pandemic, nearly every single left group served as foot soldiers for nearly every single iteration of the anti-Trump popular front, eagerly following the leadership of the liberals and betraying the interests of workers and the oppressed. The largest ostensibly socialist group, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), self-destructed and dissolved into the Democratic Party DSA. Some, like Socialist Alternative, pretended to maintain some nominal claim to independence while fully supporting Sanders by pleading with the Senator, now serving his 32nd year in Congress for the imperialists, to form a third party. The Revolutionary Communist Party even went so far as to mobilize rallies protesting Trump’s firing of the *FBI director*. These traitors to socialism

Los Angeles, May 2017: RCP’s RefuseFascism defends head of FBI, capitalist instrument for murder of black, labor and leftist militants. Banner reads: “Protest the Firing of F.B.I. Director James Comey... An Escalation towards Fascism.”



like BLM to the left by criticizing their most craven excesses. These centrists did everything but mobilize workers and youth on a counterposed communist program. Despite the tactical differences with the more openly reformist outfits, the result was the same: the leadership of the masses—many motivated by the misery created by capitalism and searching for solutions—was left in the hands of the liberals, who would lead them not to salvation but deliver them to defeat and demoralization. For example:

- The SL/U.S. and the IG had a superficial spat over sanctuary cities. The IG supported “sanctuary” because it placed “constraints” on the cops, and the SL/U.S. “welcome[d] any measure that may impede the immigration cops” while “warning” against the “notion” of “sanctuary cities.” Both built illusions that the Democratic Party’s fig leaf of “sanctuary cities” was a supportable “reform” and not a symbolic scheme to lull immigrants into a false sense of security.
- While Left Voice is openly “socialist-feminist” and the IG and SL/U.S. offer sterile critiques of feminism, all responded to the liberal women’s movement with condemnation of the Democrats, calls for “independent” labor mobilizations and calls for revolution. None drew the class line against feminism or exposed that an alliance with the bourgeoisie is an obstacle to abortion and all women’s rights. This capitulation is why they all hail, sometimes critically, bourgeois feminist organizations like Planned Parenthood.
- All organizations were cheerleaders for BLM, despite the IG and SL/U.S. openly identifying it as a liberal movement. All organizations called for labor to defend black people without drawing a class line against BLM’s liberal program. While the IG and the SL/U.S. oppose cop reform as a dead end, they refused to draw the conclusion that it is necessary to *break* with a movement whose class-collaborationist program inherently ties the oppressed to the management of the state.

Not *one* of the iterations of the anti-Trump popular front was met with a communist program of *opposition* to the liberal movement that was mobilizing the masses against their interests. A *counterposed* communist movement against Trump was needed, but those claiming the mantle of communism refused to build one.

7. The Trump presidency represented a rightward shift in society that exerted pressure on the entire left, but this did not

change the fundamental tasks of communists in this period. Workers and all the oppressed desperately needed a leadership that could chart an independent path forward, but not a single left group rose to the occasion. As a result, the only resistance to Trump was organized on the basis of a class-collaborationist program that subordinated the interests of the proletariat to that of the liberal bourgeoisie. From this sorry “struggle” under liberal leadership, workers and the oppressed achieved *nothing*. In fact, the only outcomes were the strengthening of capitalist rule, the election of yet another bourgeois overseer from the other party and even worse conditions for workers and the oppressed. This is the consequence of the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

8. The central betrayal of the SL/U.S. during the Trump presidency, flowing from years of degeneration and accumulated revisionism, was the total abdication of the fight for communist hegemony—i.e., the reason for our existence. The 2018 Conference document argued that “sooner or later the ongoing, lengthy ebb in the United States will break,” and that:

“Our task is to defend the Marxist program in order to be able to intervene into the inevitable outbursts of class and social struggle, through which a multiracial revolutionary workers party will be forged to lead the struggle to defeat U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution.”

—“In the Predominant Imperialist Power,” SL/U.S. *Internal Bulletin* No. 138, point 23

Thus, the SL/U.S. had concluded that our purpose *today* is not to fight for revolutionary leadership but to wait until the period changed. Justifying our abdication by blaming the low level of class struggle, we then identify it as the main pressure on us:

“Above all, the underlying pressure we face and the defining feature of the current context is the lack of class struggle in the U.S.”

—ibid., point 73

But the main pressure in this period was for Marxists to liquidate into liberalism. Marxists needed to counterpose a communist program of action which would set class against class. The only way for the Marxist program to become a real force was for revolutionaries to wield it to break the chains of liberalism that link the Democrats, the union bureaucracy and the reformist and centrist left. Instead, the SL/U.S. used the objective period to justify substituting for revolutionary politics a turgid, centrist, Marxist cover for social-democratic economism and liberal anti-racism, which led to crossing the class line.

The Party Question

9. The first *Workers Vanguard* article in response to Trump’s election was already an example of the SL/U.S.’s centrist, social-democratic aspirations. Along with the jargon-filled journalism and the echoes of liberal talking points, we find the programmatic core of what the SL/U.S. had to offer:

“It is high time that some genuine *class hatred* be mobilized against the politicians of the Republicans and Democrats, whatever their race or sex, and the capitalist rulers they serve. The power to resist the depredations of capitalism lies in the hands of the men and women—black, white and immigrant—whose labor keeps the wheels of production turning and produces the capitalists’ wealth. We need a multiracial revolutionary workers party that champions

the fight for black freedom, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, for women’s rights and for the liberation of all the oppressed in the struggle for a socialist America.”

—“We Need a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!” *WV* No. 1100, 18 November 2016 (emphasis in original)

10. To mobilize the class in its own interests *requires a revolutionary program in direct opposition* to the dominant liberalism. Anything else is just a cover for the popular front. To fight for women’s liberation requires a fight against the feminists; to fight for black liberation requires a fight against BLM; to fight for health care requires a fight against Sanders and his sycophants. Nowhere in the article or in any other of the next four years does the SL/U.S. explicate the necessity of breaking with the misleaders of these movements and explain that only a communist program can advance the struggle of black people, immigrants, women or workers. Instead, the SL/U.S. offers promises of prosperity in a future socialist society. Liberals and the entire left were eager to build a mass movement that would supposedly defend black people, immigrants and women from Trump’s terror, but nowhere in the article or in any other of the next four years does the SL/U.S. draw a principled line against their liberal schemes. Pointing to the objective social power of the working class, the need to break with the Democrats and the need to champion the oppressed is not, on its own, revolutionary—it is compatible with social democracy. So long as we refuse to stand in clear programmatic opposition to the liberalism and reformism that captivates the masses who were mobilized against Trump, we are not building the vanguard party but acting as yet another obstacle, whether we howl about “revolution” or not.

11. Our phony attempt in the same article to draw a line against our supposed opponents comes in response to the ISO, who pointed to “the potential for building a stronger grassroots resistance” in the wake of Trump’s victory. *WV* responds:

“The purpose of genuine socialists is not to build a classless ‘grassroots’ movement, which would sow the seeds of a refurbished Democratic Party or another capitalist ‘third party,’ but to uproot the entire decaying system of American capitalism.”

—ibid.

This sterile, maximalist counterposition is a total abdication of the fight to build a communist opposition to Trump. The ISO wants to build a movement, and we want “revolution.” No! The burning question on the table was not whether to build a movement today or dream of revolution tomorrow. The question was: on *what program* would a movement against Trump be built? A dead-end, class-collaborationist, reformist popular front? Or revolutionary class independence in open opposition to every manifestation of traitorous misleadership? All of *WV*’s talk about a “multiracial revolutionary workers party,” without counterposing a communist program of struggle against liberalism and reformism today, was nothing but a cover for the popular front.

12. If you are not fighting for an explicitly revolutionary party for today, you are building a reformist party. And if a reformist party can defend the interests of the working class, who needs a communist party? Eventually, *WV* decided to drop the pretense and explicitly called for a reformist labor party. In the 2020 *ILA* longshore article, *WV* concluded with a quote from pre-World War I laborite Ira Steward that argues for a reformist labor party to administer the capitalist state:

“It is evident, therefore, that the first duty of the *Labor Reformer* is to organize the working class into a *political party* by which means alone they can assume the power to *make the laws by which labor or capital will be obliged to obey*” (bold emphasis added).

13. Contrary to the framework of the SL/U.S., building a reformist party that fights for the oppressed is not a stage the class struggle must pass through but an obstacle to defending and advancing the interests of workers today. As James

continued on page 6

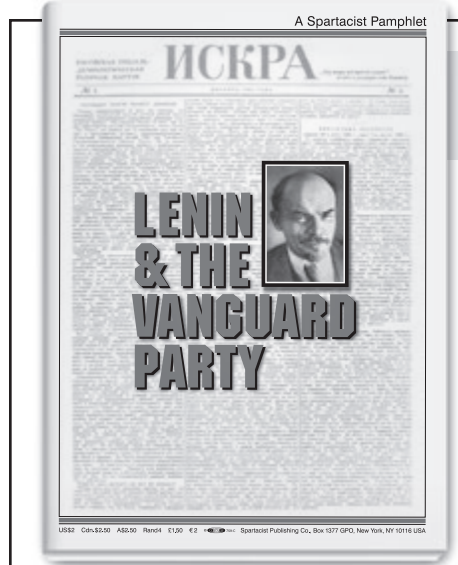


Young Spartacus photo

Internationalist Group promotes Democratic Party “sanctuary” scam, Hunter College, NYC, February 2017.

spent four years sucking up to the liberals and begging them to build a “mass movement in the streets.” Their efforts accomplished absolutely nothing for workers and the oppressed and moreover ensured that there would be no actual fight against Trump. Their program of class collaboration paralyzed the fight and their hysterical hustling herded voting cattle for the Democrats.

6. Centrist organizations like Left Voice, the Internationalist Group (IG) and the Spartacist League/U.S. put on a slightly more convincing act by serving as left critics of the various cogs in the apparatus of the anti-Trump popular front, which was nothing but a cover for it. While they all screamed about revolution and breaking with the Democrats, they sought to build the labor component of the popular front and push movements



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The International Significance of the SL/U.S. Conference

The following report was given by I.S. Secretary G. Perrault to the SL/U.S. National Conference.

For the comrades who have been working day and night to make this conference happen, the process has necessarily had a narrowing effect; comrades' attention has rightly been focused on the U.S. and reforging a section in this country. On the other hand, there has been no narrowing of horizon for the comrades who have come to this conference and in *three years* have not taken a stand against the programmatic degeneration of the SL/U.S. and ICL. In this case, we find a permanent state of national narrowness. For some, political attention has barely crossed state borders. Whichever category comrades find themselves in, it is useful to start this conference having in mind our place in the world and the broader situation in the party.

This conference is not taking place in a vacuum but in a rapidly changing world. In fact, it is *because* of the rapidly changing world that this conference is taking place.

The period of relative stability which has marked the last 30 years has come to an end. We are no longer talking about the occasional outbreak of a world crisis but of a confluence of crises, each reinforcing the other. The pandemic, the Ukraine war, inflation, economic crisis, climate catastrophes, social upheavals. We are likely only at a beginning of this cycle, which can all be tied back to the gradual weakening and breakdown of the post-Soviet order.

This political and social turmoil has particular significance for the SL/U.S. Although the U.S. has not so far been in the eye of the storm to the extent Europe has been, it will play a decisive role in the outcome of future events. Whether it is for barbarism or socialism, the fate of the U.S. will determine that of the world. The presence of a Leninist vanguard party in the United States will be the qualitative factor that will determine which of these outcomes prevails.

When it comes to forging such a party, we are far behind the curve. The SL/U.S. was tested by the course of world events and was shattered to pieces. Now we must pick up the pieces and forge a real

instrument of struggle. I want to insist on the point I made earlier: it is *because of world events* that this conference is taking place and the ICL is rearming. The global context leaves no room for half measures and half-revolutionary parties. Either we get serious and fight or together with the rest of the pseudo-socialist left we will be thrown into the dustbin of history. We have wasted enough time as it is.

The tasks facing the SL/U.S. are not different or separate from those facing the International as a whole. Analogous

The historical importance and numerical weight of the SL/U.S. explains in large part why the I.S. has devoted so much of its attention to the SL/U.S. in the last six months. It is self-interest on our part: we expect SL/U.S. cadre to return many times over our efforts by joining us in rebuilding the International. Toward this, we have proceeded along the lines outlined in my report to the IEC [International Executive Committee] two years ago. On the one hand, programmatic firmness. We have made our political stance clear and

free pass. As comrades can undoubtedly observe, our approach has already had formidable results in the SL/U.S. and in the International. The proceedings of the next two days must confirm this.

In this spirit I want to quote the following from Trotsky's "A Fresh Lesson" (1938):

"Assuredly not a few 'remnants' had gathered in the beginning around the banner of the Fourth International. But the enormous work of selection, cleansing, and re-education was accomplished here on the basis of a scientific theory and a clear program. This work, the meaning

War in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, imperialist provocations against China—world events make clear that workers must be armed with a revolutionary program in this increasingly unstable period. SL/U.S. conference laid the basis to forge a leadership committed to fighting for Trotskyist answers like those elaborated in *Spartacist*.
Read online: icl-fi.org/english/esp/67/

to the impact the U.S. will have in the world, the fate of the SL/U.S. will have a disproportionate impact on the fate of our International. If this conference is a success, we will come out of it with a greatly reinforced international cadre. If it fails or if we waver, we will be thrown backward once again, facing a much steeper road ahead. Crucially, by the end of this conference there needs to be a leadership in this section which has shown *in practice* that it will fight for a fundamental reorientation.

have not conceded our principled position to maintain a fake formal unity. On the other, we have been extremely patient, and in the best Leninist practice we have pursued the struggle among the most conscious cadre of the section, seeking to win the cadre of the future SL/U.S. among those of the old organization. We will do everything we possibly can to rally every comrade who wants to rally to our banner, but it will be on *our* terms. Experience and past contributions do not guarantee a

and importance of which philistines have never understood, has gone on and is still going on in an atmosphere of free, open, and patient discussion. Whoever has failed to pass this test has proved in action his organic inability to contribute anything to the building of a revolutionary International."

In the last year, we have slowly but surely rallied a layer of cadre internationally. Not to a slightly more leftist version of the previous program but to a qualitatively higher plane. This is clear from the recent work of many sections. In particular, I want to attract comrades' attention to the recent leaflet of the TOE [the Trotskyist Group of Greece], which not only is a highly effective interventionist tool but represents a programmatic refounding of the section, laying the basis for authentic Trotskyism in Greece [see article, page 12]. Also of great significance is our line on China, which recent events have completely vindicated.

In terms of the SL/U.S., the results of this conference have the potential to be far better than we expected when coming here. Many of the documents speak for themselves and show the rapid political motion of some comrades. To be successful, the upcoming proceedings must confirm and deepen this process. This will be the first of many tests confronting the emerging SL/U.S. leadership.

No matter the outcome of the next two days, or next few months, we can confidently state that the program we have put forward in the last year has already shown its force and effectiveness. We must forge ahead with supreme confidence that the Trotskyist program, applied *in the struggles of the hour*, will determine the outcome of the class struggle in this country and in the world.

Forward to a rearmed SLU.S.!
Forward to a rearmed ICL!
Forward to the reformed Fourth International! ■

For Revolutionary Defeatism in Ukraine

We print below, edited for publication, a contribution submitted by comrade Ed Jarvis as part of Conference discussion.

Primarily as a result of a discussion I had with members of the delegation from the International Secretariat (I.S.), I have adopted the majority position of defeatism in the Ukraine war. I was triggered into writing this document by an SL/U.S. comrade who urged me to seek, as comrade Jim Robertson used to say, in the bowels of Christ to consider that I may be wrong. It turns out that it wasn't exactly necessary for me to seek too deeply into those bowels to find the path to the truth.

There were certain key conceptions about the military defeatism position that I had serious concerns about. I openly and honestly presented these concerns to the International Executive Committee (IEC). As a result, members of the I.S. delegation discussed these concerns with me.

My initial concern with our line was, as I openly wrote in my document addressed to the IEC:

"Our line, as I understand it, is that we still defend the democratic rights of the Donbass in spite of the Russian military incursion. However, our statement

has also declared that this question has been subordinated to the reactionary aims of Russian capitalism. This is the contradiction that I am having a hard time concretely resolving with respect to defeatism."

I interpreted this to mean that the struggle for national liberation was no longer to be supported. In other words, if the International Communist League had sections in Ukraine and Russia, we would be calling for the workers and soldiers military councils to stop all activity and reverse the direction of their guns.

The I.S. comrades made it clear that this is not what this formulation actually means. It doesn't literally mean that struggle for self-determination of the Donbass is to be halted. It rather means that the liberation of the Donbass will require waging not simply a struggle against Nazi-led Ukrainian troops but also the military Russian forces engaged in the national oppression of non-Russian Ukrainians.

Such a perspective is essential for rebuilding Russian and Ukrainian working-class unity, as well as providing the foundation for the national freedom of all

Ukrainian nationalities. This, of course, can only be the result of the revolutionary conquest of power that results in the emergence of workers republics and voluntary socialist federations.

The other major concern that I had was the question of recognizing the legitimacy of Russia acting in self-defense against the longstanding encroachment by NATO toward the border of Russia. I thought that having a military wing of imperialism with a knife so near the throat of Russia was a legitimate reason to act in self-defense.

Viewing the question in this way, however, is a mistake. There must be no reliance on a capitalist-led Russian military to even defend Russia against U.S. imperialism and its NATO military extension. Under the leadership of a reformed Fourth International, it is the job of the international working class to stay the hand of U.S. imperialism and NATO.

Making these points more explicit in our propaganda on the war in Ukraine would win support for our position and help defeat our opponents, such as the Internationalist Group. ■

The following motion was adopted unanimously by Conference delegates.

Bernie Sanders's 2020 presidential campaign slogan for "Medicare for All" drew a huge following among petty-bourgeois youth and in the working class, channeling anger over the disastrous state of American health care into the dead end of Democratic Party politics. This posed two related tasks for socialists. One was upholding the principle of class independence—which meant showing that winning better health care requires breaking with the liberals because the road to any real improvements is barred by the interests of the capitalist class. The other was advancing a revolutionary solution—showing how the pressing needs of the working class can only be met by overthrowing capitalist class rule and establishing a workers government. These tasks could only be carried out by fighting for revolutionary leadership against Sanders and the misleaders of the working class and the self-proclaimed socialists who were busy building this bourgeois roadblock.

The article "For Socialized Medicine!" (WV No. 1170, 21 February 2020) was published at the height of the Democratic Party primary elections, when there were massive illusions in Sanders's promises of "Medicare for All." This article crossed the class line by building Sanders's campaign, helping subordinate the struggle to meet the health needs of working people to a liberal who was guaranteed to betray them. Instead of counterposing the struggle for free, quality health care to the Sanders campaign, the headline gave the lame advice: "No Illusions in Sanders' 'Medicare for All.'" This was such a craven capitulation that people on sales told us they were buying the paper because they supported Sanders, too. The only way to break the popular front is to directly confront and expose the illusions its supporters have that their interests can be advanced by uniting behind the liberal bourgeoisie. But WV did not fight against the liberals for communist leadership or make a single argument to show that supporting a liberal Democrat was an obstacle to advancing the fight for quality health care. Without this, WV's call to break with the Democrats and rhetoric about the need to fight for socialism just made us a left tail on the Sanders campaign.

In the dispute in the union bureaucracy over which Democrat to support in the primaries, WV took a side with Sanders's supporters. "For Socialized Medicine!" denounced the leaders of the Nevada Culinary Union and AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka for dividing the working class because they opposed "Medicare for All,"

Fight for Free, Quality Health Care by DUMPING Bernie Sanders!

i.e., because they didn't support Sanders in the primary. While the Culinary Union tops and Trumka argued that Sanders's plan would undermine their unions' medical benefits, unions on the other side of this dispute, including the AFT and SEIU, supported Sanders and argued that electing him would mean the unions would no longer have to fight for health care for their members but could rely on the capitalist government. Revolutionaries needed

most expensive in the world, while the health care available to the majority of the population is among the world's worst. Providing real access to good health care for the whole population requires defeating one of the wealthiest and most powerful sectors of the American bourgeoisie. The capitalists won't simply give up their control over health care markets and their profits. A colossal struggle is needed to break the stranglehold of the capitalist



Jeremy Hogan/SOPA

Reformist left clings to class enemy, peddling illusions in Sanders, here at Labor Notes conference, Chicago, 17 June 2022. Health care gains will only be won in struggle against capitalists and their lying politicians.

to oppose both sides in this dispute, cutting against both Sanders's promises of "Medicare for All" and Biden's defense of the status quo, and expose the union bureaucrats' support to the Democrats as an obstacle to the struggle for decent health care.

The health care industry in the U.S. is dominated by a handful of giant insurance companies, Big Pharma and private care providers. The total social parasitism of the insurance companies, the pharmaceutical companies' control over drug patents and production and private care providers' price gouging are a gigantic drain on the country's economy, producing record profits and making up 20 percent of the GDP. The U.S. health care system is the

titans over the health care system. The prerequisite for this is splitting from all representatives of the capitalist class.

The dire state of the U.S. health care system has created a huge pile of social tinder. Bourgeois reformers like Sanders are seeking to prevent any explosion by cleaning up the worst excesses of corporate medicine while defending the underlying property relations that caused the problem in the first place. Sanders promised a "revolution against the billionaire class," but he wasn't even willing to fight for health care reform in his own party. His liberal program necessarily meant that he would only put forward the most pathetic and ineffective measures—and abandon them at the slightest challenge.

When Biden won the primary, Sanders immediately began to back-pedal and told his supporters to subordinate their need for health care reform to getting the Democrats in office.

The Democratic Party has been campaigning on health care reform for over a century, using the issue to win elections while the health care system has decayed and become increasingly parasitic. Sanders's campaign just repeated the same strategy one more time. It did nothing to make health care better for the population. What it did achieve was to channel the deep anger over the U.S. medical system into the dead end of bourgeois electoral politics.

WV often made the point that the U.S. doesn't have any kind of national health system because the bourgeoisie has been so successful at using racial oppression to divide the working class and weaken it. But what's the conclusion? Black and white workers can't be united on the basis of a reformist program, which either pits white workers against black people in competition over a few crumbs from the bourgeoisie or has nothing special to offer black people except remaining at the bottom of society. To unite the multiracial working class in the struggle for quality health care means fighting to address the particular needs of black people—construction of quality hospitals and clinics in the inner cities and rural South; good and well-maintained integrated housing, with heat, hot water and electricity; union-run job training and hiring programs to combat unemployment and the long hours, low pay and dangerous work of a population concentrated at the bottom of the working class. These demands all require making massive inroads into capitalist property; the first step to winning them is to struggle against the leadership of the liberals.

Health care is not just a question of the medical system. It touches every aspect of society, from ghettoized, rat-infested housing to dangerous working conditions to sleep deprivation and stress. To improve the health conditions of the working population requires a struggle against the capitalist class's interests at every point, including for union control over safety and a reduced workweek at no loss in pay; taking over the bourgeoisie's luxury apartments and upscale buildings; and appropriation of the hospitals, medical labs and pharmaceutical factories. Tying the struggle for better health care to the liberals means limiting it to what is acceptable to the bourgeoisie, agreeing in advance that the needs of working people and black people won't be met. Only a leadership committed to the overthrow of bourgeois rule can advance this struggle. ■

Leninist Party...

(continued from page 4)

P. Cannon put it in the 1948 fight in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) over support to Henry Wallace's bourgeois third party campaign, which was backed by the Stalinists:

"There is the reformist conception that a labor party, by its very nature, must necessarily be a reformist party, and that

reformism is a necessary and inevitable stage of the development of a working class political movement. Against that is the Marxist conception that a reformist stage of working class politics is not necessary and not preferable; we do not advocate that the workers pass through a stage of reformism on the road to revolutionary Marxist politics.

"What we do advocate is the revolutionary party of the working class which formulates the program of its historical interests. And this line of ours—the advocacy of revolutionary Marxist work-

ing class politics—never changes. It persists through all stages of development of the movement....

"Let us restate our basic premises: When we speak of developing the independent political action of the workers, our fundamental aim is to build the revolutionary party of the workers because that alone correctly and truly expresses working class independence."

—SWP *Internal Bulletin* (April 1948)

14. WV, for years, has pushed that a "class-struggle" workers party, independent of the Democrats, would be an expression of class independence. However, in the absence of a program counterposed to liberal reformism, this is merely an *organizational* break. Without a *political* break with the liberalism that links the programs of the trade-union bureaucracy, BLM, Sanders and all the treacherous tendencies pushing a non-revolutionary program, the struggles of the workers and the oppressed will continue to be subordinated to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Only a revolutionary party whose program is based on the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat can defend and advance the interests of the working class and lead it to emancipation. A nominally independent, social-democratic

party only seeks to reconcile the irreconcilable interests of the exploited and the exploiter. Its acceptance of wage slavery leads only to the betrayal of our class. The key lesson of the Russian Revolution and of the collapse of the Second International is that the communist vanguard must break the workers movement from the reformists and wage a struggle against all who conciliate them. As Lenin argued against Kautsky:

"The point is that at the present time, in the imperialist countries of Europe, *you are fawning* on the opportunists, who are *alien* to the proletariat as a class, who are the servants, the agents of the bourgeoisie and the vehicles of its influence, and *unless* the labour movement *rids* itself of them, it will remain a *bourgeois labour movement*. By advocating 'unity' with the opportunists, with the Legiens and Davids, the Plekhanovs, the Chkhenkelis and Potresovs, etc., you are, objectively, defending the *enslavement* of the workers by the imperialist bourgeoisie with the aid of its best agents in the labour movement. The victory of revolutionary Social-Democracy on a world scale is absolutely inevitable, only it is moving and will move, is proceeding and will proceed, *against* you, it will be a victory *over* you."

—"Imperialism and the Split in Socialism" (1916) ■

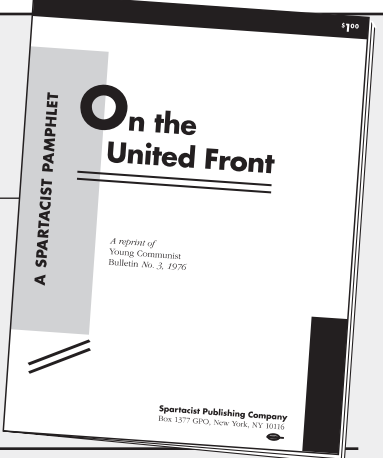
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Black Trotskyism...

(continued from page 7)

“anti-establishment” and populist rhetoric as an appealing alternative to what was offered by Wall Street Democrats like Hillary Clinton. Extensive deindustrialization and offshoring have been happening under *both* Democratic and Republican Party administrations going back decades. Now, why wasn't it in the interest of white workers to vote for Trump?

At an ILA longshore sale earlier this year, I tried to sell to a white worker, and he said, “I hate the liberals and the Democrats.” I laughed, and said: “Well, I do, too, but we're probably coming from two different places. Let me tell you why I hate the Democrats.” I only had the election leaflet to give him, because for the past nearly three years we haven't been able to put out a paper that draws a class line against liberalism, but now we will. Now, I'm sure he was a Trump supporter and no doubt a part of the white segregated local. But think about what we would have had to say to him four years ago: “Stay in the segregated local because black people are better off without you” or that he was a reactionary, white-supremacist, racist yahoo, part of Trump's base. Door slammed shut.

We needed to explain how Trump was not the answer! Supporting one wing of your capitalist oppressors against the other will not get you better housing or jobs or improve your quality of life. Capitalist rule is always for the benefit of the capitalists, at the expense of the entire working class, which is forced to sell its labor power in exchange for the most minimum of wages in order to survive. It is against capitalist interests to improve working conditions and wages. They are driven to keep their wage slaves just fit enough to amass the maximum possible profits off their backs.

Workers who looked to Trump found only the continuation of the capitalist degradation that occurred under Obama, culminating in lockdowns, layoffs, wage cuts and death during the pandemic. Under Biden, the conditions of the working class have only further deteriorated under the pressures of inflation and U.S. imperialism's role in Ukraine. And just like every capitalist administration before, it has kept blacks firmly in place at the bottom of the political economy and workers pitted against each other. The needs of the black population and the working class go beyond what the capitalist class will ever provide.

Addressing the Social Needs of Workers, Black People

What is actually necessary to address the basic social needs of white workers (and workers in general)? There is a raging war to depress wages and lower the standard of living that is being executed against all workers by the capitalist class. The special oppression of black people at the lowest rungs of the political economy worsens the standard of living of the whole proletariat, because it keeps the



Galai/Wire Image

Washington, D.C., protest against Trump's inauguration, January 2017. Liberals blame “Trump's base” for black oppression, alibiing ruling class and dividing workers. Anti-racist liberalism must be destroyed to advance fight for black, working-class liberation.

working class weak and divided. White workers have a material interest in making the struggle for black liberation their struggle, too, because it is the only way that they will make any advancements for their own emancipation from wage slavery.

Addressing the social needs of the working class for better housing and health care, and to combat unemployment and poverty, requires a revolutionary class-struggle fight against the bosses and the capitalist state. You can't wage that battle if the workers are disarmed by racial divisions. What's necessary is a program that makes clear to all workers that the struggle against racial oppression benefits all workers and has an integral relationship to the advancement of the liberation of the whole working class.

For example, because of the apprehension of many white workers, it is necessary to combine demands for equal pay and opportunities for black workers with demands aimed at assuring white workers that the benefits accruing to blacks will not be won at their expense. Therefore, in demanding that more black workers be admitted into skilled jobs, we should also raise demands aimed at increasing total employment, such as a shorter workweek with no loss in pay (30 for 40).

As mentioned earlier, special demands that speak to the felt needs of black workers are a crucial component of the fight for revolutionary integrationism. Against the segregation of black people in the worst neighborhoods, schools and jobs under capitalism, the fight for black freedom poses a massive encroachment on capitalist private property and other capitalist interests in order to integrate society. Massive public works projects are required, such as the construction of low-rent, quality integrated housing, quality integrated schools and state-of-the-art health care facilities. None of the aspects of the special oppression of the black population can be solved within the confines of U.S. capitalist rule, because they all require confronting the interests of the bourgeoisie. This means that the road to freedom

for black workers lies through struggle with white workers and the rest of the class to abolish capitalism and establish a socialist society.

You can't fight the bourgeoisie if you are in bed with it, which is why the working class will never win any of the above demands under the current sellout misleadership of their unions. For example, fights for union control of hiring to combat racial discrimination by the bosses, for full employment and for organization of the unorganized must start in the trade unions, led by communist fractions in *opposition* to the reformist sellout bureaucracies. It requires fighting for leadership of the working class and splitting workers away from the political agents of the bourgeoisie who run the unions and subordinate the interests of the workers to the bosses and foster racial divisions within the class. The prerequisite for meeting the needs of workers and the oppressed is breaking the working class from the grip of both the Democratic and Republican parties on the basis of class independence and fighting for a multiracial revolutionary workers party that is committed to waging class war against the bourgeoisie.

SL/U.S. Capitulated to Liberalism

Now, I want to talk about how the liberal reaction to Trump further polarized society along racial lines and how the SL/U.S. capitulated to it.

In the Trump years, one of the main ways that the Democratic Party and liberals helped stoke poisonous racial divisions was by mobilizing anti-racists against the “reactionary” white workers who voted for Trump in order to kick out the “white supremacist” in the White House. This meant building an alliance of anti-racists, liberal capitalists and Democratic Party enforcers of segregation and writing off the white working class. This program was also pushed by the left, including the SL/U.S., which published the same concept of Trump's base, placing the blame for black oppression on the racism of white workers rather than the ruling class. This is fundamentally counterposed to advancing the fight for black liberation and for class unity on the basis of white workers' objective interest in combating black oppression.

Initially, *WV* embraced the liberal concept of Trump's base, stating: “Like the roundups and detentions at the Mexican border, Trump's ban *plays to* his white-supremacist base, including border guards and other law-and-order forces, whipping them up for further acts of racist violence” (emphasis added). Here *WV* (No. 1137, 27 July 2018) was saying that Trump, the Republican president of U.S. imperialist rule, “plays to” the tune of his “base” of voters. This was a lie and nothing but a cover for the brutal dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, which is, in fact, responsible for the reactionary Trump administration and its policies. *WV*'s embrace of “Trump's base” also alibied the role of the liberal bourgeoisie and the Democratic

Party in enforcing racial oppression and segregation. It was a blatant capitulation to the liberal bourgeoisie's pushing responsibility for black oppression onto the “backward” white masses. Later, *WV* issued a correction, which in centrist fashion repudiated the use of the *term* “Trump's base” but did not draw the conclusion that the task of communists was to *fight against* this poison to the working class.

What the SL/U.S. Should Have Done

What was necessary for the SL/U.S. to have done? It was the duty of the SL/U.S. to wage an uncompromising battle against liberalism. It is impossible to unite the working class on a revolutionary basis with lines like “Trump's base.” It was an unprincipled rejection of the need to win white workers to the revolutionary party and to the fight for black liberation. The SL/U.S. should have combated the liberal leadership of the black struggle in the Trump years by advancing class unity against dead-end alliances of black people with the ruling class, which betray the fight for black liberation. While there are certainly racist attitudes in the working class, to blame racial oppression on those pervasive racist attitudes is a reactionary argument because it alibis both wings of the capitalist class, whose rule is the source of this oppression. For example, Jeff Bezos, who is part of the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie that waves the BLM flag, directly benefits from racial oppression and intentionally enflames racial divisions to maintain the brutal exploitation of Amazon workers. A white Amazon worker has absolutely no shared interests with Bezos, but every interest in common with fellow black workers.

The false consciousness of the working class must be fought not on a liberal basis but on the basis that it weakens the ability of the white workers to defend themselves against the capitalists and the ability of the black workers to combat their double oppression. Instead of cheerleading for the Democrats by denouncing Trump's base, the pages of *WV* should have cut through this polarization and exposed the lies of the liberals, who push that the fundamental line in society is between “progressive” and “racist” forces rather than class against class. In opposition to the liberal anti-Trump popular front, the SL/U.S. should have built a communist opposition to Trump.

Black Lives Matter

Lastly, I want to discuss another significant moment during the Trump years: June 2020. It was the explosive reaction to racist police killings that saw millions of multiracial youth, workers and leftists take over the streets in outrage over the cop murder of George Floyd. It was a pretty big deal, one of the largest outpourings of protest in the U.S. since the civil rights movement. BLM is a popular-front movement based on a coalition that includes Democratic Party politicians, liberal activists, union bureaucrats and fake socialist organizations.

It is a bourgeois liberal movement to appeal to the racist white ruling class and its politicians to recognize that “black lives matter.” But ameliorating the conditions of black people is fundamentally against the interest of the capitalist ruling class being appealed to. BLM had an underlying contradiction. There was an enormous swell of anger against the brutal oppression of black people, for which the only solution is to smash racist capitalist class rule. However, its program could only lead to defeat for the working class and black masses.

The whole basis of BLM's program was cop reform, which is inherently class-collaborationist. They put forward a variety of either reactionary utopian or useless police reform schemes to combat racist cop terror. To call to reform the police means collaborating with the capitalist class in the policing of the black population. The very role of the state is to defend capitalist rule, to enforce black oppression and racist segregation and to suppress workers

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Centrism and the Fight for Leninist Leadership

We print below, edited for publication, the reports by I.S. Secretary G. Perrault and SL/U.S. National Chairman Erica Jones to the National Conference session that elected the new SL/U.S. Central Committee.

* * *

Perrault: Well, what just happened? I'll try to explain a little bit what happened. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. Comrades should all go and read that after the conference. So, in the course of the first day and a half, we pretty convincingly defeated the right wing, politically crushed it. Some still held out and tried to talk, but I think they were pretty exposed by the proceedings of the two days. What this did, it compressed the center and put extreme pressure on both the center and the left. That's what it did. It was posed very decisively in this last point. The whole course of the conference culminated in this last point, which is also the question of the American revolution: the black question. And it posed very decisively the line—the qualitative line—between reform and revolution. In this case, it was posed as a qualitative break with liberalism.

This process has been difficult, this conference and the period leading up to this conference have been extremely intense. High heat. Mettles were tested. Some broke. But we need a leadership that is going to hold under the pressure. That's the difference between the fulls and the alts on the next Central Committee: those who have proven that they can hold the line under the most difficult circumstances and sustain that pressure.

I go back to *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. I'll explain a little bit for the comrades who are not familiar and maybe a bit younger. This book by Lenin describes the course of the 1903 conference of the RSDLP [Russian Social Democratic Labor Party], where after years of struggle the *Iskra* faction won on the program. They defeated the Economists at this conference of the Russian Social Democracy, defeated the Bundists, and the RSDLP agreed on a program. But then when it was posed to draw the line on the leadership question, the center wavered, and there was a rotten bloc. The Bolshevik-Menshevik split—what was it? Against the Bolsheviks, it was a bloc between the center and the right who did not want to draw the conclusions of the

hard, programmatic lines that had been fought for years. Now, that's what we want to avoid.

We don't want that split, but that is the danger comrades have to keep in mind. I've been warning about things during the whole proceedings of this conference. This one, really think about it. This is the main danger. The main danger is that you have a right wing that is defeated, that is waiting in the aisles for a champion, a champion from the center, a Martov, who's going to break with Lenin, who's going to break with the Bolsheviks. I implore you comrades, do not do that! But as I've been saying lots of times during this whole process, you don't learn from other people's mistakes. So true!

So, we will accept unity on the basis of a qualitative break with liberalism. We will accept unity with those who accept this qualitative break. We need the center; it is necessary to rally the center and to win the right, even. We will keep strug-

gling for that. We will go forward. Comrades probably have to take a few days and study the lessons of this conference. Learn the lessons from this. Bolshevism is not kind; it's brutal. Brutal on the side of the oppressed. Bolshevism cannot tolerate

vacillation. I also recommend all comrades go read Trotsky's *What Is Leninism?* I think that will also be a good guide. Now, I have explained throughout this conference what's happening. Leading up to this culminating moment, this second round of discussion, where everything that has happened in the last months came to a head. So, I explained this, and now there are political conclusions to be drawn from that, and I will let the next reporter motivate those.

* * *

Jones: The first part of my last report was to fight against the liberalism in the party on the black question, which is the key question for revolution in the U.S. It's the black question, it's the question of revolution, and it's the question of leadership. And in regards to the proposed leadership that we had, in particular the fulls on the slate, the majority—when it came to testing in the fight to make a break with lib-

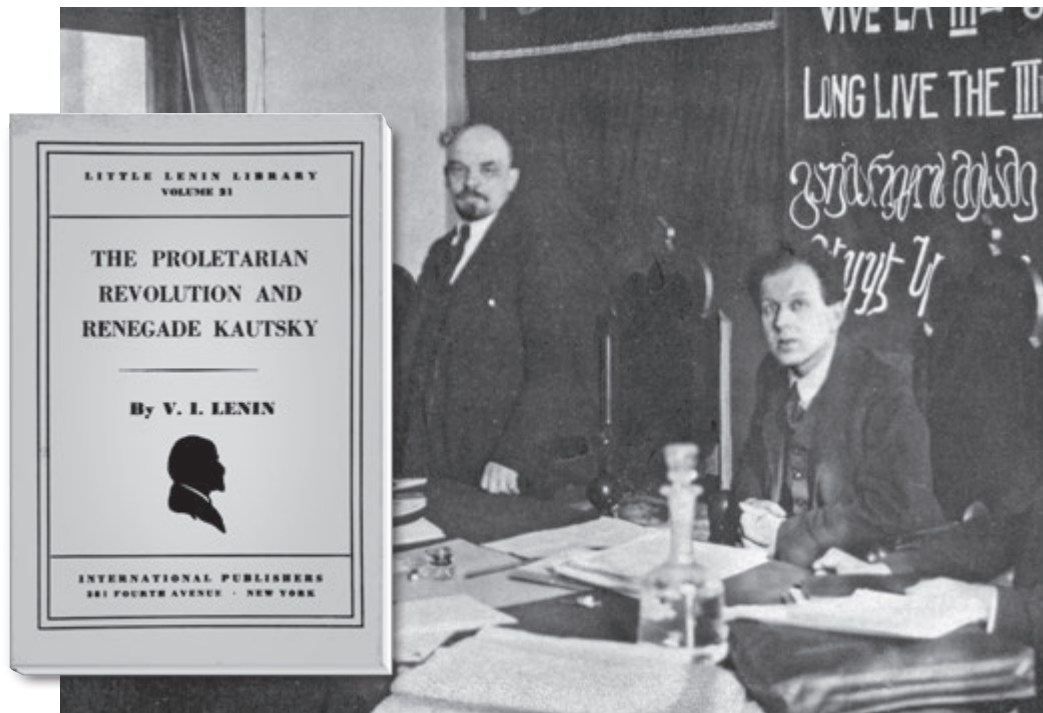
eralism, to fight against liberalism in the party, the purpose of this conference—you flinched.

inside the party and out. And if you can't defend it inside the party, you're not going to be able to do a good job defending those politics that I was pushing in my report outside of the party. You have to draw a really clear line, not just take up whatever tertiary point. I'm talking mainly to the comrades who were proposed on the slate and have been working hard on this conference. When it came time to really fight on this question, you didn't do it.

Your heads were down in your lap, you passed on the second round. At first, I was a little soft on the comrade who passed because I thought, "Well, maybe he can't make the political points." I don't think that is the point of what he did. It is that he didn't want to wage the hard fight that needed to be waged today to defend the report that I gave, which was difficult to do, over how we've totally capitulated to liberalism on this question.

I don't know how else to say it, but if you don't get it in here, you're not going to get it out there, where it matters. And we can't afford any more time dealing with conciliation on this question. We have dealt with it too long. We need to draw a hard line, we need to get propaganda out which draws a sharp line. Yes, when Perrault spoke at the beginning of the second round of the black question discussion, he said the task was to declare war against liberalism inside the party. I've seen you this whole weekend, you gave some really strong interventions, but when it came to this question, it was mushy. Basically, what we're proposing in terms of a slate is a change and that change is based on the interventions of the comrades on the last round who understood this crucial test that was posed this last day of this conference and really waged a fight to draw a line against liberalism inside the party.

In my report "For Black Trotskyism (II)," I talked about guilty white liberalism in the party, etc. It's not just up to the black comrades to defend our program on the black question. It's really important to understand that we need a leadership that is going to really go to bat inside the party and outside the party over this question. And like I said, I think for different reasons some of you may not have fully understood some of the questions that were involved to draw the line. And I think others just flinched. ■



Moscow, 1919: V.I. Lenin at First Congress of the Communist International. Bolsheviks built Comintern through ruthless combat against reformists, insidious centrists like Karl Kautsky.

revolution. Cop reform is a deadly and suicidal program that keeps black people tied to the Democratic Party. Many protesters were met with massive state repression. Meanwhile, the BLM program leads the oppressed into alliance with liberal bourgeois forces to manage the repressive state wielded against them. You can't fight for revolution in alliance with forces that are against revolution. Any step forward in the fight for black liberation requires confronting the interests of the capitalist class. The course of the movement into the Democratic Party could only lead to defeat.

There have been massive defeats and demoralization coming out of the BLM movement. Today, Biden is administering decaying U.S. capitalism, and the racist status quo has only been strengthened. People are looking for answers as to why this is all that came out of their efforts. The subordination of the struggle for black freedom to a pro-capitalist pro-

gram is the reason the movement could not advance the fight for black equality. That there was no revolutionary pole against BLM to win people to is the fault of the SL/U.S.

The SL/U.S. Response to BLM

The SL/U.S. *rejected* the need to fight for the leadership of the struggle for black liberation *in opposition to* the reformists and the liberals. It *refused* to fight for the Trotskyist program for revolutionary integrationism in order to win over blacks, workers and youth to the need to build a Leninist party and fight for socialism. This *betrayal* meant that workers and militants were left with their wretched liberal misleaders, who keep them tied to the racist white ruling class responsible for their oppression. Instead of fighting to split workers and youth from BLM and win them to revolutionary Marxism, the SL/U.S. adapted to the prevailing bourgeois liberal ideology and became a left

pressure group on BLM. What we had to say to the militant youth and workers around BLM was: "We're not gonna fight with you, just make you more effective liberals."

BLM is an obstacle to the fight for black liberation, and so were the pages of *Workers Vanguard* and every fake socialist group that served as a left tail on BLM. The SL/U.S.'s task was to lead the struggle to build a revolutionary party, to fight against BLM's program of betrayal, to fight the popular front and to win workers and activists away from its liberal program. BLM was overwhelmingly greeted with open arms on the left. While Left Voice sees BLM as a model on which to build new liberal-reformist movements today, centrists like the IG and the SL/U.S. sought to act as left advisors to it by criticizing the most overtly liberal excesses of its program, like open support to the Democrats. While revolutionaries want blacks and workers to break with the

Democrats, this in and of itself does not draw a class line. The call to "break with the Democrats" is insufficient and meaningless if it is not combined with calls to break with BLM and its liberal program. Opposition to the Democrats on a non-revolutionary basis will only lead back to the Democrats.

WV's fundamental betrayal of accepting the liberal leadership of BLM led to tailing it as left critics. In a centrist manner, the SL/U.S. did not openly hail BLM. WV criticized BLM for not understanding that "[t]he entrenched oppression of black people in this country, a legacy of chattel slavery, is rooted in the capitalist profit system" and opposed BLM's program of cop reform because the capitalist state "cannot be fixed by tweaking laws or cleaning out corruption, which is the content of the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement." WV claimed that reforming capitalism is a dead end,

continued on page 10

Black Trotskyism...

(continued from page 9)

but refused to break with BLM, a liberal force whose program is to reform capitalism. As opposed to fighting to break workers from the bankruptcy of BLM's program on a revolutionary class-struggle basis and to win them to the need to build a communist leadership of the unions, WV was attempting to build a labor wing of BLM.

The Task of Revolutionaries

What should we have done in response to BLM? WV's response should have been to counterpose the Trotskyist program for advancing the black struggle today by making the basic point that rev-

olutionaries must *break* with BLM as a precondition to waging a fight for black liberation. This is the difference between acting as an independent communist pole versus being a left tail on a liberal movement whose program is to have black people manage the state that carries out their oppression.

What draws a class line is building a Leninist party that fights for class independence against the BLM popular front, that fights to break workers from BLM's liberal grip, counterposing a revolutionary program of struggle against black oppression. And since everyone is all hung up on transitional demands, I'm gonna propose one in response to cop terror that Perrault suggested to me: For the cops to open their records and secret files of murder and abuse of black people and the rest of the proletariat!

The bottom line is that our aim is to win black Trotskyist cadre, as part of a

revolutionary internationalist vanguard to help lead the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. The course that the SL/U.S. has followed is the same as the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) course into Pabloite liquidation, abandoning the fight for revolutionary leadership of the black struggle and abdicating the responsibility to their class, the proletariat. Instead of polemicizing as Marxists in struggle, the SL/U.S. became enthusiastic, tailing-after opportunists for BLM. The SL/U.S. codified this at its 2015 National Conference:

"We intervened heavily into events and protests around the Black Lives Matter, but our tiny propaganda group does not have the social weight to influence the ideological leadership of the protests, and objective circumstances have not created a layer of left-moving activists."

—SL/U.S. *Internal Bulletin*
No. 128, point No. 82

Before being expelled for waging a principled fight against the SWP's politi-

cal degeneration, our Trotskyist forebears in the Revolutionary Tendency fought the liquidationist concept that the communist program has nothing to offer the black masses by reasserting the necessity of revolutionary leadership:

"This conception denies the fundamental necessity that the party will lead, must lead, or should even try to lead the decisive section of the working class in America. The resolution gives credence to the concept that 'we cannot lead the Negro people.' This is absolutely contradictory to a revolutionary perspective. Our leadership means the revolutionary class struggle program carried out by revolutionists in the mass movements, fused into the revolutionary party."

—James Robertson and Shirley Stoute, "For Black Trotskyism" (July 1963)

For a multiracial Leninist vanguard party! Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution! Forward to the Fourth International! These are not jingles, comrades. ■



Wallheiser/Getty



Eli Hartman/Odessa American

From Baton Rouge in 2016 (left) to Texas in June 2020 (right), millions outraged by police violence mobilized around BLM's liberal program, achieving nothing but the election of Biden as a new overseer. We seek to break militants from BLM liberalism and win them to a communist program.

BLM...

(continued from page 16)

And since black liberation cannot make a single step forward without taking on these interests, a liberal movement like BLM necessarily means betraying the struggle for black liberation. Therefore, the subordination of the black struggle to liberalism and to the black petty bourgeoisie is the central reason for the movement's current paralysis and impotence.

These liberal shackles must be broken—not as in the '60s by black nationalism, which is just another dead end—but by a revolutionary working-class program. This raises two interrelated tasks for revolutionaries: first, to fight for a left-wing working-class break with liberalism; and second, to win activists involved in the BLM movement to Trotskyism, the only program which can bring about black liberation.

But where have the so-called revolutionaries been? They have been supporting different versions of BLM's liberal politics. Whether it is in our own press, the Internationalist Group's (IG) or that of Left Voice, the purpose has been to push the movement to the left, winning the more radical elements to a halfway house between the Democratic Party and revolutionary politics (which really means the Democratic Party). This is an utter betrayal of the struggle for black liberation and an utter betrayal of the struggle for workers revolution. It accepts that young black militants and others outraged by the realities of black life in America will remain tied to capitalist politics, which necessarily leads only to defeat and demoralization. While the pseudo-Marxist left is tiny and not very influential in the U.S., it nonetheless represents the main political obstacle stopping left-wing BLM activists from breaking from liberalism and finding their way to revolutionary socialism.

So far, our internal discussion has established well how the SL/U.S.'s intervention toward BLM was totally capitulatory. But this isn't enough. It is necessary to concretely motivate revolutionary integrationism against BLM's liberalism and the left's tailism.

With the black movement clearly at an impasse, there is an urgent need for answers. Only Trotskyists can explain why BLM was such a failure and what needs to be done to go forward. In the rest of my presentation, I want to outline six key questions on which we have so far failed to draw a Marxist line against the politics of BLM and the left.

1. Police Reform

The main political demand by BLM is for police reform. There are a bunch of schemes—some utopian, some useless, some reactionary—all of them total dead ends.

The main response from the SL/U.S. and IG to the program of police reform has been to say that it is impossible and that only revolution can end police oppression of black people. This is as true as it is sterile. We learnedly explain that: "This system cannot be fixed by tweaking laws or cleaning out corruption, which is the content of the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement" (WV No. 1064, 20 March 2015). And then go on about the nature of the state and the need for revolution. No political conclusions are drawn as to the concrete tasks for Marxists toward a movement whose main objective is police reform. Advocating police reform is not simply a faulty view stemming from a misunderstanding of the capitalist state. It is a deadly program used to rope black people behind the Democratic Party.

The point we started to develop in our letter to the SL/U.S. is that the program of police reform is inherently class-collaborationist. Unlike the fight for reforms, such as better housing or better wages, whose achievement will benefit the working class and the oppressed, police reform can only serve to further tie the oppressed to the capitalist parties and their state. It means directly involving minorities and the working class in the management of the capitalist forces of repression, whether it is through civilian review boards, municipal budgets, legislation in Congress, or the selection of the police commissioner.

The point is that you can't fight for police reform independently from the cap-

italists; it is an inherently popular-frontist demand. A BLM group that opposes the Democrats but still supports police reform is *still* in the popular front. It is not enough to explain that police reform is impossible and that the future revolution will solve everything; it is necessary to expose how today this program is used to bind the oppressed to their oppressors. The program of police reform *must* be rejected as a *precondition* for advancing the struggle for black liberation. This is precisely what the IG and SL/U.S. have not done.

It is also necessary to put forward a concrete counterposed alternative for right now. The gunning down of ten black people in a Buffalo grocery store shows once more the constant fascist threat that black people face. BLM and other leftist demonstrations are also in the crosshairs of fascists. To turn the tide of class struggle in this country, labor will need powerful, militant picket lines. Instead of putting faith in the cops and fostering illusions in cop reform, it is necessary to organize black and working-class power independently of the capitalist state. *For labor/black defense committees, for the right of armed self-defense!*

2. Integration

The only way to achieve black liberation is through the full integration of black people into American society. BLM mostly does not claim to be for integration, but plenty of liberals in and around the movement do call for various forms of integration in schools, housing, jobs, etc. The problem is that it is impossible to achieve any real integration without confronting deeply rooted capitalist interests, and thus it is impossible to achieve while staying in the good graces of the liberal establishment. For example, integrating New York City will require going against the real estate parasites, Wall Street and the Democratic Party. When Martin Luther King left the South, where the struggle was centered on formal legal equality, for the North, where the question was *social* equality and integration, he rapidly lost the backing of Democratic Party liberals and was forced to back down with his tail between his legs.

Liberal integrationism can offer only legal or parliamentary reforms through pressuring the Democratic Party. It necessarily betrays the struggle for integration because it can only push for it insofar as it is acceptable to the ruling class. And as I explained before, real integration is not and cannot be acceptable to the ruling class. Thus, to fight for real integration, it is necessary to break with liberalism.

The left, including the SL/U.S., has mirrored BLM in totally ignoring the fight for integration. Focusing solely on police brutality and cop reform is a way of keeping the movement on its liberal tracks. A concrete way to break the black masses from liberalism is to advocate and push the struggle for integration which will rapidly collide with the limits of liberal integrationism.

In contrast, all BLM articles in WV barely mention segregation, and revolutionary integrationism was nothing more than a meaningless jingle. Here is an example from the article "Class-Struggle Road to Black Freedom, Part One" (WV No. 1073, 4 September 2015):

"We fight for black freedom on the program of revolutionary integration including mobilizing the working class against every manifestation of racial oppression. This approach is counterposed to liberal integration, which is premised on the utopian notion that equality for black people can be attained within the confines of this class society founded on black oppression."

In no way is it clear why revolutionary and liberal integration are counterposed. Liberal integration is presented as simply "utopian," not as a program that fundamentally restricts and hampers the struggle for black liberation. The only way to advance black liberation is to win the black masses to the understanding that integration can only be achieved in struggle against all wings of the bourgeoisie, including its liberal wing. This is the premise for fighting for *integrated affordable housing; free, quality health care; free, integrated schooling from preschool to university.*

3. Overcoming the Racial Divide

The dominant pressure in the United States is to look at society through the prism of race instead of class. The white

ruling class spreads racial prejudice against black people in order to keep the oppressed divided and at each other's throats. In response to this, black nationalism and liberal identity politics present all black or non-white people as having a commonality of interests against the dominant white population. Despite being generally espoused in reaction to brutal discrimination and oppression, these programs are fundamentally false and are obstacles to black liberation.

All black people in the U.S. are oppressed due to the color of their skin, but they do not all share a common interest. The black cultural and business elite draws a large part of its success from the maintenance of segregated communities. Lacking the resources to compete with the white elites who dominate the U.S. economy and cultural institutions, among the segregated black population they can find a captive and receptive market in which they can have disproportionate influence. While buying black, guilt-tripping Hollywood into hiring more black actors and electing more black politicians is good for the careers of the black petty bourgeoisie, it does nothing for the black masses and, in fact, subordinates their needs to the distinctly pro-capitalist ambitions of this layer.

WV had two answers to overcome racial polarization. The first was using Lenin's call for a party that is a tribune of the people, which we distorted into some do-good liberal formula (more on this later). The second is the classic social-democratic program of unity around economic class struggle. Part Two of the article quoted earlier makes a long list of demands which "benefit the class as a whole." The article goes on to say that: "Under revolutionary leadership, struggles for these and similar demands would serve not only to win immediate gains but also to weld the class together and advance its consciousness, pointing toward the need to overthrow the capitalist system."

Fine words, but the whole presentation promotes the illusion that such demands can be fought for without a revolutionary leadership in the working class. So, why do you need revolutionary leadership to overcome the racial division in the United States? Comrades in the SL/U.S. are wedded to the idea that all you need to do is raise good demands and the racial divide will be overcome. This is wrong. Revolutionary leadership is key. There has been plenty of economic struggle by the American working class, and while it can



Internationalist

Left: Internationalist Group at Juneteenth 2020 march in Brooklyn. Right: ILWU-led Juneteenth work stoppage/protest, Oakland, 2020. Centrist IG calls for revolution but hails as a model the action organized by ILWU tops to push BLM's Democratic Party politics, cop reform.



Peg Hunter

for black oppression, can only consolidate the hold of anti-black racism. This reactionary cycle is constantly fueled by the ruling class to maintain its domination.

Demands that will unite the interests of the entire working class, and specifically address the oppression of black people, will not be acceptable to the bosses. The most basic measures will require momentous battles that confront the capitalist class and the state. Such battles cannot be won while the working class is blindfolded by trade unionism. It's *not* just about having a bunch of demands; they are useless without a leadership that can fight for and win them.

The unity of the working class can be achieved only through white workers understanding that it is in their own class interests not only to temporarily unite in struggle against the common enemy but also to champion the struggle for full black equality, which itself cannot be achieved within the bounds of capitalism. The working class can be united only around a program that combines revolution and integration. Trade unionism does not do this, and is, in fact, a total obstacle to this program.

4. Workers Movement

BLM has mainly been a petty-bourgeois movement which has not intersected much working-class struggle. The main call raised by Left Voice, the IG and the SL/U.S. has been for the working class to fight in defense of black people. Here's Left Voice's version (leftvoice.org, 25 May 2022):

"SEIU called for a Strike for Black Lives in coordination of the ILWU West Coast

including the SL, has been doing. Workers must be mobilized in defense of black people, but *not* on the basis of BLM's program. For the working class to advance its own interests and to champion the needs of the black masses, the precondition is to break with its political subordination to the Democratic Party.

5. Breaking with the Democrats

It is pretty common for pseudo-Marxists to call for breaking with the Democrats, especially these days. Recently, the main argument raised in the SL/U.S. against BLM is that it is organically tied to the Democrats. "Break with the Democrats" is, of course, a necessary and principled call. However, raising this call does not automatically draw a class line. For example, as the previous example shows, it is entirely possible to call to break with the Democrats and the bureaucrats while supporting the working class being mobilized on the political basis of BLM's liberal program for police reform. Presenting the call to break with the Democrats as a sufficient condition for class independence is simply a way to conciliate the left-wing elements of BLM that are critical of the Democrats but who cling to liberal or black nationalist politics.

On characterizing the left's intervention in BLM, the IG comes closest to the truth:

"Opportunist leftists see the present politically liberal protests through rose-colored glasses because they place themselves on a continuum, just a step to the left of the liberals. Today even many liberals understand that the institution of the police, 'as we know it,' is inherently racist. But the reformists and centrists obscure the class line, and with their 'fight the right' politics they constantly cross that line seeking political alliances with bourgeois liberal forces."

—internationalist.org, 10 July 2020

But the IG notes this truth only to better reject the crucial question: BLM is itself a bourgeois liberal force! The task of revolutionaries is not to merely observe the existence of the class line, but to clearly draw it in the course of struggle. In the case of BLM, that means fighting to break its militants from the liberal politics of BLM.

To the openly liberal slogan of BLM, the IG responds with its more "militant, class-struggle slogans." But this is utterly meaningless because the IG's propaganda is focused on liberal outrage and exposition journalism, entirely compatible and acceptable to the liberal politics of BLM. The class line can only be drawn by showing how BLM liberalism betrays black liberation, and counterposing to it a revolutionary program for black liberation that explicitly goes beyond what is acceptable to liberals. The IG (as well as our press in the past) talks about class independence from the Democrats, talks about revolution as the solution, but *does not* conclude from this that the task of communists is not to build the BLM movement, but to build a counterposed revolutionary pole for black liberation and socialism. This is the fundamental capitulation.

6. The Revolutionary Party

Throughout WV articles on BLM—and in most of its articles dealing with special oppression—we claim we want to build a revolutionary party and refer to Lenin's

conception of the party as a "tribune of the people." In fact, the SL/U.S.'s program has been much closer to that of the Economist Martynov than Lenin's.

Just like the SL/U.S., Martynov justified dumbing down the tasks of the party with the argument that current consciousness isn't revolutionary. From this, he drew the conclusion:

"Since in ordinary times various social strata inevitably march separately, 'it is, therefore, clear that we Social-Democrats cannot simultaneously guide the activities of various opposition strata, we cannot dictate to them a positive programme of action, we cannot point out to them in what manner they should wage a day-to-day struggle for their interests... The liberal strata will themselves take care of the active struggle for their immediate interests, the struggle that will bring them face to face with our political regime'"

—V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (1902)

To put this in the context of the black question, we, just like the Economists of Lenin's time, did not put forward a positive program of action, did not point out how to wage the day-to-day struggle and abandoned the struggle for black liberation to the leadership of the liberals.

Lenin also quotes Martynov arguing that the party should function "*merely in the negative* role of exposers of abuses... we can *only* dissipate their hopes in various government commissions." Sounds just like the *Internationalist* and *WV*, which *merely* write long turgid expositions of the abuses against black people while dissipating hopes in police reform. Blacks don't need *WV* and the *Internationalist* to tell them how brutal police are. As Lenin responded to Martynov, they will find out directly from the police. Simply writing about different forms of specific oppression is totally compatible with today's economism. In contradistinction to *WV*, which uses the tribune of the people point to justify liberal moping about capitalism, Lenin insists on the need to give the struggle of the various oppressed groups a *revolutionary content and leadership*.

Toward the groups oppressed by tsarism, Lenin explained:

"We must take upon ourselves the task of organising an all-round political struggle under the leadership of *our* Party in such a manner as to make it possible for all oppositional strata to render their fullest support to the struggle and to our Party. We must train our Social-Democratic practical workers to become political leaders, able to guide all the manifestations of this all-round struggle, able at the right time to 'dictate a positive programme of action' for the aroused students, the discontented Zemstvo [provincial council] people, the incensed religious sects, the offended elementary schoolteachers, etc., etc."

Lenin's whole point is that against the economists who restrict working-class struggle to economic struggle and abandon other opponents of tsarism to liberal leadership, a vanguard party must elevate consciousness and unite all opponents of tsarism behind its own banner in the struggle to overthrow the regime. At bottom, the question facing the SL/U.S. boils down to the same conflict: an economist program for the working class, leaving the black struggle under a liberal leadership, versus unity of the black and working-class struggle behind a revolutionary party. ■



Chicago, 6 August 1966: MLK after pacifist protest attacked by racist mob. Preaching reliance on liberal bourgeoisie, King's program was incapable of achieving genuine equality for black people.

temporarily bridge the racial divide, that divide cannot be overcome on the basis of trade-union struggle. Increasing the size of the economic pie given to workers without addressing the fact that blacks are at the bottom and receive a proportionally smaller portion will maintain the basis for racial antagonisms.

Trade-union economism, which ignores the specific needs of black workers, will generate resentment and distrust and can only fuel black nationalism. In turn, black nationalism proposes to redress the condition of black people through separation and measures taken at the expense of white workers. In this way, black rights become associated with attacks on white workers, who are themselves oppressed by the ruling class. This, and the liberal moralizing that blames all white people

port shutdown, although few SEIU work stoppages actually occurred. Yet it showed a glimpse of what could be and what will need to happen in order to defend Black lives and end police brutality—coordinated strikes against police killings."

You will find pretty much the same thing as this throughout *WV* and the *Internationalist*. The propaganda by the left simply presents strikes and working-class demonstrations as inherently progressive. The ILWU Juneteenth "strike" was not a show of labor power against the capitalist class, but a rally behind liberal Democratic Party politics. To call for working-class action in the context of BLM, without it being based on a clear programmatic counterposition to liberalism and the Democratic Party, is simply building an alliance between the workers and the liberal wing of their exploiters. This is what the left,

— Enough Defeats! — Workers Need a Program for Victory!

The following article is translated from *O Bolsevikos* (No. 7, December 2022), published by our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece.

The imperialists, along with the Greek ruling class, have ransacked the country. Ever greater imperialist enslavement is paid for with the blood of working people: privatization of ports and shipyards, factory closures; attacks on unions, on health care, on education and on union rights. Inflation is increasing the cost of basic goods and electricity. One crisis follows another: the crisis which began more than ten years ago; Germany's overturn of the result of the

Ο ΜΠΟΛΣΕΒΙΚΟΣ

2015 referendum on European Union (EU) austerity; Syriza's sellout to the EU and the banks; the government's disastrous policies in the pandemic and in the Ukraine war; the current crisis. The masses have been impoverished, the lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie ruined. Their immediate needs on every question collide with the basic pillar of the capitalist system: private ownership of the means of production.

Struggle *now* is urgently needed to meet the needs of working people and to link that with the fight to liberate the country from imperialist subjugation and establish a workers government. The workers must take power into their hands, sweep away all the useless parasites and **run the country from top to bottom**. With the working class in charge and the profit motive cut out, the scourges of price gouging, unemployment and expensive housing can all be rapidly eliminated.

But why is it that—in a country where socialism is part of the everyday vocabulary of the whole left, where there is a mass Communist Party (KKE) and a proletariat that has fought like no other in Europe—not only has there not been a seizure of power but living conditions have gotten worse? This brings us to the nub of the problem. There is a gigantic gulf between what the toilers need and the political solutions provided by the leadership of the KKE, as well as of the trade unions and the left.

What Is To Be Done?

We need low-cost heating, free quality health care and education for all, jobs, decent pensions and wages. We just had a “general” strike on November 9. The strike showed two things: workers want to fight, and the strike did not end in victory. Why? Workers deserve an answer. Trade-union organizations GSEE, ADEDY and PAME called workers out on strike with important demands to benefit the lives of the working masses. What were some of those basic demands and what were the tasks posed for the proletariat? Was it in fact a general strike?

The KKE calls for “rent subsidy for workers'-people's households, students and small businesses, broadening the criteria for inclusion and an increase in the subsidy,” “no worker's or people's home without electricity, water or telephone,” “collective agreements and wage increases based on the increase in inflation” and “stable jobs with rights; no to unpaid overtime” (*Panergatikí* No. 15, September 2022). We agree. But what did the KKE/PAME leaders do to prepare the general strike to win those demands? The workers' basic neces-



Greece

Athens, 9 November 2022: Construction workers in one-day general strike. Workers' interests are betrayed by the reformist program of their leaders.

sities cannot be won with routine trade-union methods, a symbolic 24-hour strike that was essentially a parade and then back to work. Greece provides an example of how numerous strikes have brought only minimal results.

What is needed is an offensive by the entire working class against the bosses in the form of a *real* general strike, i.e., a political strike, an organized struggle with the aim of forcing the enemy to retreat. That would be guaranteed to wrest the most concessions for working people *right now* as the crisis hits. When the working class shuts down factories, transport, ports, etc., it paralyzes not only production but also the government, posing the question of who is in charge in the workplace and the country: the workers or the bosses. A general strike draws in all sectors in the country and mobilizes the oppressed layers of the petty bourgeoisie along with the majority of the proletariat, actively counterposing them to the bourgeoisie and its state.

But although the need is great and conditions are ripe, no general offensive is being organized. Why? Because it's a question of revolutionary program and leadership. A revolutionary program is a precondition even for the struggle for reforms. But the KKE's program is as much an obstacle to that struggle as it is to the realization of a workers revolution. It is reformist on fundamental questions—on the state, on emancipation from imperialist enslavement, on common struggle of Greek and

Turkish workers, etc. It is urgently necessary to replace the workers' existing leadership with leaders whose program for the immediate betterment of the masses' living conditions is an integral part of a broader strategy to bring the working class to power.

For the National Liberation of Greece

In a country raped by the imperialists, no fight to improve the masses' living conditions is possible without a program to link that struggle to the fight against imperialist subjugation. The KKE's program is an obstacle to that perspective since, for them, it is opportunist to recognize the fact that Greece is not imperialist but a country subjugated by imperialism. Accordingly, the struggle for national emancipation—which has to be at the center of the revolutionary program—is also opportunism, because it lets the local bourgeoisie off the hook. The KKE writes:

“On a political level, this opportunist conception of imperialism leads the workers movement onto pernicious paths of class conciliation, as a political tail on the bourgeoisie. It essentially exonerates the bourgeoisies of the less powerful countries of monopoly capitalism, which tend to appear also as victims of foreign monopolistic groups. It shifts the class dividing line from inside the country to outside (to the ‘managers,’ to the IMF, to the Germans, etc.)”

—“Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and Its Distortions,”
Kommunistiki Epitheorisi
No. 2 (2017)

The KKE creates a false dilemma, counterposing the struggle against imperialist subjugation to the struggle to overthrow the national bourgeoisie. The revolutionary struggle to break the imperialist yoke does not weaken but rather strengthens the political differentiation of classes. The local bourgeoisie has a solid rear guard behind it in imperialism, which will always help it with money and arms against the workers. Everything the oppressed and exploited masses do to stand on their feet inevitably pushes the national bourgeoisie into an open bloc with the imperialists. To fight against imperialism, one must *necessarily* fight against the national bourgeoisie.

The KKE believes that the struggle against imperialist subjugation leads to conciliating the Greek bourgeoisie. This is indeed a danger in the absence of a revolutionary program against imperialism. That is what happened in the 1940s when the Stalinists formed a popular front in the name of fighting fascism, collaborating with the Greek bourgeoisie as well as with the “progressive” imperialists (British and American). (See “Greece 1940s: A Revolution Betrayed,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 64, Summer 2014.) Indeed, the program of class conciliation must be rejected, but the way to do that is not by refusing to fight against imperialist enslavement.

The KKE says that the struggle against the imperialists “shifts the class dividing line from inside the country to outside (to the ‘managers,’ to the IMF, to the Germans, etc.)” In other words...if the workers fight in the first place mainly against the IMF and the German bourgeoisie, that is opportunism. With this reasoning and the argument that “*capitalism in Greece is in its imperialist stage of development, in an intermediate position in the international imperialist system,*” they deny that the whole country is *nationally* oppressed by the imperialists. They disappear the dominant role of foreign finance capital in Greece as a subjugated country. Their argument rejects the struggle for *national* and *class* liberation. Let's see how the struggle for basic needs is tied to the struggle against imperialism. The KKE calls for “canceling the debt of worker's-people's households and for professionals,” “abolition of the property tax on worker's-people's households” and “abolition of debts to banks and the tax office” (*Panergatikí* No. 15, September 2022).

We agree. But how will that happen and who will do it? A workers or a bourgeois government? The KKE doesn't tell us, so we'll answer for them. Can the debts be canceled without the expropriation of the banks by the proletariat? No. In order to cancel the debts we must violate the interests of the imperialists, the banks and the local ruling class, who have burdened

For National Liberation! For a Workers Government!

the masses with an enormous national debt. It is the task of revolutionaries to fight to *cancel* the debts and *expropriate* the banks. *Abolish business and banking secrecy—open the books!* Banks in the hands of the workers will have no interest in paying the debt by means of which the imperialists have sucked the blood of the Greek people. Does that mean we need to take power? Yes. Only a revolutionary workers government fighting against *all* the oppressors can apply this program. However, this can only be realized by a revolutionary party which puts national and class emancipation at the center of its program.

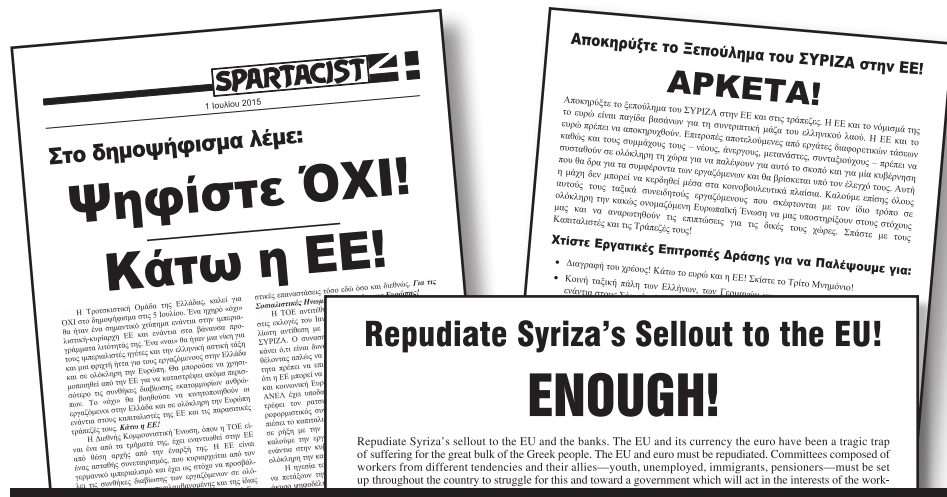
The KKE also calls:

“To use all the modern possibilities of production, technology and science to satisfy the workers’-people’s needs. The precondition is that energy, food, basic goods are not produced as commodities under the control of large business groups but become social property; that scientific, centralized planning is developed with the toilers, the people, at the helm of power.”

—“No Delay! Combative Common Action with the KKE Everywhere So That the People Become a Protagonist,” kke.gr (7 October 2022)

No objection. But how do we get from where we are today to using all the modern possibilities to satisfy working people’s needs so that these become “social property,” and how will the people be “at the helm of power”? That remains a mystery. Here we have two banks of a river but with no bridge to link them. The KKE walks on the path of social democracy, dividing its program into a minimum program limited to reforms in the framework of capitalism, as in the strike, and a maximum program of “scientific, centralized planning...with the toilers, the people, at the helm of power” relegated to a foggy, indeterminate future.

But why is there no bridge? The KKE is incapable of building a bridge between the necessary struggle now and the struggle for revolution because its program is opposed to the fight for national liberation. The KKE’s program leads to capitulation as much to the imperialists as to



Our TOE comrades called for “No” vote in 2015 referendum on EU austerity, linked struggle against imperialist subjugation to formation of a workers government. KKE’s refusal to call for “No” vote, rejection of our united-front call for workers action committees, brought huge defeat for workers.

the national bourgeoisie, as was shown in 2015. It is important to draw the lessons of 2015 so that workers understand that the KKE’s mistakes were not simply theoretical but have terrible consequences in real life. Class-conscious workers must understand that the KKE’s program cannot be reformed and that the working class needs a new leadership.

The Lessons of 2015

In 2015, after years of brutal austerity when the proletariat was fighting tooth and nail, the country reached a turning point. To divert the anger and struggles of the masses into safer channels, Syriza, then the ruling party, tried to deceive workers that it could champion the struggle against imperialist subjugation. Indeed, there were many illusions that Syriza would get a better deal with the EU and that it would fight against the imperialists.

In 2015 Syriza held a referendum on EU-dictated austerity, hoping for a “yes” vote. That would have been the best outcome for Syriza and the EU, handing them a *mandate* to devastate the proletariat. For revolutionaries, opposition to imperialism is not simply a question of

tactics but a question of *principle*. Our task was to expose the fact that Syriza was incapable of leading a fight against the imperialists and to show the masses that only a proletarian leadership can bring about their emancipation. The *only* revolutionary position on the referendum was “no,” with *no* support to the government. The KKE leadership criminally refused to take a position against the imperialists and called on workers to spoil their ballots, thus aiding the “yes” vote. The victory of the “no” vote was a loud and clear message that the imperialist parasites could go to hell, and it came about *despite* and *against* the KKE, which weakened the struggle against imperialism.

The referendum result showed that the masses were determined to fight. In the face of the result and massive protests, Syriza prime minister Alexis Tsipras turned white. His imperialist bosses said: “You have won, but Greece has lost.” The masses had been deceived before the referendum. But following the “no” vote, its overturning by Germany and Syriza’s sellout, the government was weakened and exposed. What was posed was an *open* confrontation with the imperialists and the local bourgeoisie.

The role of revolutionaries was to provide a revolutionary pole to transform the rage of the masses into a revolutionary situation. The working class had to be organized to fight. We said “ENOUGH!” and organized a campaign with precisely that perspective. We directed agitation toward unions and left organizations and fought to build workers action committees linking the struggle against imperialist subjugation with the overthrow of *all* the oppressors and the formation of a workers government. We did our duty while the KKE and the left literally went on holiday. They criminally refused to take up our call and to set the masses in struggle, bringing about an enormous defeat for the workers. The KKE leadership, with its dominant role in the workers movement, has the greatest responsibility. It clearly did not want to lead the workers

in a struggle against the euro and the EU when it was posed concretely, thus rescuing the local capitalists at the same time.

To justify its position, the KKE claims to this day that voting down the austerity package drawn up by the Troika (IMF, EU and European Central Bank) was equivalent to an indirect vote for Syriza’s own austerity package and, by extension, support for its government. This position sounds orthodox in that it apparently opposes both the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. However, the Stalinists fall into ultraleftism. This arises from the KKE’s position that Greece is an imperialist country and leads to a betrayal of the struggle for national liberation. The KKE’s position that the fight against imperialist subjugation is counterposed to the fight against the national bourgeoisie leads inevitably, as shown in 2015, to capitulation to both the imperialists and the bourgeoisie. *Break with the treacherous leadership of the KKE! For the reforging of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution!*

For Common Class Struggle of Turkish and Greek Workers!

It is important for the working class to understand that in every serious struggle it undertakes, the capitalists will attempt to divert such struggle by whipping up chauvinism against Turkey. For workers to be able to fight for their interests, it is essential to combat chauvinism with a program that will unite Greek and Turkish working people.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated tensions between the Greek and Turkish bourgeoisies, who fight over who will get a bigger slice of the pie, from natural gas to competing claims on the islands. Constant threats from both sides are daily news. The goals of both bourgeoisies are reactionary. Using national unity, they set workers against each other in order to advance their own interests. For the working class of each country, it is criminal to take the side of one of the two capitalist classes.

The imperialists turn one country against the other in order to ensure their dominance in the region. Greece and Turkey are both brutally oppressed by the imperialists, against whom the workers have a *common interest* in fighting. The only way for workers to satisfy their needs for cheap gas, electricity, etc. is to seize natural resources from the claws of the oppressors through class unity against both the imperialists and their own bourgeoisies. The revolutionary unity of Turkish and Greek workers would be an enormous blow against imperialist domination in the region and would also advance the struggle for revolution in the imperialist centers. This can only happen with a program for proletarian power.

The greatest obstacle to this perspective is the KKE, which imbues the proletariat with anti-Turkish chauvinism, chaining it to the national bourgeoisie and deceiving it as to who its real enemy is. The KKE

continued on page 14



Stalinist KKE rejects struggle against imperialist oppression of Greece. In 1944, with withdrawal of Nazi forces from Athens, KKE betrayed a revolutionary situation, embracing Stalin’s alliance with British and U.S. imperialists. KKE poster reads: “Long Live Our Great Allies.”

KKE/PAME...

(continued from page 16)

As Trotskyists, we have no illusions in the Stalinists of the KKE, but we recognize that they lead the vanguard of the proletariat. If the KKE is truly revolutionary, as it claims, then it will lead the working class in the fight to achieve these demands and to take power. The situation is ripe. If the KKE and PAME lead the attack of the working class, they can be victorious. But if, as we believe, they will not do that, then it will demonstrate to the working class the need for a new, revolutionary, leadership.

The entire history of the KKE demonstrates that they will not lead this fight to victory. In the 1940s, the KKE led the national liberation movement to the very cusp of working-class power, only to give it back. This was shown clearly in the December [1944] events when, having taken control of Athens, they surrendered it to the British and the Greek capitalists. In 2015, the KKE refused to vote against the EU austerity

package, casting a spoiled ballot. After Syriza’s betrayal, when the task of leading the struggle against the imperialists was posed concretely, the KKE did not lift a finger.

In the 1940s, they collaborated with the bourgeoisie and the “progressive” imperialists in the name of the struggle against fascism. Today, in the name of “class independence,” they refuse to lead the struggle against imperialist subjugation. Both positions are but two sides of the same Stalinist coin, leading to capitulation before both the imperialists and the domestic bourgeoisie. In counterposition to that, a genuinely revolutionary party would link the struggle for national emancipation to class independence in the struggle for socialist revolution.

The rest of the left organizations have essentially the same reformist program as the KKE. At best, they make left criticisms of the KKE in order to pressure it into adopting more radical positions. They are an obstacle to the development of the workers struggle because they do not put forward a revolutionary alternative solu-

tion to that of the KKE, thus leaving the leadership of the proletariat in the hands of the reformists. The most that Antarsya has to offer for the crisis today is, in their own words, a “strong workers opposition to whatever government emerges.” This reflects the fact that they cannot show a road toward fulfilling the expectations of the proletariat and leading it to power.

A successful offensive by the Greek proletariat can raise all of Europe in rebellion. The outcome will depend on whether the vanguard of the proletariat will be able to forge a revolutionary party capable of rallying all of the oppressed to its banner.

Unlimited general strikes now to fight for:

- *Trade-union control of health and safety! Full class independence from the state and the bosses!*
- *Expropriation of the banks and the strategic sectors of the economy without compensation: ports, shipyards, rail, transport, the shipping industry, the electricity supplier DEI!*
- *Decent housing for all through the*

expropriation of the church’s property and the luxury housing of the bourgeoisie! Take back the homes stolen by the banks!

- *For a reformed Fourth International!*
- *For the Soviet United States of Europe, united on a voluntary basis!*

For Strike Committees in ports, factories, workplaces, universities, schools and elsewhere.

To organize the struggle and debate the strategy of what must be done.

Enough with the defeats!

FOR A WORKERS GOVERNMENT

Enough...

(continued from page 13)

writes that national unity is a trap and that the workers and the bourgeoisie have opposing interests. Indeed! But let's look at what the KKE's real position is. For many years they have moaned that successive Greek governments have accepted the framework of "co-dominance" (joint control) with Turkey and that:

"Greece has accepted, in the framework of exploratory meetings with Turkey, not to unilaterally expand its territorial waters in some places that disturb Turkey and to maintain them at six rather than the 12 nautical miles which they are entitled to according to Maritime Law."

—"The Greek Government on the Aegean—It Has Accepted the Framework of Co-dominance," *Rizospastis* (10 August 2011)

Expansion of territorial waters and exploitation of energy sources by the Greek capitalists at the expense of Turkey is *against* the interests of the working class. The KKE openly upholds the aims of the Greek bourgeoisie against Turkey regarding exploitation of natural resources in the Aegean and the southeast Mediterranean. In its efforts to further advance the interests of the Greek capitalists, it criticizes various governments for not *sufficiently* defending Greece's territorial and sovereign rights against Turkey. All of its left rhetoric against national unity is exposed as a lie and is used to cover its support to the ruling class. The only ones who are going to exploit the hydrocarbons are the imperialists, against both countries. In addition, the KKE's defense of the international law of the sea—a law of the imperialists—is criminal. It means defending the imperialist status quo in the region.

The KKE rails against New Democracy [ND, current ruling party]:

"Of course the government silences what the maps it presents 'shout out.' In other words, *the unacceptable claims of the Turkish bourgeoisie in the framework of its bartering with the Greek bourgeoisie, which are being 'built up' step by step, reinforced by 'allies and partners,' constantly pushed to the 'negotiating' table with the goal of Euro-Atlantic cohesion in the Eastern Mediterranean, at whose altar Greek and Cypriot sovereign rights are sacrificed.*"

—"Erdogan Urges Greece to 'Come to Your Senses and Demilitarize the Islands,' in the Presence of Americans and French," *Rizospastis* (10 June 2022)

The KKE talks about "unacceptable claims of the Turkish bourgeoisie." What about the claims of the Greek bourgeoisie? Are these not unacceptable? We Trotskyists have a straight answer: they are reactionary. In addition, the KKE's opposition to NATO/EU is based on the imperialists supporting the aims of the Turkish bourgeoisie, i.e., they're not on the side of Greece! While it's true that the imperialists threaten the national sovereignty of Greece, the KKE's opposition to NATO/EU is not based on the fact that they rape the country but rather that they weaken the Greek bourgeoisie's position



no credit

U.S. overlords have long brutally oppressed Turkey, Greece. Left: Tens of thousands of Turkish leftists rally in Istanbul against imperialist subjugation. Banner reads: "Guardian of American Imperialism, 6th Fleet Get Out," February 1969. Right: U.S. general toasts head of U.S.-backed Greek junta George Papadopoulos during 1973 NATO maneuvers.



Keystone

against Turkey. And of course the Stalinists refuse to recognize that Turkey's national sovereignty is *also* sacrificed under imperialism.

The KKE uses the masses' powerful anti-imperialist sentiment, their yearning for peace and a better life, and exploits their just hatred of the humiliation imposed by the imperialists for decades—all in order to divert their anger toward Turkey. The KKE's appeals that the imperialists represent a threat to sovereignty, its calls to close NATO bases and for Greece to exit NATO are used as a working-class cover for its cowardly call on the Greek bourgeoisie to adopt the KKE's program as a better defense of Greek capitalism against Turkey, outside of the imperialist NATO/EU alliances. The KKE pushes an alternative policy for the Greek capitalists that would better serve their interests.

The KKE divides the proletariat of both countries and thus impedes the struggle against imperialism. The workers of both countries need a leadership that instills class unity: Greek workers will not be emancipated if they do not fight the oppression of their class brothers in Turkey and vice versa. *Down with the EU and NATO! Greece/Turkey out of NATO! Close all imperialist bases in Greece, Turkey and the Balkans! Out of the EU/euro! For the Soviet United States of Europe, united on a voluntary basis!*

State and Revolution: Leninism vs. Stalinism

For the workers to win substantive reforms, they will need to *confront the capitalist state*. The ruling class will give nothing to the toilers unless it fears that it's in danger of losing everything. In a general strike the bourgeoisie and its state will strike back, mobilizing strikebreakers, police, fascists, even the army. The workers must be able to defend themselves. The KKE is an obstacle to that because its program is based on collaboration with the state; it administers the bourgeois state in the city of Patra and supports the police. In a *Rizospastis* article headlined, "The Police Should Support the KKE, Which

Is Their Most Valuable Supporter in Their Struggle" (16-17 March 2019), they boast that a cop said:

"The KKE is our valuable supporter, in order for active and retired police officers to organize our own resistance for our just demands through our associations and our fellowship with the workers'-people's movement. "It supports us in organizing our struggle together with the people against the consequences of the anti-people policy which hurts the police and the rest of the working people and daily makes the poor poorer."

We cannot imagine Lenin mobilizing the working class in defense of the cops' "just" demands. Supporting their "struggle" means supporting better salaries,



Military Sealift Command



U.S. Embassy Greece

Expansion of U.S. military presence furthers imperialist subjugation of Greece, eastern Mediterranean. Left: U.S. Army matériel at Greek port of Alexandroupolis, November 2021. Right: Geoffrey Pyatt, ambassador at the time, underscored importance of port as American bridgehead, December 2021.

better weaponry for more effective repression of the workers movement. The KKE deceives the people with the lie that the cops are part of the workers movement and that they should fight together against capitalism. They present the police—who are the core of the state along with the army and the courts—not as the instrument of oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie but as a force which can be used in the interests of the toilers against the "anti-people policy." This is the very definition of class collaboration! "Our slogan must be: *arming of the proletariat to defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie*" (Lenin, "The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution," September 1916 [emphasis ours]).

For Marxists it is clear that reforms cannot be won in collaboration with the police. *Cops, security guards, prison guards out of the unions, the workers movement and the KKE!* As Lenin said, "They Have Forgotten the Main Thing" (May 1917):

"Separated as it is from the people, forming a professional caste of men trained in the practice of violence upon the poor, men who receive somewhat higher pay and the privileges that go with authority (to say nothing of 'gratuities'), the police everywhere, in every republic, however democratic, where the bourgeoisie is in power, always remains the unailing weapon, the chief support and protection of the bourgeoisie. No important radical reforms in favour of the working masses can be implemented through the police. That is objectively impossible."

the state can be reformed and can act to benefit the workers. Not only will everything stay as it is—private property, bourgeois democracy and the accompanying misery and high cost of living—but running the capitalist state even on a local level means defending all of this.

In regard to the November 9 strike, Peletidis said, "Together with the people we will not sacrifice our future; we will fight together, we will struggle, we will overthrow them" ("Decisive Message of Escalation in 9 November Strike," 902.gr, 18 October 2022). How will that come to pass when the KKE itself constitutes a part of the capitalist state? The KKE has its feet on two boats. On the one hand it mobilizes the workers; on the other it runs Patra, doing the dirty work of the central power. The fact that the KKE runs Patra demonstrates its program for "people's power" *in practice*. As Rosa Luxemburg wrote:

"The character of a bourgeois government isn't determined by the personal character of its members, but by its organic function in bourgeois society.... With the entry of a socialist into the government, and class domination continuing to exist, the bourgeois government doesn't transform itself into a socialist government, but a socialist transforms himself into a bourgeois minister....

"While in parliament, or on the municipal council, we obtain useful reforms by combating the bourgeois government, while occupying a ministerial post we arrive at the same reforms by supporting the bourgeois state. The entry of a

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Website: icl-fi.org • Email address: vanguard@tiac.net • @WorkersVanguard

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

Chicago.....Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (312) 563-0441

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

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

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

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE IN QUEBEC AND CANADA

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

Toronto.....Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138
trotskyist.toronto@gmail.com

Editorial...

(continued from page 2)

and the more openly bigoted bourgeois politicians, and thereby reinforce the source of racial oppression: capitalism. Anti-racist liberalism is an obstacle to the black struggle that deepens the racial divide by blaming white workers for racial oppression, driving them into the arms of reaction. White workers become resentful for being blamed, and black people become resentful for the failure of liberalism to achieve any real gain. As a result, black people go down non-revolutionary roads, like identity politics, despairing of the prospect of winning white people to the fight for black liberation, because they know spineless white liberals won't defend them.

It was a criminal betrayal that much of the left, including the SL/U.S. for a time, pushed the Democrats' line that the white "deplorable" workers who voted for Trump, i.e., "Trump's base," are responsible for racial oppression. This liberal poison—which wrote off large swaths of the white working class as a bunch of irredeemable racists, reinforcing the vicious cycle of racial division—needed to be smashed. It pushed Trump supporters further into the arms of the Republicans and anti-racist activists deeper into the arms of the Democrats. Both political parties of capitalist rule are responsible for enforcing racial oppression and segregation. Both are responsible for driving down the conditions and wages of the entire working class. The Democrats are just hypocritical and lie about it. The liberal hysteria about Trump's base is a vicious tool to further the ruse that the Democrats are the good "anti-racist" party.

What is posed is not to make black people like white people or to make white people empathize with black people, but to win black people and white workers to communism, because black people need white workers to liberate themselves, and white workers must champion black liberation to liberate themselves. To make that happen requires a struggle against liberalism in all its forms—black liberalism as well as guilty white liberalism.

Racial divisions and the liberal poison that fuels them can only be combated with the program of revolutionary integrationism. That is the understanding that the need to unite black and white requires communist leadership. The needs of the black population and the working class go beyond what the capitalist class will ever

provide. It is impossible to fight to get rid of capitalism without fighting against the racial segregation and special oppression of black people and for their integration into society on an equal basis. On every front—health care, housing, women's liberation, unionization, etc.—the proletariat in the U.S. requires a communist program for black liberation to advance. Winning the white working class to the struggle against black oppression is a necessary lever to advance the fight for socialist revolution.

The Struggle at the SL/U.S. Conference

To pursue its emancipation, the working class requires a revolutionary party that can lead it in struggle against the capitalist class. That party can only be built through an intransigent fight against every obstacle that binds workers and the oppressed to the capitalist order and sells out their struggles. Centristism, which masks its accommodation of liberalism with revolutionary rhetoric, is the most dangerous of these obstacles. But to clear these obstacles, just as the class requires the revolutionary party, the party as well requires a revolutionary leadership.

The principal struggle at the conference was between those who fought for communist leadership based on a complete break with liberalism and the centrists, who refused to fight for such a break and avoided directly attacking liberal illusions. As the conference progressed, there was less and less room for centrism. This came to a head at the session on the black question, which is the strategic question for the American revolution and the one where the pressures of liberalism are most intense.

The "For Black Trotskyism" presentation confronted head-on the longstanding anti-racist liberalism of the party, explained the different pressures operating on different comrades, frankly detailed liberalism's corrosive effects inside as well as outside the party and insisted that both black and white comrades break with their own accommodation to anti-racist liberalism. Many comrades defensively responded with guilty white liberalism, as if openly grappling with these topics was fueling the racial divide. Rightist elements regurgitated WV mantras, denying that liberalism has been the main pressure on the SL/U.S. and offering that a few more trade-union slogans would put us back on course. They assured the body that they cared about black people and made empty appeals for black and white unity. This response was possible only if

viewing the report through a liberal lens, that is, viewing its analysis of liberalism's corrosiveness as assigning moral blame rather than pointing to the communist way forward. A revolutionary party must be able to recognize liberal pressures in order to combat the illusions and false consciousness that are obstacles to winning both black and white workers to a communist program.

The International Executive Committee delegation was the active factor insisting that it was necessary to wage war against this liberalism inside the party and that centrist conciliation of the liberals would not be tolerated. There is no middle ground: either you are with the liberals or you are a revolutionary. The way to break unity with the liberals and win black people and workers to our party is through actions, not words. A political split between the conciliators and opponents of liberalism was posed.

The response of the centrists was to tick the boxes—just like WV articles did—and raise abstractly correct arguments about revolutionary integrationism, the dangers of liberalism and the fight for communist leadership. But they refused to break unity with the right wing of the party by making a sharp Marxist counterposition to the liberalism permeating the discussion. Instead, the empty revolutionary bombast of the centrists served only to bridge the two irreconcilable programs present on the conference floor. This non-aggression pact was shattered by the left wing, which exposed the right wing *as well as* the centrist conciliators—including many who had been instrumental in elaborating the program fought for throughout the conference. The left wing made clear that there would only be unity on the basis of a revolutionary program and acceptance of the need to break with centrism. The conference was a victory: it endorsed the revolutionary program of the documents and elected a leadership based on those who stood up and demonstrated a commitment to fight for it (see page 9).

The liberal pressures inside the party did not disappear after the conference. It was necessary for the new leadership to continue the fight against centrist conciliation of liberalism. Instead, almost immediately after the departure of the IEC delegation, the newly elected sectional leadership capitulated to the prevailing pressures and pushed a liberal anti-racist revision of the conference, abandoning its commitment to implement the revolutionary program. The resident Central Committee reduced the conference to the discussion on the black

question and moralistically condemned comrades for being "bad" on that question, essentially blaming white comrades for the section's abdication of the fight for leadership of the black struggle.

This capitulation reflected how liberal pressures play out by race in society at large. Leading black comrades, facing a sea of paternalistic liberalism inside the party, pointing to their own liberal moralism, and the rest of the leadership, deferring to them without question, embraced the same program and acted as their white allies.

The CC's backlash against the conference divorced the black question from the question of communist leadership. In the U.S., the black question, party question and question of revolution are fundamentally intertwined; to separate the black question from the fight for leadership on the basis of a revolutionary program is inherently liberal. It is essential to recognize how divisive liberalism is and the pressures it exerts in order to defeat it with a program to unify the class. But such recognition of these pressures in the absence of providing the communist answer is just a form of soul-searching.

It would have been a centrist lie to publish this issue of WV while the SL/U.S. CC was defending a liberal program internally. The sectional leadership had to be reconsolidated around the revolutionary program through additional struggle waged by the non-resident CC and I.S. As a result of these fights, the CC convened a plenum to correct its course, making it possible to bring out our press.

The successful defense of the SL/U.S. conference places our party in a unique position on the American left. No other organization offers a Marxist alternative that can break the working class and oppressed not just from the Democrats but from all liberal movements. We strongly encourage anyone who seeks to be a revolutionary to carefully study the articles in this WV, which are an application of the fundamentals of Leninism to the U.S. today. The next issue of WV will feature more conference documents and reports addressing other burning questions: a revolutionary program in the pandemic, the fight for a communist movement for women's liberation and the fight against trade-union economism. Re-establishing the revolutionary Marxist SL/U.S. is part of the programmatic rearming of the ICL in order to make it a contender for leadership of the international proletariat and to reforge the Fourth International—world party of socialist revolution. ■

socialist into a bourgeois government is not, as it is thought, a partial conquest of the bourgeois state by the socialists, but a partial conquest of the socialist party by the bourgeois state."

—"The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case" (1899)

The KKE can answer us that Peletidis enacts measures for the working people and the poor in Patra. While we are for whatever improves workers' lives, this is still in the realm of "social policy": not only does it not call the capitalist system into question but, on the contrary, it rein-

forces the idea that we can have a more humane capitalism. Lenin denounced the petty-bourgeois opportunism of "municipal socialism," saying that "if the bourgeoisie allows, tolerates 'municipal socialism,' it is because the latter does not touch the *foundations* of its rule...the *important* sources of its wealth," and that "they forget that so long as the bourgeoisie rules as a class it cannot allow any encroachments...upon the real *foundations* of its rule" ("The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian

Revolution, 1905-1907," December 1907). In opposition to the KKE's hoax that the state can be reformed, the working people must be conscious that they cannot take over the existing state apparatus and wield it in their interests. It is necessary to smash the capitalist state and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is the fundamental dividing line between reform and revolution.

The KKE's reformist program is at the heart of why general strikes are carried out in the form of parades. The lesson is that even the struggle for reforms has to be part of a revolutionary program with the goal of a workers government under a revolutionary leadership.

We need a *real* general strike which will fight for:

- *Decent homes for all through expropriation of the church's property and the luxury homes of the ruling class! Take back the homes stolen by the banks!*
- *Division of existing work among all available hands with no loss in pay! Decent wages and pensions for all pegged to the cost of living!*
- *Expropriation of the strategic branches of the economy without compensation: ports, shipyards, rail, transport, maritime industry, the electricity supplier DEI!*
- *Common struggle of Greek, Turkish, German and other workers against the EU/NATO imperialists!*

- *For industrialization of the country to create additional jobs!*
- *For a free, quality health care system for all!*
- *For workers' control of food distribution and prices!*
- *Cancel the debt! Down with the EU and the euro!*
- *For the national liberation of Greece through socialist revolution!*

Fight with us to forge a party that Lenin and Trotsky would be proud of. ■

Ο Μπολσεβίκος
 ΟΡΓΑΝΟ ΤΗΣ ΤΡΟΤΣΚΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΟΜΑΔΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ
 Τεύχος 7
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Αρκετά με τις Ήττες!
Οι Εργάτες Χρειάζονται
ένα Πρόγραμμα Νίκης!

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SPARTAKIST
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NATO/AB Saldırılarını
Ukrayna'daki Savaşı Tetikliyor

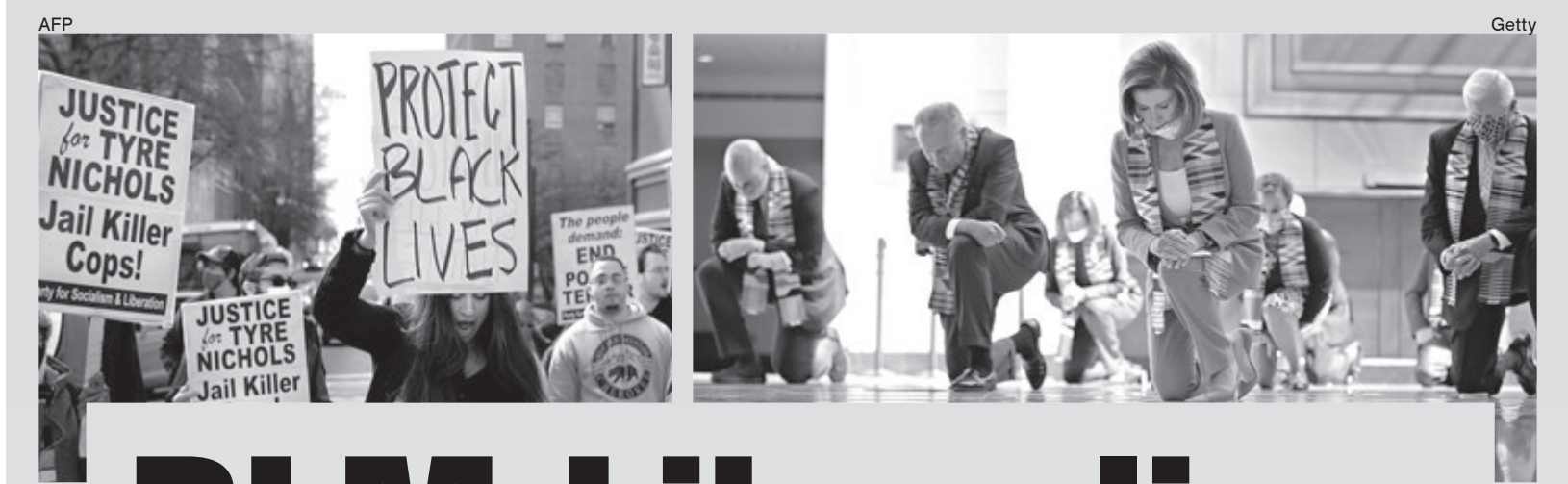
Ukraynalı ve Rus İşçiler:
Silahlarınızı Hükümdarlarınıza Doğrultun!

Doğrudan emperyalizm, emperyalizm, emperyalizm...
 Doğrudan emperyalizm, emperyalizm, emperyalizm...
 Doğrudan emperyalizm, emperyalizm, emperyalizm...

NATO/EU Aggression
Provokes War in Ukraine
Ukrainian, Russian Workers:
Turn the Guns Against Your Rulers!
Down With the EU and NATO!

March 2022 (2 pages)
 Read online at: icl-fi.org/turkish

WORKERS VANGUARD



BLM Liberalism vs. Trotskyism

At the end of January, video footage was released of Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old black FedEx worker, being pulverized by Memphis, Tennessee, cops and left for dead. This recent episode of murderous police terror enraged many black people, workers and activists. But unlike when millions mobilized in BLM protests in 2020, that anger did not pour out into the streets. There is plenty of bitterness toward BLM, which has achieved nothing for black people—it only helped elect Biden as overseer of American capitalism. Despite all the time and energy expended, this country remains a recurring racist hellscape for black people. The rest of the left has no real explanation for this impasse and no solution. The presentation below, given by I.S. Secretary G. Perrault in New York City last summer as part of the fight against the programmatic liquidation of the SL/U.S., explains why the black struggle is paralyzed and provides the communist answer for how to go forward.

* * *

There have been two main waves of BLM protests in the U.S. At their peak in 2020, millions of people were in the



Top left: Atlanta protest against cop killing of Tyre Nichols, January 28. Liberal illusions continue to undermine black struggle. Top right: Democrats' cynical gesture for George Floyd, June 2020. Above: SL-initiated labor/black mobilization, built in opposition to liberals, stopped KKK in Washington, D.C., 1982.

streets. What have the results been? Well, Biden is in the White House, and Derek Chauvin is in jail. But when it comes to the conditions of black people in the U.S.,

they have only gotten worse. Blacks are gunned down as always, and the living conditions that are dreadful in normal times are getting ever more wretched due

to rising inflation and other consequences of the pandemic.

That BLM has not led to any significant progress for black people is pretty obvious and uncontroversial. The real question is: *why?*

Black people are segregated at the bottom of American society. Any significant progress toward social integration and equality—whether it is ending police brutality, integrated housing, high-quality health care, free, integrated education—requires confronting the fundamental interests of the American capitalist class. You cannot resolve a single one of these questions while staying within the confines of capitalist America.

BLM, on the other hand, is a liberal movement for police reform. You just have to look at its main slogan—"black lives matter"—to see that it is not a call for freedom, for power, but an appeal to the ruling class to "care" about black people. The movement is based on a coalition going from liberal capitalists to unions to pseudo-Marxists. It is a classic popular-frontist movement whose entire political program and composition guarantee from the outset that it will not pose any challenge to capitalist interests.

continued on page 10

For a KKE/PAME Workers Government!

Greece

We print below a translation of a leaflet issued by the Trotskyist Group of Greece. Our comrades distributed over 1,000 copies at a March 12 rally of tens of thousands headed up by the rail workers union. The protest was called by the Communist Party (KKE), the PAME trade-union organization, unions and student groups.

The Tempe rail crash, which left 57 dead and many injured, is the result of decades of vicious austerity and privatizations dictated by the EU and the U.S. imperialists. After the 2015 defeat [Syriza government's overturning of the referendum result against more EU austerity], the working class has found itself waging defensive struggles, frustrated and facing one defeat after another. The crime committed at Tempe has brought forth enormous rage among the masses. In the massive strike on March 8, the working people said, "ENOUGH!" and demonstrated their readiness to fight

Fight Now To:

- **Cancel the Debt!**
- **Throw out the Austerity Packages!**
- **Out of EU/NATO!**

against the consequences of austerity. For the first time since 2015, the working class is on the counterattack, putting the bourgeoisie and the New Democracy (ND) government on the defensive. In contrast to 2012 and 2015, there are far fewer illusions in Syriza. It is clear that ND, PASOK and Syriza are equally responsible for the suffering of the masses. To hell with all of them!

With the anger of the masses at a boiling point and elections approaching, the question is: who will run the country? The needs of the workers are clear: Cancel the debt! Overturn the austerity packages! Out of the EU and NATO! In order to achieve those demands, a general offensive of the working masses is necessary. The main question is who will lead this struggle to victory. Nobody on the left has a clear answer. We call for a workers government of the KKE/PAME!

continued on page 13