

Get the Hell Out of Afghanistan and Iraq – And Stay Out! **From Ukraine to Middle East: U.S. Imperialism Strikes Out**

Instigating Ethnic/Religious War in the Name of “Democracy”

JUNE 20 – When a right-wing cabal of pro-European Union capitalists, Ukrainian nationalists and fascists seized power in Kiev in a coup d'état at the end of February, their backers in Western capitals hailed this supposed victory for “democracy” and setback for Russia. But the Kremlin's swift and bloodless takeover of Crimea just days later threw the U.S. and European imperialists for a loop. When pro-Russian rebels rose up in eastern Ukraine a month later, quickly gaining popular support, Washington called on its Ukrainian puppets to crack down. But instead of stifling unrest, the military offensive provoked massive opposition in the east.

A May 2 massacre of dozens of anti-Kiev demonstrators by fascists and Ukrainian ethnic nationalists in Odessa (see article, page 12) sealed the division of the country in blood. On May 11, hundreds of thousands turned out in the Russian-speaking eastern *oblasts* (districts) of Donetsk, Luhansk and Mariupol to vote in a referendum for home rule. The May 25 presidential election (boycotted in the east) solved nothing, and when the new president, Petro Poroshenko, stepped up the “Anti-Terrorist Operation,” indiscriminately shelling residential areas, it only intensified the overwhelming hatred of the Ukrainian nationalist Kiev regime.

On top of this disastrous situation in Ukraine, with the country coming apart at the seams, suddenly Iraq appears to be disintegrating as well. After eight years of war and occupation, the U.S.-installed government of Nuri Karmal al-Maliki is a sectarian Shiite Muslim regime, systematically persecuting the Sunni Arab minority which used to be dominant under the rule of strongman Saddam Hussein. Since Sunnis are in the majority in the areas to the west and north of the capital, Baghdad, it was only a matter of time until a Sunni uprising occurred. When it did on June 10, the Iraqi army collapsed, with whole units running away.

Now Republicans and Democrats in Washington are at each others' throats, squabbling over “who lost Iraq,” while policy planners in the White House and Pentagon are tearing their hair out over how, or whether, to intervene. The role of the murderous jihadis (holy warriors) of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) spearheading the attack has raised the spectre of a fundamentalist Islamist caliphate in the Sunni areas of the two Middle Eastern countries. Behind the scenes, Washington is seeking the aid of the ayatollahs' regime in Tehran in dumping al-Maliki and preserving

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Reuters

Fascist-led protesters set barricades aflame in Kiev's Independence Square, 20 February 2014.

Organize Workers Defense Committees to Defend the Favelas, Protests and Social Movements

Brazil: No to the World Cup of Repression!

Popular Front Launches War on the Favelas

The following article was published in a May Day supplement to Vanguarda Operária, the newspaper of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, Brazilian section of the League for the Fourth International.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILITARY COUP – March 31 marked the 50th anniversary of the civilian-military coup d'état that overthrew the government of Jango Goulart and installed 21 years of bloody military dictatorship, of torture, of disappearances, of repression against working people and the poor. Marches in the streets carry photos of the victims, proclaiming “Never Again.” There are conferences, debates and films in the

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Reuters

Heavily armed police contingents invaded the da Maré favela on March 27. In preparation for the World Cup of soccer, the popular-front government has imposed a state of siege on the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro.

World Cup...

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universities on the “democratic transition.” But at the same time a deputy in the federal House of Representatives and a professor at the University of São Paulo praised the coup. *Folha de S. Paulo* (30 April), which feverently supported the seizure of power by the generals and which in 2009 caused a scandal when it referred to the “soft dictatorship” in Brazil, published a self-justifying editorial saying that “the options at the time” were “much worse” and hailing the economic growth under the military regime, as a result of which, it incredibly claimed, “all social layers progressed”! “NEVER AGAIN?” After ten years of the popular front government of presidents Lula (Luis Inácio da Silva) and Dilma (Rousseff), of the Workers Party and other reformist parties and their bourgeois allies, torture and murder continue to be the common practice of the various police forces. So, too, are massacres of residents of the *favelas*, the impoverished slum areas of Brazil’s cities, and on the very anniversary of the 1964 coup there was a police/military invasion of the favelas of the Maré Complex in Rio de Janeiro. More than 1,500 troops and officers participated, including the military police, the BOPE and BOE (elite police special operations battalions) and Marines with 21 armored cars. Immediately a youth was shot down by the invaders. Seven days later came the second blow: a new occupation of the Maré, this time with 2,700 army troops. A week after that, on April 11, there was the brutal eviction of the “TELERJ favela,” on lands belonging to the Oi company in the district of Engenho Novo. Gas and rubber bullets were used, provoking ferocious resistance by the residents. More recently, two residents of the Maré favela were shot to death in three days.

WORLD CUP – This outright *war* against the most impoverished neighborhoods is intimately linked to the preparations for the World Cup of soccer, beginning on June 12, when the local, state and federal governments, and the bourgeoisie of Brazil as a whole, want to put the “Marvelous City” (nickname for Rio de Janeiro) on display. The Maré Complex is strategically situated between three express routes (the Red and Yellow Lines and Avenida Brasil) and the access point for Rio’s Galeão

Airport. Unrest there could have a huge impact on the Cup: a traffic jam like occurred during the Pope’s visit last year would be a disaster. That being the case, in the expectation of having well-known personalities from the world of football and “illustrious” political leaders from various countries, the Brazilian capitalist class decided to install a military dictatorship over the 130,000 inhabitants of the Maré and the half million who live in the other favelas and morros (hilltop communities) of Rio.

The workers movement must mobilize its forces now to defend our class sisters and brothers. For that reason, the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC – Class Struggle Committee), a union opposition tendency linked to the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB – Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil), put forward a motion at assemblies of the Rio teachers union (SEPE-RJ) and health workers union (SINDSPREV-RJ) proposing: “Drive out the pro-imperialist occupation troops from Haiti,¹ the favelas and social movements.” The motions, which were approved by the SEPE-RJ state network and the SINDSPREV, call to mobilize the unions against police attacks, and for the formation of workers defense committees, based on the unions, to protect the favelas and street protests.² (See below for the text of the motion.) As a banner proclaimed after the Maré massacre during the June Days last year, “The Police Who Repress in the Streets Are the Same Ones Who Kill in the Favelas.” Let’s make this May Day the starting line for class struggle against the bourgeoisie’s *World Cup of Repression*.

While the ruling class is imagining possible terrorist actions against prominent visitors, the Rio favelas are already living under state terror. For some time the Maré Complex as been surrounded by a wall of steel plates, with squads of heavily armed soldiers in the entrances and now thousands of troops patrolling inside the walls who are slated to remain until after the World Cup is over. For the racist capitalists, the favelas are a gigantic black blotch, the Rio de Janeiro fraction of the mass of the oppressed and exploited who produce their wealth, but who also constitute a threat to their class rule. The white bourgeois elite in their opulent houses and mansions under the outstretched arms of

¹ For the last ten years, Haiti has been occupied by United Nations “peacekeeping” troops, the MINUSTAH, under Brazilian command, in order to free up U.S. forces for the imperialist occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

² See “Hot Winter in Brazil: Mobilize Workers Power! Organize a General Strike!” *The Internationalist* No. 35, Summer 2013, for an account of the massive anti-government protests that swept the country’s major cities, of the brutal police repression and the unprecedented resistance by demonstrators.



“The Police Who Repress in the Streets Are the Same Ones Who Kill in the Favelas.” March protesting killer cops in the Maré Complex, June 2013.

Christ the Redeemer³ insists on keeping the descendents of the slaves under its whip. For it, the phrase in the *Communist Manifesto* that the proletariat will be the gravediggers of the bourgeoisie is a constant nightmare, since the potential gravediggers live right above them and all they would have to do is come down from the hills, from the favela of Rocinha to Leblon, from Cidade de Deus (City of God) to Tijuca, etc.

The nightmare of the ruling class is nothing new, nor is its “cure.” Only a few months after the Brazilian monarchy in 1888 decreed the “Golden Law” finally abolishing slavery, some former slave-owners carried out a coup d’état, proclaiming a republic in revenge and militarizing the police corps. The proprietors of the Old Republic maintained their class rule using the same methods of yesteryear.⁴ As the verses of the song “The Black Admiral” by Aldir Blanc and João Bosco put it so well, “Ruby-red cascades tumbled down the backs of the blacks, amid songs and lashes of the whip.” But in 1910, the masters in their noble residences designed in the Belle Epoque style of French architecture trembled as they looked out on Guanabara Bay and saw the masts of the ships occupied by their sailors led by the Black Admiral, João Cândido, in the “Revolt of the Whip,” which put an end to the use of that remnant of slavery.

This time around the military occupation of the Rio favelas, particularly of the Maré Complex, by some 3,000 troops with modern armament, similar to that used in conventional warfare, is led by popular front governments. The (now ex-) governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral Filho (of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, or PMDB) thanked his ally, Brazilian president Dilma Vana Rousseff (of the Workers Party, or PT) for her “essential” support to his “historic” military action (*O Dia*, 31 March). He thereby demonstrated that racism is a matter of state, it is institutional, an organic part of bourgeois rule in this land of the Brazil tree, which all governments must enforce, whether of the right or the “left.” Liberal, reformist and centrist critics of all stripes cry out: “*This is fascism! Where is democracy?*”

The answer can be found in reading the history of the massacre of Canudos (1897), of the Revolt of the Whip (1910), of the massacres of agricultural workers in Eldorado

³ One of the most famous landmarks of Rio de Janeiro is the mountaintop statue of Christ the Redeemer, while some of the most luxurious housing is located on the hillsides below.

⁴ See “Lula’s Brazil: Land of Massacres,” *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005.

dos Carajás (1996), of Rio street children in Candelária (1993), of the Carandiru prison massacre (1992) and of the brutal eviction of the Aldeia Maracanã (an Indian village set up at the site of Rio’s famous soccer stadium) last year. Or one can simply observe the horrendous fate of the house cleaner Cláudia Silva Ferreira: on March 16, seven months after the disappearance of the stone mason Amarildo in the hands of the Police Pacification Unit (UPP) in the favela of Rocinha, she was hit by a bullet during a police operation in the *morro* of Congonha, on Rio’s north side. She was transported in the trunk of an armored car of the military police but fell out. Her clothes caught on the military vehicle, she was dragged for about three city blocks. This is only one of the many sinister and macabre events which confirm once again that our Republic and our Democracy were born bathed in the blood of blacks, Indians and the poor.

No, this is not fascism, however fascist some of the repressive methods used in the police actions may be. *This is democracy itself*, as it was idealized in its cradle, in ancient Greece, where those at the bottom (slaves, women, foreigners, those who didn’t own land) were excluded from the decision-making of the elite. In Rio’s case, its version of democracy has a special touch, with a government led by an alliance of bourgeois liberals (PMDB), social democrats (PCdoB, the one-Maoist Communist Party of Brazil) and the “government of the working people” (PT), which seeks inspiration in the format and worst repressive methods of the civil and military coup-plotters of 1964. Today some of those who were victims of the military dictatorship, like the ex-guerrilla and current president Dilma Rousseff, send the military to install a police dictatorship in the Maré Complex and other favelas. Such is the *marvelous democracy* of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

In the case of the Maré they brandished the pretext of carrying out a “War on Drugs.” This borders on the ridiculous, trying to kill a little bird with a cannon. The marginal capitalists who are active in drug dealing, controlled by the “militias” led by military police and firemen, are small fry compared to the Eike Batistas (formerly Brazil’s richest man, the high-flying magnate whose energy and transportation empire went belly-up last year), Benjamin Steinbruch (boss of the CSN steel company) and other big monopoly capitalists who prop up the popular-front governments. And since when is it considered “terrorism” to sell and consume drugs? After all, the drug capitalists

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May-June 2014

May Day: For Workers Action to Stop Deportations Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group calling for an Internationalist Contingent in the 2014 New York City May Day march.

Immigration reform is dead, at least for now. Everyone knows it. Any foreseeable legislative action on immigration will be viciously anti-immigrant. Not just because of Republican obstruction, as many immigrant rights lobbies claim. Both parties represent the interests of the bosses who profit from low-wage labor without rights. *Democrats and Republicans are enemies of immigrants.* Any real fight for immigrants' rights must oppose the parties of capital.

The Democrats' Senate bill provides no "path to citizenship" for the large majority of undocumented immigrants. Obama's Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) order is only a limbo, going nowhere. The New York "DREAM Act"

(which offers nothing to young workers) was defeated due to sabotage by Democrats. And Obama is "deporter-in-chief," expelling more than 2 million undocumented immigrants, 400,000 a year, far more than Bush.

But immigrants have power – economic power. Whole sectors of the U.S. economy depend on immigrant labor: agriculture, construction, restaurants, taxis, what's left of the garment industry. On May Day 2006 over one million immigrants walked off the job. Packing houses were forced to shut down. Lobbying capitalist politicians is a dead-end. Workers – all workers – must use our power to block the anti-immigrant offensive.

At the time of the U.S. Civil War, Karl Marx wrote that "Labor in the white skin can never free itself so long as in the black skin it is branded." Today, U.S.-born workers cannot defend their interests so

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Internationalist contingent at 2014 New York City May Day march.

Internationalist photo

only want to sell their "merchandise" just like the capitalists of other drugs (tobacco, alcoholic beverages) and capitalists in general. Like the capitalists of the World Cup, they just want to make money!

Therefore, the most sensible and rational thing would be to lift the ban on marijuana and annul all laws against drugs and thereby eliminate the criminal trafficking, and where called for provide appropriate treatment for those who want to stop using them. Then one would confront the reality that the use of drugs has grown in many cases due to the pressure and oppression of the youth who increasingly are without perspectives, without work, in a capitalism in an advanced state of decay which daily gives every indication that it will not and cannot resolve the immense social problems. The bourgeois state has another "solution": it will impose a dictatorship on those sectors where the majority of residents are black, a labor force that makes the city run but which is daily subjected to massacres perpetrated by the police forces, whether in or out of uniform. Until we "wage slaves" revolt!

In the case of the "TELERJ favela," which was barely a week old, they couldn't use the pretext of drug trafficking. So the justification was the supposed "inviolability of private property" (in this case of the Oi mobile phone company, which received the land as a present in the privatization for the former state telephone company TELEBRÁS, of which TELERJ was the Rio affiliate). Of course, the capitalist state massively violated the property rights of poor people in order to build installations for the World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. This points to another of the great problems people face in this decomposing capitalist society: the lack of housing for the working people. In part due to the real estate speculation and building boom for the world Cup, rents in Rio have shot up precipitously and there is an enormous housing shortage. The 5,000 needy people, working people, who organized the favela were seeking a solution by occupying an area that had been abandoned years ago: for them to have a residence, in the bourgeoisie's eyes, is a monstrous crime! Dilma's "My House, My Life" mortgage subsidy

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program is pure demagoguery.

Friedrich Engels himself wrote a series of articles on *The Housing Question* (1872) when capitalism was still in its ascending phase. Even then, Engels explained that building adequate housing for working people was impossible in an economy based on the search for profit. He described how the bourgeoisie "solves" the problem, tearing down the workers' housing as Haussmann did in Paris in order to construct luxurious grand avenues, and as big construction companies like Odebrecht do today building enormous stadiums at breakneck speed, at a cost of numerous deaths of construction workers. Engels concluded his work: "As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labor by the working class itself."

Thus to fight against the unbridled militarization on behalf of Brazil Inc., what's needed is a strategy for socialist revolution. We must mobilize the power of the working class along with the impoverished masses, building workers defense committees to unite the favela with the factory and the street protests. In the face of the machine guns of the BOPE, the BOE and the army, we fight with our far more powerful methods: *against abuses by the police and military, paralyze the city with workers action.* Cut off the airport, shut down public transportation, strike the steel works and refineries, bring teachers and students into the streets. At the same time, workers must fight to *eliminate mass unemployment, creating millions of jobs by reducing the workweek with no cut in pay.* They should *impose workers control* and call for the *expropriation of the construction monopolies* in order to build millions of housing units for the working people.

This struggle requires going beyond trade-union economism to undertake a class struggle. Marxists must act, as Lenin insisted, as a *tribune of the people*, denouncing every attack on the oppressed. We fight against the

centuries-old oppression of women, for the right for free abortion on demand, for 24-hour day care, for equal pay for equal work and to end gender violence. We fight for revolutionary integrationism, for interethnic integration of whites, blacks and indigenous peoples, constituent parts of the working class and the great mass of the oppressed. The fight against racism is not a "matter for black people," it's the struggle of all of us. When people of other ethnic groups look at the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, or in Haiti, or Harlem, they remember the immortal phrase of the first teacher of socialism: "Labor in the white skin can never free itself as long as labor in the black skin is branded" (Karl Marx),

On this 50th anniversary of the civilian-military coup of 1964, we must undertake a revolutionary, communist and internationalist struggle against imperialism. From the outset of Lula's government we warned that the PT in power would serve as a sheriff for Washington in Latin America, particularly in sending military police and troops as mercenaries to impose an imperialist occupation of Haiti. We noted how counterinsurgency tactics used in Haiti were also used against poor blacks in the favelas and the periphery of São Paulo. That's why we call to *mobilize workers action to drive the troops and police out of Haiti and the favelas.* A strike at Embraer and in the other military factories in São José dos Campos against the occupation of Haiti would have a vastly greater impact than hundreds of street protests.

We join our struggle with that of our comrades of the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of our League for the Fourth International. And above all, we seek to build a revolutionary workers party that fights for a workers and peasants government that begins the socialist revolution in Brazil, in the continent and in the heart of the empire. *For a federation of workers states of Latin America! Epigones of the coup-plotting military butchers of 1964 get out!*

We translate below the motion presented by the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Committee) and approved by the assembly of the state network of the SEPE-RJ on April 10:

Mobilize the power of the working class to drive out the pro-imperialist occupation troops from Haiti, the favelas and social movements

RIO de JANEIRO, April 2014 – Troops of the Brazilian Armed Forces, the Army, Navy and Air Force, reinforced by the Federal Police, the Pacification Police Units (UPPs), the Military Police (PMs), Civil Police, X9 (informants) and P2 (undercover intelligence operatives) as well as the Municipal Guard, a squad of more than 3,000 men and women with modern armaments for conventional war, invaded the favela of the Maré Complex on the pretext of "fighting drugs" and protecting the World Cup.

However, as far as this is concerned, during the two terms of former governor Sérgio Cabral some 374 schools were closed, 157 of them between 2010 and 2014 (see the SEPE website). As well, schools are being occupied by UPPs, according to a motion of opposition posted on the SEPE web site on March 31, which states:

"The Union of Professional Educators SEPE-RJ denounces the presence of a support unit of the UPP on the grounds of the state school CAIC Theophilo de Souza Pinto, located in the community of Nova Brasília, in the Alemão Complex. The flagrant presence of heavily armed police in the entrance and inside the school places the entire school community at risk, violating pedagogical principles and considerably limits the development of education."

"Commemorating" the 50th anniversary of the civilian-military coup, the Popular Front and its triumvirate of Eduardo Paes [mayor], Cabral-Pezão [outgoing and incoming governors] and Dilma in the Planalto [seat of Brazil's presidency], together with the right wing, have put Rio de Janeiro under a State of Siege! Favelas have been transformed into occupied territories as the military attacks blacks and poor people.

It is necessary to:

- Mobilize the working class and its power, and in particular the trade unions, to defend against police attacks!
- Form workers defense committees based in the unions to protect protests and the favelas!
- Tear down the steel walls around Maré!
- Drive out the pro-imperialist occupation troops from Haiti, the favelas and social movements!

Solidarity Pickets Back Locked-Out ILWU Workers in Vancouver, WA



PORTLAND, OR – Members of ILWU Local 4, locked out by Columbia Grain for a year, received a boost of solidarity from local labor activists on March 3, when a group of about 20 stopped a van full of JR Gettier scabs in the driveway of their hotel. The union-busting firm, hired by Columbia grain to reopen their terminal in Vancouver, WA, got more than it bargained for when they attempted to drive through a line of community pickets on their way to drop scabs off at the port of Vancouver.

As the bus advanced, the picketers grouped together chanting, “What’s disgusting? Union busting.” Police aggressively shoved women and retirees away from the scabmobile, but the pickets filled the street, blocking the bus again, forcing the driver to double back. As the driver pulled away from the picket, tires screeching, picketers headed in a caravan toward the Port of Vancouver.

With the scabs already delayed by at least half an hour, there seemed to be a traffic jam at the entrance to the port. Dozens of vehicles idled as the caravan of pickets arrived. The bus full of scabs sat in traffic. There was spirited chanting by the labor activists at the gate when individual scabs entered the locked-out terminal. As police began breaking up the tight group in front of the bus, they were met with chants of “Cops and scabs work hand in hand!”

As dawn broke over the Port of Vancouver, the police finally cleared a path for the scab haulers, an hour or so after they were scheduled to arrive, having rammed a sheriff’s SUV through the picket line, pushing women out of their way with their bumper.

In the struggle to defend their union against vicious attacks from their employer, ILWU members locked out by grain terminals in Portland and Vancouver have walked the picket line for over a year. Their safety, working conditions and right to a hiring hall have come under fire from grain companies looking to cut labor costs and retain a more pliable labor force.

On the picket lines the locked-out workers have faced police repression, violence and intimidation from armed J.R. Gettier scab herders, as well as repeated threats of imprisonment. While actions like on March 3 won’t by themselves win the struggle for the ILWU, the solidarity picket sent a message that they have support from their sisters and brothers in the labor movement and the community beyond.

While the ILWU has walked the line, facing down police and security, their pickets have become more and more isolated, with

fewer and fewer people picketing. Those who dare to oppose their boss’s union-busting have been charged with “obstructing the flow of traffic,” even after being hit by scabs’ cars. Several other trumped-up charges have been leveled at pickets, sending union workers to court repeatedly, and intimidating others who might dare to resist.

To turn the tide we must stand together firmly against the grain giants, and build picket lines so massive that no one would dare cross. *Labor needs to play hardball to win.* That means bringing the full force of organized labor out to defend the pickets, and stop the grain bosses’ union-busting rampage.

Union supporters of the Internationalist Group have been active building solidarity and circulating motions endorsed by seven Portland/Vancouver-area unions last year pledging to build mass pickets and a solidarity mobilization with the ILWU (see *The Internationalist* No. 34, Summer 2013).

But the union’s International leadership has stood in the way of accepting support from allies in organized labor and the community, citing legal concerns and in some cases inciting fear of “outside agitators.” Yet the action on March 3 demonstrates that solidarity among workers can make a difference on the Columbia River and beyond.

What’s needed to win is a class-struggle leadership, independent of the two parties of capital, the Democrats and the Republicans, with their anti-labor laws like Taft-Hartley, a leadership that can show a way forward for the working class and build a revolutionary workers party, to bust the union-busters for good. ■

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long as millions of immigrant workers are deprived of equal rights. We call for workers action at every level – from demanding that localities stop cooperating with the ICE immigration police to mass mobilization to stop deportations.

This May Day there will be more hopeless calls for legislative immigration reform. Leftist groups call for “legalization,” which could include drivers licenses (in order to aid the police) but not citizenship, and “guest worker” programs which are indentured servitude. “Dreamers” agreed to the Republican plan that would have given them a shot at citizenship, but not their parents.

Our position is simple: everyone here should have the right to stay, with equal rights for all. Defense of immigrants is also

Seattle’s “\$15 Later” Law – A “Historic Victory”? Hardly

Last November, the liberal “socialist” Kshama Sawant was elected to the Seattle city council, on a platform for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. The victorious Democratic candidate for mayor, Ed Murray, also called for \$15/hr., as did his Democratic rival.¹ After some weeks’ deliberation a select “Inequality Advisory Committee” of corporate lobbyists and labor bureaucrats produced a bill that do that ... by anywhere from 2017 to 2021. The *Seattle Times* (2 May) headlined, “Mayor’s plan lifts minimum wage to \$15 – eventually,” saying the “lengthy and complicated” route “lacks the punch of ‘15 now’,” but had business and labor support. On June 2, the bill was approved by the city council as activists chanted “we are unstoppable, another world is possible.”

The *Seattle Times* (3 June) called it “historic,” as did Sawant. Her party, Socialist Alternative (SAlt), had earlier denounced the lengthy phase-in (only after 11 years – in 2025 – will workers who receive tips catch up to the rest) and elements on the “big business wish list.” Sawant (who was on the advisory committee) presented a series of amendments to eliminate provisions for a lower “training wage” for teenagers and disabled workers, as well as delays for tips and health care benefits. All were voted down. She then joined her Democratic colleagues to make the final vote unanimous, later calling it “an absolutely historic movement” (Democracy Now, 5 June). An article on the SAlt website hailed the “victory” as “an historic achievement.”

Was it? Sawant said the measure “signifies a transfer of income of \$3 billion from the richest in the city to the bottom-most workers,” and the SAlt article claimed that “one hundred thousand workers will be lifted out of poverty” Nonsense, workers earning \$15 an hour *won’t even be able to pay the rent*, which by 2017-21 is bound to be quite a bit higher. Certainly the vote shows that Democrats are feeling the need to do something to defuse unrest over inequality. Ballot measures calling for minimum wage hikes are being proposed in San Francisco, Oakland, Chicago and other cities. Yet Council members acknowledged it would

¹ See our article, “‘Socialist’ Elected in Seattle on Platform of Liberal/Populist Reforms,” *The Internationalist* No. 36, January-February 2014.

bound up with the struggle against imperialism: in every major U.S. war over the last century, immigrants have been targeted as the “enemy within.” The presence of a war criminal at the City University of New York is a threat to everyone. Students, teachers, immigrants and workers demand: David (“Death Squad”) Petraeus must go!

Despite the calls of many immigrants’ rights groups, Obama will never stop the deportations. It’s up to us. Join the Internationalist contingent to march on May Day to demand:

Unionize low-wage workers!

For workers action to stop deportations!

Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

U.S. imperialism get your claws off Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela!

No to Democrats and Republicans – For a revolutionary workers party! ■

take more than a gradual pay increase to make the city more affordable,” the *Seattle Times* account noted.

Democracy Now journalist Juan Gonzalez questioned Sawant about her turnaround on the mayor’s plan, and the International Socialist Organization (which is every bit as reformist as Socialist Alternative) took her to task for proclaiming it a historic victory and for “abruptly dropping the campaign for a ballot measure to win a stronger law” (socialistworker.org, 13 June). SAlt’s answer is given in its headline on the city council vote, “Victory for \$15 in Seattle! How Socialists Built a Winning Movement.” For the social democrats – whether SAlt, ISO or the other brands – what’s key is not mobilizing the working class against capitalism but projecting the image of a “winning movement” (led by them), no matter how paltry the gains.

Revolutionaries can support reforms that significantly improve conditions for the working class and oppressed, while emphatically denouncing their limitations and underscoring the need to bring down the whole system of production for profit. But the ballot initiative being pushed by Socialist Alternative was not, in fact, better than the mayor’s bill. In particular, it included a provision, similar to one in Proposition 1 to establish a \$15 minimum wage in the Seattle-Tacoma Washington “airport city” of SeaTac last November, that allowed unions to agree with employers to *contractually exempt their members from the higher minimum wage*. This grotesquely anti-union clause was written into the law by the labor bureaucrats who drafted it!

In SeaTac, a county judge struck down the \$15 ordinance, agreeing with Alaska Airlines that the city had no right to set wages at the airport. In Seattle, SAlt’s “15 Now” campaign drafted a ballot initiative as a pressure tactic against waffling by the Democratic mayor and city council. But at the request of Hotel and Restaurant Workers (HERE) union bureaucrats, at an April 26 conference SAlt included a clause similar to SeaTac’s allowing *lower* union wages. Trying to hide its capitulation to the sellout bureaucrats, SAlt cynically called this sub-minimum wage clause “language defending the family health care plans won by unionized Seattle hotel workers” (“\$15 in Seattle is not the end – It is the beginning!”, socialistalternative.org, 30 April).

The HERE labor fakers no doubt figured they could offer sweetheart deals of lower wages and lousy medical insurance to the bosses in exchange for union recognition. But while filling union coffers with dues money, this would fatally undermine the unions as a defense of workers against unlimited capitalist exploitation. For ostensible socialists to support such a dirty deal is shameful. So when SAlt tries to cover its left flank with cheap criticisms of the “corporate loopholes” in the Seattle minimum wage law it voted for, just keep in mind that it wrote the mother of all corporate loopholes into its “alternative” proposal.

P.S. Now that Socialist Alternative has dropped its ballot initiative and hailed the mayor’s law as “historic,” perhaps it should rebrand its campaign from “15 Now” to “15 Later.”

Don't Fall for Democrats' Campaign Promises

Fight Low-Wage Slavery Mobilize Workers' Power

What “economic recovery”? You seen any recovery in your pay lately? Rents are up – along with food, transportation and everything else – and wages are down. Better-paying jobs are being replaced by low-wage jobs. Despite the government’s lying statistics, mass unemployment hasn’t gone away. The reality is that we are well into the sixth year of a capitalist economic crisis with no end in sight. But workers won’t take this forever: an outbreak of class struggle is coming.

“Recession”? No way. A recession is a cyclical dip. This is a *depression*: the economy went down and it’s staying down. Sure, the bosses are making money hand over fist, while we the workers pay the price – low-wage workers most of all. The fight against poverty wages must be the fight of all working people – and it must be waged first and foremost *against the Democratic Party*, from the White House to the State House and City Hall.

President Obama’s call to raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 is peanuts. The Republicans won’t even agree to that, which is why the Dems proposed it, as a ploy to get votes in the 2014 elections. But even the \$10.10 Obamawage would leave workers stuck deep in poverty. The Democrats are no “friends of labor”: like the Republicans they are a capitalist party that represents the interests of the bosses who exploit low-wage workers – and all workers.

Over the last year and a half there has been a groundswell of calls to raise the minimum wage to \$15. Beginning in 2012 with nationwide rallies outside Walmart stores and a fast food workers “strike” in New York City that December, protests in numerous cities against low wages have coalesced around the demand for a \$15 minimum wage. On June 1, the Seattle City Council voted to raise the local minimum to \$15 but taking four to seven years to reach that level.

\$15 would be a raise rather than an insult, but one that is wholly inadequate. Low-wage workers chant, “we can’t survive on \$7.25” and call for a living wage. But you can’t live on \$15 either and make ends meet, particularly with a family. A worker in Seattle would have to put in two and a half weeks full-time to pay the average monthly apartment rent (\$1,540) – and that’s before taxes! In NYC, a one-bedroom apartment (\$2,666) would be more than a month’s pay!!

Fact is, *\$15 is still a poverty wage*. You would have to *triple the current minimum wage to \$25 an hour and more* to even begin to climb out of poverty. But beyond the numbers, the rulers will use every trick in the book to whittle it down (in NYC the liberal hope Bill de Blasio is talking \$13.33), delay it and load it up with all sorts of exemptions like health care. *Appeals to the Democrats are a dead end*: workers are going to have to use their power to *strike*.

May-June 2014

Even \$15 Is Poverty Pay



Demonstration outside McDonald’s restaurant near Times Square, New York City, during May 15 fast food workers “strike.”

Yet the various campaigns (15 Now, Fight for 15, Fast Food Forward, etc.) all focus on pressuring the Democrats. Even when led by ostensible socialists, they are basically electoral gimmicks. The “strikes” that have been called are purely symbolic: very few low-wage workers actually join in for a simple reason – without union protection they run a huge risk of being fired. To counter that what’s needed isn’t appeals to “elected officials” but to mobilize union *power*.

Workers today are being told not to expect a secure retirement, steady employment or decent and affordable housing. We are beset by an aggressive police apparatus armed for civil war that lays its bloody hands on one in three black men in this country and persecutes the 12 million undocumented immigrant workers, breaking up families and throwing them into concentration camps awaiting deportation. Unions are under constant assault yet they are shackled by a sellout, flag-waving bureaucracy that seeks to chain the workers to “their” capitalist bosses.

Straining under this burden of exploitation and oppression, insulted by the gross inequality that subverts any promise of “democracy,” the working class is heading for an explosion that will make the middle-class Occupy protests look like a firecracker. *The question is not whether a labor revolt will break out, but what will be its result.*

Will its energies be sapped by symbolic actions, will there be a rotten compromise that leaves low-wage slavery intact? The will to struggle is there. The outcome depends on two things: leadership and program.

The issue here is *power*. The opposition to raising the minimum wage is not being led by mom-and-pop delis and the corner bodega, it’s coming from multi-billion-dollar corporations like McDonald’s and Walmart. The sky-high profits of these mega-capitalists depend on rock-bottom wages. They will never be defeated by business unionists whose stock-in-trade is *class collaboration*. Real victories for low-wage workers require forging a leadership based on a program of unflinching *class struggle*.

“Stick Together for \$15 and a Union” read the signs outside the Wendy’s on Fulton Street in Brooklyn last December 5. Wendy’s response was to close the store. Yet for all the media attention and hopes incited by low-wage worker protests, these have not organized a single shop. Why not? Because the goal of the union bureaucrats and the reformist “socialists” who tail after them is to contain the class struggle and use it as a bargaining chip for political influence within the ruling party of racist American capitalism, the Democratic Party.

The fact is, *the union tops are not trying to unionize workers in low-wage*

industries. They even say so. On 29 January 2013, the Organization United for Respect at Wal-Mart (OUR Walmart) and its backer the Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), threatened by a suit brought against them by Walmart, called off picketing for 60 days and categorically promised the National Labor Relations Board that they did not, and would not, seek to unionize Walmart workers. All they’re trying to do is keep Walmart out of the urban centers.

Meanwhile, despite the millions of dollars in members’ dues poured into the project, the Service Employees International bureaucracy behind the “Fast Food Forward” campaign limits itself to cheap stunts where a handful of workers are used as stage props for Democratic politicians to promote their undeserved reputations as “friends” of the workers. But millions of low-wage workers are fed up with empty promises, want real results and have all the courage and initiative that the struggle requires.

A class-struggle fight against poverty wages would seek to build fighting unions, beginning with assemblies of low-wage workers. It would appeal for working-class support to picket and, where there is sufficient support among workers, *shut down* particular businesses (especially of national chains) that don’t pay *at least* \$15 per hour. Opposing bureaucratic sellouts, it would insist on mass mobilization and independence from the Democrats and all capitalist parties and politicians, who are the servants of the bosses and the patrons of the racist, strikebreaking cops.

A class-struggle offensive must not limit itself to narrow “bread-and-butter” economic demands. Recognizing that a majority of low-wage workers are women, it would call for free, 24-hour child care. Particularly since a huge percentage of low-wage workers are undocumented immigrants, it would demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Well aware that young African American workers are targets of police terror the minute they walk out the door, it would call for workers mobilization against racist repression. And it would oppose the drive to war.

Above all, we must fight for political independence from the bosses’ parties, to begin building a workers party *now*, not just to fight back against capitalist attack but to lead a counteroffensive for a workers government that can do away with modern wage slavery and begin the work of international socialist revolution. *\$15 is not enough. Low-wage workers, and all workers, need a whopping raise, fighting unions, and a revolutionary workers party!* ■

For Class Struggle Against Capitalism Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Obama's Back-to-Work Order Is a Trap SEPTA Workers: Strike Together to Win!

PHILADELPHIA – Just past midnight on Saturday, June 14, over 400 unionized Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) workers represented by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 98 (IBEW) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Division 71 (BLET) walked off their jobs. This marked the breakdown of four years of fruitless contract negotiations with the SEPTA administration.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* headlined, "SEPTA Rail Struck, 13 Lines Shut Down." The *Daily News* put it, "Guess We're Walking." The strike would affect over 60,000 passengers in and around Philly. But within a matter of hours, the Democratic administration of Barack Obama issued an executive order forcing the strikers back to work and barring IBEW and BLET from striking for 240 days.

Obama's back-to-work order was a body blow to SEPTA unions. Yet it was hailed by the leadership of the BLET and the IBEW. The union bureaucrats had repeatedly called for increased government intervention in negotiations with SEPTA. IBEW president Terry Gallagher told the press that the executive order was "what we were waiting for. We have been five years without an agreement, trying to get to this point, and we're happy we're here now."

The unions called for retro pay raises and increased contributions to the underfunded pensions in line with those SEPTA offered Transport Workers Union Local 234 (TWU) after a 2009 strike. Representing subway and bus operators and comprising over half of all 10,000 SEPTA workers, the TWU possesses the most bargaining power out of the 17 SEPTA workers' unions.

SEPTA wants to stick TWU workers with a 1% pay cut to pay for the Obamacare tax on union health plans. It essentially provoked the BLET/IBEW strike by announcing it would impose a contract containing no back pay and no increase in pension contributions.

A joint statement by the BLET and IBEW tops in May laid out their "strategy" of appealing for binding arbitration, saying that the unions had been "patient for over four years" of negotiations. In a June 10 letter to union membership announcing the strike, BLET said SEPTA "is afraid of a formal investigation of this dispute by an unbiased tribunal – such as an Arbitration Board or a Presidential Emergency Board."

"Patience" with the bosses and increased government intervention are the opposite of what workers need, and an arbitration board or presidential emergency board (such as Obama has now ordered) are hardly "unbiased." Calling for arbitration will win nothing. What is needed to gain real advancements in workers' rights is unrelenting class struggle, which begins by recognizing that the capitalist state represents the class enemy.

The history of SEPTA unions' relations with management is an object lesson in how bureaucratized union leadership acts against the interests of labor and

in favor of capital. The fact that SEPTA workers are divided into 17 different unions is a major obstacle, which the bosses use to set one craft or group of workers against another.

Back in March, TWU Local 234 president Willie Brown and other leaders were talking tough, saying "If negotiations fail, the unions representing SEPTA workers may all be on strike at the same time, idling bus, trolley, train and Regional Rail service for the first time ever." But as a walkout loomed, Brown told the *Inquirer* (11 June) that a BLET/IBEW strike "wouldn't affect us." And on June 14, TWU members were ordered to stay on the job, undermining the strike.

This wasn't the first time the TWU leadership stabbed other SEPTA unions in the back. In 1983, Conrail passed its suburban railway lines to SEPTA, which pushed to eliminate 600 union jobs and decrease pay of new hires. The unions agreed to strike together until all unions had settled. But the TWU, which wasn't affected, refused to go out with the others.

After a strike lasting 108 days, SEPTA enacted all of the changes it originally proposed. It would have been a different story had the largest SEPTA union hit the picket lines with the others in solidarity.

Today, the labor-hating press theatrically sighed relief, and union leaders welcomed the handcuffs placed on them by the federal government on June 14. But nothing has been resolved. Commuter rail and city transit workers are still without contracts, facing concessionary demands on wages, health care and retirement benefits.

SEPTA workers have enormous power in their hands, but they are stymied by a leadership that divides the workers and looks to the bosses' government rather than the power of workers solidarity. To overcome this, Philly mass transit workers should elect a joint strike committee and prepare for industrial-strength action against SEPTA and the federal straight-jacket. This would be a giant step toward uniting into one powerful industrial union.

Almost three quarters of a century ago, Leon Trotsky pointed out: "There is one common feature in the . . . degeneration, of modern trade union organizations . . . it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power" ("Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" [1940]). Trotsky warned that unions would either be instruments of the revolutionary struggle of the working class, or be secondary instruments of capital for the disciplining of labor.

Today's sellout misleaders of labor are firmly committed to the latter course. The answer is not to junk the unions but to drive out the bureaucrats who endanger the unions by acting as agents of the bosses and their state. Above all, what's needed is to build a leadership that will break with the Democrats and defy the bosses and their state, a leadership committed to the program of class struggle rather than class collaboration. ■

Labor Activist Faces Jail for Protesting "Right to Work" Union-Busting Drop the Charges Against Wyatt McMinn!

Trial Scheduled for June 27

PORTLAND, OR – Last September 5, Wyatt McMinn, vice president of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) Local 10 in the Portland, OR-Vancouver, WA area and a longtime fighter for the cause of workers' rights and oppressed people, was arrested and charged with first-degree trespassing. Wyatt was taking part in a labor protest at a Vancouver meeting of the Freedom Foundation, an anti-union lobbying outfit that is putting "right to work" initiatives on the ballot in Oregon and Washington this year. Police intervened to prevent union supporters from being heard in the supposedly public meeting.

Wyatt is innocent of the charges against him, which threaten this working painter with months in prison and thousands of dollars in fines. The widely-circulated video of the event shows that Wyatt never refused to leave, nor did the police give him even a minute's opportunity to do so before they handcuffed him.

What they call trespassing is exercising free speech at a public event on public property! The facts of this frame-up are clear as day, but we can't count on justice from the bosses' courts – the same courts that have convicted International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) longshoremen in Washington for picketing, and in the Portland-Vancouver area and around the country sanction the mass incarceration of black youth. We appeal to working people, labor organizations, and supporters of democratic rights everywhere to join us in demanding: Drop the Charges Against Wyatt McMinn Now!

The police attack on Wyatt's free speech rights is no isolated incident. Working people in the Pacific Northwest, across the U.S. and around the world are under siege. The attempt by the grain cartel to break the coast-wide power of the ILWU at the new EGT facility in Longview, Washington in 2011 was followed by a lockout of ILWU longshore workers at grain terminals in Vancouver on February 27 and in Portland, Oregon on May 4, 2013. Meanwhile, FBI agents raid the homes of supposed anarchists, police and private security guards go after ILWU pickets on both banks of the Columbia River while scabs load grain, and Democratic and Republican politicians alike threaten the wages, pensions and union rights of public-sector workers.

It's in this climate of all-sided attacks on working people that the "Freedom Foundation,"



Wyatt McMinn in union contingent at gay pride march, Portland, June 15.

which is funded by anti-union billionaires including the Koch brothers and the owners of Walmart, came to town to peddle their anti-labor poison. What kind of "freedom" does the "Freedom Foundation" stand for? The freedom of the bosses to exploit labor without any organized resistance – what they dishonestly call "right to work." That's why, for example, these "freedom" fighters want to take away teachers' freedom to strike.

Brother Wyatt was a key organizer of the September 5 protest that showed the labor-hating hacks that Vancouver is a union town: no Wisconsin here! That's why the bosses are trying to throw the book at him, and that's why we all need to stand with him and say NO to this union-busting frame-up.

–Supporters of Wyatt McMinn

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Internationalist photo

Victory to the Platinum Miners!

Elections and Miners Strike: South African Popular Front in Crisis

For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

For a Revolutionary Workers Party with a Trotskyist Program!

UPDATE, June 23: As we go to press, Reuters reports that a mass meeting of the AMCU union this morning approved the end of the platinum strike which lasted five months, by far the longest strike in South African history. The miners reportedly won a 20% wage increase over three years.

APRIL 30 – South Africa heads to the polls May 7 in the most important election since the 1994 vote which marked the formal end of the apartheid system of white minority rule. Meanwhile, 70,000 platinum miners are in the fourth month of a bitter strike not only against the companies but also against the policies of the African National Congress (ANC) government which has backed the mine bosses to the hilt. The intersection of these two events could pose an explosive challenge to capitalist rule in the economic powerhouse of Africa: the non-white masses are *gatvol* (“fed up”) with the black capitalist regime which has kept them mired in poverty, while the corrupt rulers have no answers but bloody repression. Yet a key ingredient is lacking to provide a positive outcome to this crisis: revolutionary leadership.

South Africa’s ruling Tripartite Alliance – a “popular front” composed of the bourgeois nationalist ANC, the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) – is confronted by popular discontent fueled by workers’ strikes and “service delivery protests” in the townships against the degradation of public services. After two decades of ANC rule, the rage against growing inequality coupled with the emergence of “tenderpreneurs”, a layer of black bourgeois fattened by state subsidies spells big trouble for President Jacob Zuma’s party in the elections for the National Assembly and provincial legislatures. Although the ANC will undoubtedly win, it will likely suffer severe electoral losses.

Last year the *Financial Times* (17 February 2013) noted, “Every big government upheaval has been preceded by trouble at the mines.” This voice of London bankers referred back to the imperialist “scramble for Africa” and the search for gold and diamonds which has been central to South African history. The miners’ strikes of 1946 and 1987 rocked the white supremacist apartheid system. Today, the cold-blooded massacre of 34 platinum miners in Marikana on 16 August 2012 has galvanized opposition to the Tripartite Alliance. The National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), with 340,000 members the largest union in South Africa, denounced the ANC and SACP as nakedly pro-capitalist and came out against electoral support to the ANC (or any other political party) at a special congress in December.

Concurrently with the election campaign, the platinum miners are once again battling for their lives. In a hard-fought

strike begun on January 23, tens of thousands of miners have confronted police attacks and intimidation, financial hardship and threats of layoffs in a fight for the demand of the 2012 strike: a minimum monthly wage of R12,500 (South African rands, equivalent to US\$1,190). They have been up against not only the imperialist mining trusts – Anglo American Platinum (Amplats), Impala Platinum (Implats), and Lonmin – and the bourgeois state, but also the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), whose bureaucrats are literally mine owners, as well as the COSATU tops. On April 29, leaders of the striking Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) announced that strikers had turned down the owners’ latest “offer.”

Conditions in the mining industry are a glaring proof that vicious *superexploitation* of black labor remains the basis of South African capitalism, and that the installation of the ANC in government in 1994 was designed to prop up this system. A thin layer of blacks have been incorporated at the top, while those at the bottom do not earn enough to support a family even in the miserable conditions of South Africa’s shantytowns. Thus billionaire ex-NUM president and ANC deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa – who owns 9% of Lonmin shares – has the means to purchase a prize bull for \$2.3 million, while miners at Lonmin’s Marikana mine live in shacks and meet at Wonderkop stadium where “curls and curls of barbed wire line the entrance as if it were an animal enclosure” (*Daily Maverick*, 29 April).

With consummate cynicism, the ANC election manifesto announces the “first phase” of the “democratic transition” has been completed. Their mentors are the SACP, the high priests of the Menshevik-Stalinist theory of stages who excuse every crime with the mirage of ultimate “socialism.” According to the ANC, “our people’s dignity has been restored” in this first phase. Tell it to the Marikana miners, or the township residents gunned down by the police as they demand clean drinking water and housing! In mid-March, police and ANC officials shot at protesting schoolchildren at Bekkersdal in the Gauteng province around Johannesburg. Even *The Citizen* (a tabloid oriented to the black middle class) compared



South African platinum miners of the AMCU at January 19 rally in Rustenburg voted to strike. The walkout, the largest and longest in South African history, is now in its sixth month.

this to the 1976 Soweto uprising.

In the “second phase,” the ANC promises to “eradicate poverty” and reduce inequality by 2030. In the concrete, this amounts, not to real jobs but rather “work opportunities, many of long duration” and the like, meaning temporary jobs with low pay and no benefits. The SACP/ANC’s call for “radical socio-economic transformation” (not even a mention of “socialism,” of course) is a cruel joke, amounting to further capitalist immiseration.

Struggle Against Neo-Apartheid in the Mines

The platinum miners’ walkout is universally seen as a historic strike. Joseph Mathunjwa, the head of AMCU which is leading the action, called it a struggle against an “apartheid system of salaries.” Before the 2012 strikes, wages fluctuated between R4,000 and R5,000 per month. The mines are still heavily dependent on migrants from the Eastern Cape, Lesotho, Mozambique and elsewhere. All the workers killed in August 2012 were migrants, mainly from the former “Bantustan” of Transkei. Given this ethnic and national heterogeneity, communication among the workers is conducted by means of Fanagalo, a simplified form of Zulu plus some English and Afrikaans words. It was a great achievement of the 2012 strikes that these divisions could be overcome through common class struggle.

When the miners revolted against these conditions in 2012, they immediately ran up against the opposition of the NUM. During a protest march on their Marikana offices on 11 August 2012, NUM leaders and

shop stewards emerged from the building and began shooting at the strikers, killing two. As one miner stated: “NUM shot its own people” (quoted in Peter Alexander, Thapelo Legkova, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell and Bongani Xezwi, *Marikana: A View from the Mountain Top and a Case to Answer* [Auckland Park, 2012]). As for the August 16 massacre, an eight-page COSATU declaration on Marikana refers to the “tragedy” and “killings” but nothing about a massacre. Months later, the Farlam Commission of Inquiry, while still trying to scapegoat the strikers for violence, had to confirm the police responsibility.

The Commission uncovered evidence that the heads of the South African Police Service, working with Lonmin management, decided that August 16 was the day to “kill” the strike. Hundreds of police reinforcements were brought in to “disperse” the strikers’ supposedly illegal gathering (on public land). The authorities tried to corral miners with barbed wire, and when their intended victims started marching back to their settlement, police vehicles chased them down and then special squads opened fire on them from a distance. Tellingly, in addition to the 16 cut down in the initial shooting spree, an equal number were tracked down and shot in the back at a second location in what amounted to a summary execution. And of course ex-NUM leader turned Lonmin boss Cyril Ramaphosa called for the slaughter.

There was also a deliberate targeting of miner militants. Today, Marikana strike leader Mgcineni “Mambush” Noki and organiser Steve Khululekile, both shot down that day

in August 2012, are revered martyrs. In addition to the 34 killed, a least another 78 were wounded in the cold-blooded slaughter. The company and the government sought to drown the workers' struggle in blood, but they did not succeed. The strikes spread from Marikana through the mines. In October 2012, Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) fired almost 13,000 miners. However, in the end workers won wage hikes, supposedly raising pay by up to 20%. But the mine bosses at Marikana reneged on the agreement. "They made fools of us after the Lonmin strike," complained one shop steward (*Mail & Guardian*, 27 March).

As a new strike loomed, the mine owners brandished the threat of "restructuring" and mass lay-offs. But not because of weak demand: in July 2013 the CEO of Amplats, Mark Cutifani, announced that he intended to increase the return on investment from 11% to 15% per year. In other words, they are not losing money, they just want to jack up profits. And keep in mind that just about everything officially reported by these companies is a lie – from the "transfer pricing" to false reports of worker housing to misreporting the number of workers with temporary contracts.

The strike had barely gotten under way when COSATU declared on January 29 that it was "concerned about safety at the mines." Mind you, this did not refer to the brutal working hours and methods, COSATU denounced Impala management for "not providing security" to *scabs*. On March 11, CONSATU called on "the employers and the South African Police Service to devise some safe way for the workers in the platinum mines to go back to work." A moribund Workers' Association Union (WAU) was revived to get miners back to work. But as one AMCU shop steward remarked, "There is no use in caving in because of hunger, because if we go back underground with these peanut wages, we will still suffer from hunger. It is better we starve once" (*Mail & Guardian*, 27 March).

Unfortunately, the platinum miners have had to stand alone. NUMSA has been getting involved in the mining industry, organizing 1,800 workers at Amplats refineries, who struck separately in February and settled in March for wage increases of between 7.5 and 8.5% per year for the different categories of workers. Bloomberg News (4 April) quoted NUMSA national treasurer Mphumzi Maqungo saying of the miners strike that it was "a bad situation and we hope a solution will be found," adding, "we support the struggle of workers irrespective of a union they are affiliated to." Yet statements of solidarity are not enough. There should have been, and should be today, a mobilization of all of South African labor to defend the miners with *solidarity strike action* to bring South Africa to a standstill in support of the platinum strike.

This is all the more urgent as it is "increasingly obvious that the government are willing to wait out AMCU until it breaks," according to a London market analyst (Bloomberg News, 30 April). The platinum miners strike is where the conflict between South African workers and the ANC government has come to a head. Yet instead of common workers action, the logic of bureaucratic infighting has prevailed. Even the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) has done nothing to support its AMCU affiliate. And although NUMSA president Andrew Chirwa had been invited to address an AMCU rally in Rustenburg on January 19 to offer solidarity, and was even on stage, he was suddenly banned from speaking by the AMCU tops.

The mine bosses have claimed that

they have enough platinum stockpiled to wait out the strike, and market prices for the mineral have not budged. Yet the companies have declared "force majeure," a legal term allowing them to suspend payments and deliveries because of circumstances beyond their control. This would imply that their stockpiles are not unlimited. In the face of the conglomerates' hard-line refusal to grant the mine workers' elementary demands, and now threats of closing mines in retaliation as the gold mines did following the 1987 strike, mine workers and their allies should *occupy the installations and institute workers control*, including *opening the companies' books*, as part of a revolutionary mobilization for a *workers and peasants government to expropriate South African capitalism*.

WASP Backstabbing Against Miners Strike

While the AMCU has no strategy other than waiting out the mine owners and has made no attempt to mobilize working-class solidarity action, it is also clear that the mine bosses were speculating on rifts inside the union. AMCU tops have pushed aside the workers' committees which led the 2012 strikes and generally behave like typical trade-union bureaucrats. This has disappointed a layer of former workers committee members and AMCU shop stewards who have been drawn around the Democratic Socialist Movement, the South African affiliate of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI). These social democrats, who were buried inside the ANC until 1996, have now launched a Workers and Socialist Party (WASP). On the eve of the strike, the WASP issued a series of defeatist statements undercutting the workers' action.

After wild accusations from AMCU president Mathunjwa that dissidents were being "wined and dined by [South African President] Zuma", five shop stewards (or former shop stewards) called a press conference under the aegis of the WASP on January 20 to lambaste the AMCU bureaucracy and corruption. According to press reports, some "were equivocal on their stance regarding the strike. Others, such as Impala's [Vuyo] Maqanda, seemed somewhat opposed to it, while Amplats' [Gaddafi] Mdoda said they would support the upcoming strike only if Mathunjwa met them around a negotiating table to iron out their differences and allowed workers to discuss a strategy for the strike" (*Mail & Guardian*, 21 January). This shameful backstabbing could only aid the companies.

The next day, WASP spokesperson Mameitwe Sebei accused Mathunjwa of "playing into the hands" of the ANC by calling a strike which could become "violent" (*Mail & Guardian*, 22 January). Sebei also raised worries about company stockpiles and about future lay-offs, giving credence to the bosses' blackmailing tactics. On January 23 an official statement by the WASP appeared to disavow Sebei, saying "we are emphatically supporting the strike action which began in the platinum industry today." It claimed to have been "misrepresented" by the media, although not directly misquoted, and that it was just raising "concerns". "Misrepresented"? The *Mail & Guardian* has been notably sympathetic to the WASP, including over attempts to deport its deputy general secretary, Swedish-born Liv Shange.

All of the talk about AMCU "authoritarianism" and "concerns" about the union going into the strike "divided" evade the fact that the strike had already been decided, including by a vote at the January 19 rally. This all bears a striking resemblance to at-



Siphwe Sibeko/Reuters

Striking platinum miners rally in Wonderkop stadium outside the Lonmin mine in Rustenburg, site of the August 2012 massacre.

tacks by Thatcherites and Labour traitors on the National Union of Mineworkers and its president Arthur Scargill for having "undemocratically" decreed the British miners' strike of 1984-85. The WASP says it is for "the election of representative strike/workers committees, regular mass meetings for open and democratic debates on the strategy to win R12 500 and to rally the entire working class behind the mineworkers' cause." Nice words, but empty. Rather than winning the strike, the WASP is more interested in distancing itself from the AMCU.

Its January 23 statement promised that "Workers and Socialist Party will be campaigning ... in the whole trade union movement and throughout the country to raise support for the strike and its demands." Really? So where is this promised support? Certainly not on the WASP website, which hasn't had a single article or statement about the strike since January. No mention either in its election poster and two election leaflets, and only a dismissive remark in its election Manifesto about lack of "serious preparation for a campaign of action to win the R12 500 per month minimum wage notwithstanding the present platinum strike." Well, "notwithstanding" its pseudo-support for the strike, as social-democratic electoral reformists, WASP has "weightier" matters to attend to, namely chasing after votes in the May 7 election.

"Notwithstanding" their socialist pretensions, the DSM/WASP campaign is directly counterposed to the "Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism" (1920) of the Communist International, which declared: "Election campaigns should not be carried out in the spirit of the hunt for the maximum number of parliamentary seats, but in the spirit of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses for the slogans of the proletarian revolution.... It is necessary to utilize all mass actions (strikes, demonstrations, ferment among the soldiers and sailors, etc.) that are taking place at the time, and to come into close touch with them." Sound like the WASP campaign in South Africa today? Not hardly. Even its call for nationalization of the economy would let the apartheid criminals retain 10% of their plunder!

Moreover, its election Manifesto states: "WASP fights against police brutality, -corruption, -racism and sexism and for holding the police to account. ... [W]e need to fight for democratic working class control over the police, also appealing to the sense of class solidarity among rank-and-file police officers." This garbage, a hallmark of the CWI, is utterly anti-Marxist. There can be no "democratic working class control" over the police or any other part of the bourgeois state, and spreading

illusions about a "sense of class solidarity" among the cops – *the armed fist of the bourgeoisie* – is a deadly delusion. The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) talks of "advancing the working-class struggle within the criminal justice system" – and then they carry out massacres like Sharpeville, at Marikana and in the townships.

"ANC Reloaded" or Revolutionary Workers Party?

The nomination of Moses Mayekiso as the WASP lead candidate is certainly evocative. Mayekiso once represented the "workerist" tendency in the anti-apartheid struggle which was wary of what the bourgeois nationalist ANC held in store for the workers – with good reason, as history has shown. But whereas Leon Trotsky's perspective of *permanent revolution* holds that in semi-colonial and late-developing capitalist countries like South Africa, even basic democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution cannot be achieved short of proletarian revolution, the workerists had no overall political program counterposed to capitalism. As a result they were reduced to a pressure group on the ANC and were ultimately eaten alive by the ANC/SACP. Mayekiso himself ended up in the SACP.

Although the WASP campaign claims to be focused on the fight against corruption, this was not a hallmark of Mayekiso's subsequent career. After helping break the Mercedes-Benz strikes as a NUMSA bureaucrat in 1990, he went into the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO) which was supposed to empower the townships. He became head of Sanco Investment Holdings (SIH) which set up joint ventures privatizing municipal services, including with the British firm Biwater, which had close connections to Margaret Thatcher, for water supplies. The SIH collapsed when its money disappeared. Mayekiso then created the Congress of South African Non-Racial Civic Organisations Movement on behalf of the ANC to punish SANCO for supporting anti-privatization protests (and for failing to elect him president) in 2001.

In addition, there are accusations of bribery around an arms deal with Sweden. Since 2008, Mayekiso has been a leader of the "Congress of the People" (COPE), a pro-free market, explicitly anti-Marxist split from the ANC. But in the current trade-off, WASP gets press coverage for its candidates and Mayekiso gets a new "left" cover. The WASP does not merit support by class-conscious workers seeking to pose a revolutionary challenge to South African capital, to the black bourgeois ANC government which

manages its affairs, to its SACP ideologues, and to the union bureaucracies which have climbed aboard the “gravy train.”

In competition with the WASP campaign, SACP veteran Ronnie Kasrils, who was founder and leader Umkonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the ANC’s armed wing, and former South African intelligence minister, has launched together with other ANC worthies the “Sidikiwe! Vukani! Vote ‘NO’” campaign. This campaign is in fact nothing more than an expression of frustration in the ANC and/or an attempt to pressure it into more “acceptable” policies. But the same is true of the WASP calls for a campaign to recall Zuma over the “national embarrassment” of the extravagant expenditures on the president’s Nkandla residence. None of this represents a break from bourgeois electoral politics, and much less a move toward workers revolution.

The fact of the matter is that the bulk of the South African left is waiting for NUMSA. Its painfully late formal break with the ANC/SACP opens a lot of doors, but the union tops are not prepared to go through them. The Metalworkers organized a national protest strike against the Youth Employment Incentive Act (a mix of slave labor for youth and further giveaways to the “tenderpreneurs”) in March, but with mixed results. NUMSA has been more focused on reinstating ANC critic Zwelinzima Vavi as General Secretary of COSATU. Pro-government forces had suspended Vavi using charges of corruption and sexual harassment. While the WASP, among others, hailed a decision by the Johannesburg High Court reversing this as a victory, Vavi has now turned around and indicated he will be obliged to campaign for the ANC.

Is the break with the ANC going to be reduced to bureaucrat in-fighting arbitrated by the bourgeois state? NUMSA’s special congress last December made vague references to a “united front” – not the unity of the working class in revolutionary struggle proposed by the Communist Party in its initial period, but rather the United Democratic Front of the 1980s. The UDF was a popular front which subordinated working-class forces to the bourgeoisie, and which specifically served to bring workers’ militancy and township revolts in that period back under the control of the ANC. NUMSA also calls for a “Movement for Socialism” which could mean anything from a reformist workers party such as the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil –which has unleashed its own brand of capitalist austerity – to a bourgeois populist party like those in Venezuela and Bolivia.

The NUMSA bureaucrats remain wedded to the 1955 ANC Freedom Charter which promised liberation to all classes. As we have noted, its prescriptions for nationalization had nothing “socialist” about them: as Mandela wrote in his June 1956 article, “In Our Lifetime,” the goal of the Charter was “the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class.” The ANC was thus clearly committed to capitalism well before it took office in 1994. And we now have that “prosperous Non-European bourgeois class” ruling South Africa on the backs of the impoverished non-white working masses.

Another variant of a return to the supposedly pure sources of the ANC is represented by populist demagogue Julius Malema and his Economic Freedom Fighters. With the consummate opportunism so often exhibited by the bourgeois opposition parties to the ANC, Malema has concluded a sort of non-aggression pact with the Zulu chauvinist, virulent anti-communist and anti-ANC ally

of the apartheid regime Mangosuthu Buthelezi and his Inkatha party. Despite his often scathing critiques of ANC corruption (which he knows well from the inside), Malema’s immediate perspective can only be as a junior partner in a continuation of the neo-apartheid system, despite the WASP’s frantic attempts to form an electoral bloc with the EFF.

Genuine revolutionary Marxists warned in 1994 that a vote to the ANC was a trap chaining the working class to the bourgeoisie. So, too, would be a vote today to any component of the government (i.e., the SACP as well as the ANC) or any other variant of bourgeois nationalism like the EFF. As for the WASP, it is not even a deformed expression of a mass pro-working class, pro-socialist groundswell against the Tripartite Alliance, but rather a vehicle for peddling the CWI’s Labourite nostrums.

The struggle against neo-apartheid will continue, regardless of the results on May 7. It will be pursued in the mines and factories and townships. It must be a struggle against the Tripartite Alliance popular front and all forms of class collaboration. What it cries out for is forging a Leninist revolutionary workers party armed with a Trotskyist program linking the fight against neo-apartheid wage slavery in the mines and factories, for land, for “service delivery” and massive construction of high quality public housing in the townships, and against all forms of special oppression, to proletarian struggle to expropriate the capitalists, including in their lairs in the USA and Britain. This is the program of permanent revolution of the League for the Fourth International. ■

Ukraine/Iraq...

continued from page 1

the fiction of a unified Iraqi state.

The policies of *both* parties of U.S. imperialism are jointly responsible for *creating* the quagmire in which they now find themselves. Ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians were able to coexist in the same state until the NATO imperialists, with Washington in the lead, demanded that Ukraine align itself with the West. This emboldened Russia-hating western Ukrainian nationalists and fascists, while spelling disaster for the eastern industrial regions which are deeply integrated into the Russian economy.

Likewise, in Iraq since before launching the 2003 invasion, the United States was bent on installing a Shiite regime. The neoconservatives in the Bush regime were enamored of Ahmad Chalabi, who although a secular politician was a ferocious Shiite communalist. Liberals argued that since Shiites were a majority, they should rule. Saddam Hussein was a bloody dictator, who executed communists and with his Sunni-dominated officer corps waged war against Shiites, Kurds and Iran. But in order to keep a lid on things he did not promote communal feuding and did include token members of Iraq’s various ethnic and religious groups in his one-man regime.

The reality is that in Washington’s playbook for maintaining world domination – whether at gunpoint or by the dictates of Wall Street bankers – U.S. rulers have pursued a *bipartisan* policy of promoting national, ethnic and religious sectors which were suppressed or saw themselves as dominated by the previous rulers. Once in power, they turned the tables and put down the former dominant groups. Thus the U.S. imperialist crusade to export “democracy”

has led to horrific sectarian slaughter from Iraq to Libya to Syria and Ukraine. Since this was entirely predictable, it cannot be brushed off as “unintended consequences” – the communal bloodletting is intentional.

The arrogant Yankee imperialists sowed the wind, and now they are reaping the whirlwind.

For now, U.S. and European Union rulers are having trouble figuring out how to bomb their way out of their current predicament: their Ukrainian and Iraqi pawns have not proven up to the task. But that is little comfort to the targeted populations. In Ukraine, internationalist communists must fight against the fascists and oppose both Ukrainian and Russian nationalism in the struggle for workers revolution. At the same time, Marxists recognize that the Russian-speaking eastern and southern regions have

Defend the Uprising in Eastern Ukraine

The NATO imperialists have been deeply shaken by events in Ukraine. Their image of the Russian army as a run-down, ill-equipped, undisciplined force was blown apart by its rapid-fire professional takeover of the Crimean peninsula. For all the talk of a Russian “invasion,” there was none – the troops were there already. But beyond the usual recriminations over conflicting assessments by the “intelligence community” and how the U.S. fell for Moscow’s misdirection maneuver along the Russia-Ukraine border, most worrisome to the Pentagon and CIA is that they had *no electronic intelligence* about the Crimea takeover – *none!* – until it was well underway.

“U.S. military satellites spied Russian troops amassing within striking distance of Crimea last month. But intelligence analysts were surprised because they hadn’t intercepted any telltale communications where Russian leaders, military commanders or soldiers discussed plans to invade.

“America’s vaunted global surveillance is a vital tool for U.S. intelligence services, especially as an early-warning system and as a way to corroborate other evidence. In Crimea, though, U.S. intelligence officials are concluding that Russian planners might have gotten a jump on the West by evading U.S. eavesdropping.... “‘We have gone into crisis-response mode,’ a senior official says.”

–“Without Warning: U.S. Scurries to Shore Up Spying on Russia,” *Wall Street Journal*, 24 March

We have spelled out in previous articles that as proletarian internationalists we support the self-determination of Crimea’s people, who voted overwhelmingly to join Russia, and how this was facilitated by Russian military action. It is also gratifying to note that for all the National Security Agency spying on millions of ordinary people’s communications – on *your* e-mails, phone calls and social media – as well as tapping German and Brazilian presidents’ cell phones, Moscow has evidently developed a communications system that the U.S. couldn’t crack, and didn’t even know about! Finally, the American spymasters got their comeuppance.

In early April, as the coup regime in Kiev tried to gain control of eastern and southern Ukraine by naming leading capitalists (“oligarchs”) as governors, revolts broke out in this predominantly Russian-speaking region against the junta of Ukrainian nationalists and fascists. As protesters stormed government buildings in the major

a right to autonomy or self-determination and we defend the anti-Kiev rebellion. Military occupation by the Ukrainian nationalist regime will lead to more massacres.

In Iraq, in fighting for socialist revolution the immediate threat is imperialist attack, particularly now that Obama has announced the dispatch of U.S. troops. Between the Shiite and Sunni communalists, working people have no side: they are all vicious enemies. In Syria, we oppose both the authoritarian Damascus regime and the Islamist opposition. But while giving no political support to any of the feuding bourgeois bands, communists defend those fighting against the U.S. imperialists, who unleashed a horrific bloodbath in conquering and occupying Iraq that far exceeds the crimes of a small-time bourgeois strongman like Saddam Hussein (or the Assads).

eastern cities, a “Donetsk People’s Republic” was proclaimed. This was followed by the takeover of the city of Sloviansk with the support of local officials, and the occupation of police installations in a dozen cities. Western governments and media accused Russian president Vladimir Putin of orchestrating it all.

For several weeks, Kiev authorities tried repeatedly to send the military against Sloviansk, to no avail. Civilians surrounded the troops asking why they were attacking the people – and giving the soldiers food. Sometimes armored columns turned around; sometimes they removed the firing pins for their weapons; on one occasion the troops handed over their guns and armored personnel carriers to the rebel fighters. With an army that had no stomach for firing on the population, the military leaders in Kiev (themselves fascists) decided to organize a National Guard out of the fascist (Svoboda) and Nazi (Pravy Sektor) fighting squads from the Maidan occupation.¹

Western imperialists, and the United States in particular, at the very least have encouraged the murderous assault by Kiev on the population of eastern Ukraine. Beyond disputed reports of Western mercenaries, there is the fact that the army offensive came on the heels of the secret visit to Kiev in early April by Central Intelligence Agency director John Brennan. A few weeks later U.S. vice president Joe Biden showed up, also advocating a hard line. Note that his son, Hunter Biden, last month joined the board of Ukraine’s largest gas producer, Burisma Holdings, along with Devon Archer, a fundraiser for Secretary of State John Kerry.

And throughout, the point woman for U.S. intervention has been Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, former top aide of Hillary Clinton and ex-vice president Dick Cheney and wife of neo-con “historian” Robert Kagan, who recently wrote an essay titled “In Defense of Empire” (*The Atlantic*, April 2014). Nuland, who handed out cake to anti-government protesters in the Maidan (shades of Marie Antoinette) and met with fascist leaders, handpicked “Yats” (Arseny Yatsenuk) as the junta’s “prime minister” (in her “fuck the EU” leaked phone call). Her influence is so pervasive in Kiev these days that some now refer to Ukraine as “Nulandia,” or alternatively the “Khaganate of Nulands.”

Following the May 25 election, oligarch-president Petrochenko vowed to

¹ See “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” (12 March) on page 13 of this issue.

finish off the eastern rebellion in “hours.” But giving the locals “a whiff of grapeshot” hasn’t exactly worked. Ukrainian forces have suffered setbacks at the hands of the rebels, most recently when a troop and ammunition transport plane was shot down, killing all 49 aboard. Although Kiev’s military push is billed as an “Anti-Terrorist Operation,” in fact its main purpose has been to terrorize the local population. For weeks the army has been parked outside Sovyansk, cutting off water, electricity and gas and shelling residential buildings, a kindergarten and a hospital.

In addition, leading oligarchs have their own private armies led by fascists, ex-Maidan fighters and mercenaries. One such unit is the Donbass Battalion based in Dnipropetrovsk, which is reportedly “comprised of ex-military men with experience operating in hot spots around the world and civilian volunteers” (*Kyiv Post*, 14 May). Although the leader of the black-uniformed paramilitaries in balaclavas (ski masks) claimed disingenuously that they were “crowd-funded” from a Facebook page on the Internet, the battalion is sponsored by Oleh Kolomoisky, the appointed governor of Dnipropetrovsk and one of the richest men in Ukraine.

Another politician, right-wing presidential candidate Oleh Liashko, formed a unit named after himself which is a veritable death squad, killing unarmed rebels “gangland style” in their offices (*Kyiv Post*, 23 May). An article in the *London Guardian* (15 May) recounted how the National Guard and paramilitaries drove into the steel city of Mariupol to attack “separatists” in police headquarters and on the way out of town fired on civilians, leaving at least eight dead. Another outfit, the Dnipro Battalion, also sponsored by Kolomoisky, attacked voters lines during the May 11 home-rule referendum in the city of Krasnoarmeisk:

“The volley of bullets did nothing to placate the crowd, and the men kept shooting, a look of panic on their faces. The incident ended with two civilians dead....”

The Donbass Battalion leader justified shooting pro-Russian civilians, calling them “pigs.” But when the squad aided a pro-Kiev ex-cop to take over the rural hamlet of Velyka Novosilka in Donetsk oblast, a reporter noted that the masked gunmen had alarmed the residents and one could see “outright loathing in their faces” for the new ruler. A couple of days later, when the battalion was chewed up in a firefight with rebels in Korlovka, the macho commander “posted increasingly desperate messages to his Facebook page.... It was a disastrous and bloody day for the Donbass Battalion in their first showing in real combat” (*New Yorker*, 23 May).

So there is no doubt that ultra-rightist and fascist Ukrainian ethnic nationalists are at the forefront of the assault on the eastern region. On the other hand, Western media (and some fake leftists) have claimed that the “separatist” revolt is just a small number of Russian fascists and nationalists, many of them infiltrated from Russia itself. It is true that several of the leaders are members of reactionary Russian nationalist groups, and both the “prime minister” of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the military leader at Slovyansk are Russian. But the vast majority of the fighters are local residents outraged by the murderous Kiev regime.

Mass support for the rebellion is shown by several things. First, the fact that even Ukrainian army units brought in from the west have made no headway in two months of clashes in which civilians have repeatedly

confronted the troops. Second, even anti-Russian Western journalists who have spent time with the insurgents confirm this. An article in the *New York Times* (4 May) co-authored by its “weapons expert,” C.J. Chivers, who is about as close as you can get to being an asset of the U.S. military and still maintain journalistic cover, after a week with a unit of the People’s Republic’s militia found no Russian armament and reported:

“The rebels of the 12th Company appear to be Ukrainians but, like many in the region, have deep ties to and affinity for Russia. They are veterans of the Soviet, Ukrainian or Russian Armies, and some have families on the other side of the border. Theirs is a tangled mix of identities and loyalties.”

The drive to “untangle” the mixed and interpenetrated “identities and loyalties” that to a considerable degree are a legacy of the multinational foundations of the former USSR is also known as ethnic cleansing and nationalist fratricide, along the lines of what was “accomplished” by the Western-backed nationalist dismemberment of Yugoslavia.

Most of all there was the turnout for the May 11 referendum. Ukraine and Western officials insist on labeling the eastern rebels “separatists,” then cite opinion polls showing most people in the east don’t want to join Russia. Yet their actual demand has been for “самостоятельность” (samostoyatel’nost) or “self-rule,” which like the call for “home rule is an elastic term that means autonomy but could be a stepping stone to separation or independence. The indisputable fact is that the large majority of the population of eastern Ukraine is demanding at the very minimum autonomy from Kiev.

On the eve of the vote the *New York Times* (9 May) opined that “a chaotic voting process might discredit insurgent leaders” but “a polling station or two with a line of voters could provide the backdrop needed to make the vote appear legitimate on television.” So of course its article (12 May) on the referendum was titled “Ukraine Vote on Separation Held in Chaos” – the “chaos” being attacks by pro-Kiev fascist bands – and it carefully avoided any pictures of long lines of voters. Yet 2.3 million reportedly voted (a turnout of 70%) with 89-96% favoring self-rule and scores of photos showed huge throngs of voters in every major city in the region.

Several other things indicate that the rebellion in eastern Ukraine is not just a creation of the Kremlin, to be turned on or off like a water faucet. For one, the April 17 statement agreed to by Russia stipulating that “all illegal armed groups must be disarmed; all illegally seized buildings must be returned to legitimate owners” and calling on rebels to surrender weapons was categorically rejected by the People’s Republic leaders. Putin’s call to postpone the May 11 self-rule referendum was likewise rejected by the insurgents. And a good thing, too, since the turnout demonstrated conclusively the mass support in the east for autonomy/self-rule.



Coal miners rally in Donetsk, May 28, to demand end of military operation against uprising in eastern regions. Sign says: “Fascism Will Not Pass!”

Most recently, rebels dismissed out of hand a “ceasefire” announced by Porochenko on June 18 and agreed to by Putin, on the grounds that they didn’t trust the Kiev authorities for a second. Sure enough, the next day the Ukrainian army demanded that defenders of the eastern town of Krasny Liman surrender, and a few hours later launched a heavy artillery barrage. A Porochenko aide argued, “As they didn’t fulfill the conditions of the ultimatum, the decision was made to destroy them.” Putin surely wants to use the insurgents as pawns in maneuvering for influence in Kiev, but the inhabitants of eastern Ukraine have to live with the consequences.

While defending the right to self-determination for eastern and southern Ukraine and calling for military defense of the anti-Kiev uprising, Trotskyists would not make a political bloc with the rebel leadership, which whatever the strength of the right-wing Russian nationalists, is bourgeois politically. As one militia leader told the *New York Times* (5 June), “We’re not trying to make a socialist revolution here.” But that is precisely what any class-conscious worker and Marxist must be fighting for. And in fact many rebels are workers whose interests are counterposed to those of the “oligarchs.” The key is to fight for class political independence.

Earlier, we have written:

“In the face of the squads of fascist thugs who have been dispatched from Maidan to Odessa, and have popped up in eastern Ukraine, it is necessary to form anti-fascist workers militias rooted in the factories, mines and unions. The militias that have appeared in places like Luhansk and elsewhere do not have a class character, which is vital to mobilizing workers’ power and ensuring internationalist defense of all ethnic, religious and national groups.”

–“Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” (12 March)

While individual fighters may be workers, the working class as an organized force has only been marginally present in the uprising in eastern Ukraine – but that could be changing. The Western press made much of the appearance of squads of steel workers and miners on the streets of Mariupol in opposition to the pro-Russian “separatists” after the May 11 referendum. All of a sudden the hired pens of capital were in favor of workers mobilization? Not hardly. In fact, this was the private army of oligarch Rimat

Akhmetov, who employs 285,000 people in his steel and coal empire, and many of the “workers” were actually supervisors.

At a lunchtime “ministrike” called by Akhmetov, workers sat around listening to the factory director complaining about falling production. According to a report in the *London Guardian* (20 May), “Most of them, when questioned, said they actually supported the Donetsk People’s Republic, though they also expressed worry that the current situation could impact jobs and regional stability.” Whatever their opinion about joining Russia, said the head of the factory union, “everyone is against the current Kiev government.” On April 20, coal miners in Luhansk struck against the Akhmetov-owned company, refusing a 20% pay cut to pay to restore Kiev.

More recently, on May 28 some 1,000 miners of the Independent Union of Donbass Miners marched in Donetsk under the banner of the Donetsk People’s Republic in a “march for peace” opposing the Kiev military offensive against the region. They carried signs saying, “Fascism will not pass” showing a worker smashing a swastika in the blue-and-yellow colors of Ukraine. Again on June 19, the miners struck and marched in Donetsk demanding withdrawal of the Ukrainian troops from the Donbas (Donetsk Basin). But while opposed to the Kiev regime, the miners have not put forward a revolutionary working-class perspective, let alone called for expropriating the oligarchs such as Akhmetov.²

There is broad awareness in eastern Ukraine that the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a body blow to the working people, whose standard

² There is a second miners union, the Independent Union of Miners of Ukraine (NGPU), which supports the Kiev regime. This is the same union that in the waning days of the Soviet Union carried out strikes in support of Boris Yeltsin, the leader of the counterrevolution. Comrades of the then-revolutionary International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) were at the October 1990 miners congress where a minority of pro-capitalist leaders staged a coup to found the NGP. The Trotskyists argued with delegates against the program of embracing counterrevolution in opposition to the AFL-CIO which in the person of the secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers of America was pushing for capitalist restoration (see “Soviet Miners Strike Amid Perestroika Turmoil,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 522, 15 March 1991). Then and now, the NGPU leaders are enemies of Donbas miners!

of living plummeted. Some of the “pro-Soviet” sentiment that has been reported in the region as in Crimea is no doubt Russian nationalist yearning for status as a great power. But by no means all. In fact, there are numerous mixed marriages, local residents with relatives in Russia, and quite a few Russian speakers in the region who are non-Russian ethnically as they were drawn here from other Soviet republics by the high wages in the mines and steelworks.

The fight against the murderous Ukrainian nationalist Kiev regime and its fascist shock troops is thoroughly justified and must be defended by internationalist com-

munist. Support to the “anti-terrorist” onslaught is counterrevolutionary and should be smashed. But there can be no support to Putin and the Russian nationalists, who will soon enough sacrifice the Donbas workers. Class-conscious workers must fight above all to mobilize the Ukrainian proletariat, *east and west*, to seize the plants of *all* the oligarchs, who looted the remains of the USSR, and to impose *workers control* in the fight for *international socialist revolution*.

To lead that fight it is necessary to forge an authentically communist, Bolshevik and Leninist, Trotskyist vanguard party of the working class.

The Dismembering of Iraq

Washington was stunned as Sunni insurgents led by the jihadists of the “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” seized Mosul in the north in a matter of hours. Barack Obama thought he had put the Iraq war behind him. Speaking at the West Point military academy on May 28, the U.S. president declared that “we have removed our troops from Iraq, we are winding down our war in Afghanistan,” the Al Qaeda leadership is “decimated,” and on Syria he had decided that the U.S. “should not put American troops into the middle of this increasingly sectarian civil war.” Yet three weeks later Obama was sending hundreds of U.S. troops into a sectarian civil war in Iraq.

Even though the sudden collapse of the Maliki puppet government’s control in northern Iraq blindsided the Iraqi premier and his imperialist puppet masters, it was the outcome of policies going back to the beginning of the U.S. occupation, and before. For all the laments in Washington about “failed states,” “age-old religious hatreds” and similar colonialist claptrap, *this latest war in Iraq is “made in the U.S.A.”* The Yankee imperialists are determined to keep their hand on the Middle East oil tap, while following the watchword of the Roman Empire, “*divide et impera*” (divide and rule).

The elements that came together to produce the rout of the Iraqi army on June 10 have been evident for some time. ISIS has been active along the Syrian border since being pushed out of central Iraq by the U.S. military’s “surge” of 2007-08. Since 2012 it has become the strongest force in the Islamist insurgency against the Assad government in Damascus. But how could a force numbering at most a few thousand fighters defeat Iraqi military forces of 130,000? Answer: it didn’t. First of all, the army wasn’t defeated in battle – the soldiers fled, possibly on orders. Second, it wasn’t just ISIS but several remnants of the Baathist military machine.

Among those leftovers are the 1920 Revolution Brigade, the Army of Muhammad and the Men of the Naqshbandiya, linked to the Naqshbandi Sufi Muslim sect and led by a former top lieutenant of Saddam. These groups waged guerrilla resistance against the U.S. occupation forces and the Iraqi puppet army in the Sunni areas. They reflect a mixture of secular nationalist and religious outlooks, though unlike the ISIS they are not Salafist Islamists. But even in coalition they couldn’t occupy Mosul and put the army to flight. That occurred because the Sunni Arab population was fed up with the Shiite government, and Sunni components of the army deserted in mass.

As the insurgents raced south, there were panicked reports that Baghdad could fall. At the chief ayatollah’s call, thousands

enrolled in Shiite militias. In fact, the rebels would be foolish to try to take the Iraqi capital with its large Shiite majority. Instead, Iraq is being dismembered, with a Kurdish quasi-state in the northeast, a Sunni quasi-state in formation in the northwest, and a Shiite rump state in the center and south. Accompanying this is an orgy of communal slaughter. ISIS started off, claiming to have executed 1,700 captured Shiite soldiers. This was followed by reports of police executing 44 Sunni prisoners. Soon there will be more victims on both sides.

The Maliki government has set the stage for this by systematically excluding Sunnis from government posts, high and low; by making sure Sunni parties could never win a vote in parliament; and by arresting thousands of Sunnis and keeping them in jail for years on trumped-up “terrorism” charges. Also, Shiite militias drove tens of thousands of Sunnis out of mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad. Now the U.S. wants to do a backdoor deal with Iran to oust Maliki in favor of a more “inclusive” government, but by this point it’s dubious that Sunnis would trust any Shiite-dominated regime.

Moreover, if the end of Iraq is near, it’s not solely due to the policies of one puppet prime minister. As liberal academic Juan Cole noted:

“The US overthrew Saddam Hussein of the Baath Party in 2003 in alliance with Shiite groups primarily. Those Shiite groups wanted revenge on the disproportionately Sunni Baath Party. They carried out a program of ‘de-Baathification,’ in which they fired tens of thousands of Sunni Arabs from their government jobs as bureaucrats and even teachers. They hired Shiite clients instead.”

–“Who Are Iraq’s Sunni Arabs and What Did We Do to Them?” Informed Comment (18 June)

A few years later, in 2006-07, “When Gen. Petraeus conducted his troop escalation (‘surge’), he disarmed the Sunni militias first, inadvertently leaving Sunnis in the capital vulnerable to threats and night raids.” The fall of Mosul was a personal humiliation for Petraeus, the relentlessly self-promoting future CIA director who made the city the model of his counterinsurgency strategy. For all the media ballyhoo, it turns out that not so many “hearts and minds” were won after all.

Various policy wonks are proclaiming the end of the Sykes-Picot Treaty which carved up the Ottoman Empire following its defeat in World War I. The various pieces were turned into British and French colonies (disguised as League of Nations “mandates”) while ensuring that the Kurds, divided among seven countries, had no state at all. It was Leon Trotsky as commissar of foreign affairs of Soviet Russia who in early



National Defense University

With his Iraqi death squads and “surge,” ex-general David Petraeus facilitated “cleansing” of Sunnis from Baghdad. Now his counterinsurgency model city Mosul has fallen.

1918 made public this secret imperialist treaty, carrying out the Bolsheviks’ pledge to end secret diplomacy. But although the result of the infamous treaty was a handful of artificial countries, state boundaries have changed little over the last century.

Now the told-you-so pundits are republishing maps they drew up following the U.S. invasion of Iraq showing a reordering of the region along ethnic/religious lines. They are claiming that more homogeneous states would lessen hostilities. In fact what has happened as a result of the latest round of imperialist intervention is the opposite: a massive escalation of inter-communal and sectarian slaughter, as minority populations are driven out everywhere. The multi-ethnic states resulting from artificial boundaries are being homogenized with a vengeance, with the U.S. pushing the process in the name of “democracy.”

In Iraq it was the Republican government of George Bush II that unleashed the butchery by its alliance with the Shiites. But the neocons just took over the scheme from Democrat Bill Clinton, who first used it in Central Africa and the Balkans. In Rwanda, the Clintonites backed the minority Tutsi, historically the dominant caste, against the ruling majority Hutu. Led by a U.S.-trained military officer, Paul Kagame, a Tutsi exile army invaded the country setting off a horrendous slaughter by both sides, although the Hutu genocidalists killed many more. Now Rwanda is a U.S. neocolony, and English has replaced French as the second official language.

In the Balkans, Clinton set about ripping apart Yugoslavia, formerly a multi-ethnic, bureaucratically deformed workers state, by encouraging the Croatian and Bosnian Muslim leaders to throw out the Serbs. The result was all-sided communal massacres, although the imperialist “human rights” warmongers (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc.) reported – and misreported – only Serb atrocities. This set the stage for the U.S. to intervene. Like Obama, Clinton was wary of putting “boots on the ground” so in 1995 and again in 1999 he unleashed NATO terror bombing of Serb areas of the ethnically mixed republics.

The bloody U.S. policy of “democracy through ethnic cleansing” has taken such a heavy toll on southeastern Europe and the Middle East because of the existence of all kinds of ethnic and religious enclaves and mixed populations, which was the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman sway extended over such a broad area, from North Africa and southern Arabia to the borders

of Persia and Russia and “the gates of Vienna” in the West, that the Sultans didn’t much care about the religious affiliation or ethnic identity of their subjects so long as they paid taxes and tribute and recognized the suzerainty of Constantinople (Istanbul).

So in the Balkans, Christian Serbs and Croats and Bosnian Muslims lived side-by-side speaking essentially the same language (although with different alphabets) while in the Levant along with a Sunni Arab Muslim majority there were enclaves of Druzes, Shiites, Alawites, Kurds, Greek Catholics, Maronite Christians, Assyrians, and dozens of other minorities. Such intermixing existed in medieval Western Europe, but capitalism is organized on national lines. So the centralizing monarchies and the bourgeois republics achieved national “unity” by suppressing and sometimes wiping out minorities, such as Occitan speakers, Huguenots, etc.

In the Middle East and North Africa, following World War II bourgeois regimes that presided over countries with ethnically and religiously mixed populations often did so by erecting semi-secular dictatorships that while victimizing minorities, and sometimes majorities, suppressed tendencies toward communal feuding. When those brutal regimes are brought down, whether by imperialist invasion or through popular uprisings in the so-called “Arab Spring,” the result is not a flowering of “democracy” but frequently mass murder. As Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution explained, capitalism can no longer produce a “democratic revolution.”

Karl Marx noted of the birth pangs of capitalism, the period of primitive accumulation, of colonial conquest, of the extirpation and enslavement of native populations, that “capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” If that was the case of the “rosy dawn of capitalist production,” today in this era of putrifying capitalism as the U.S. seeks to impose a “new world order,” feeding off the remains of former degenerated/deformed workers states and looting the resources of the semi-colonial countries in order to ensure its imperial hegemony, the process is just as bloody.

While recognizing the right of national self-determination, Trotskyists insist that the only equitable solution to the myriad national, ethnic, religious and linguistic conflicts of the region is through a struggle for socialist revolution. In the case of a large oppressed nation like the Kurds, we call for a *united socialist Kurdistan*. With interpenetrated peoples, such as the Hebrew-speaking and Palestinian Arab population, we fight for an *Arab/Hebrew workers republic*. And with all mutually dependent on vital resources such as water and energy, the key is to build a *socialist federation of the Middle East* and to extend the revolution to the imperialist centers.

From Ukraine to Iraq, the League for the Fourth International upholds the heritage of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 which was able to unite the oppressed peoples of the tsarist empire and served as a beacon to fighters for the liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Yet a parasitic, nationalist bureaucracy under Stalin and his heirs sacrificed that heritage on the altar of the anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country.” As the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union proved, and struggles from Kiev and Donetsk to Mosul and Baghdad show, the urgent need is to return to the path of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

Fascist Pogrom in Odessa, And the Aftermath

Almost from the outset of the protests that began last November in Kiev's Independence Square (the "Maidan"), the occupation was led by right-wing Ukrainian ethnic nationalists, and increasingly by outright fascists. As weeks wore on and battles escalated, the square came to be dominated by "self-defense groups" of the fascist Svoboda (Freedom) Party and the neo-Nazi Pravy Sektor (Right Sector). It was these sinister forces whose provocations led to the February 22 overthrow of the corrupt and despised government of elected president Viktor Yanukovich. While Western governments and many on the left hailed the "democratic" uprising, we and others warned that the new fascist/nationalist regime backed by the U.S. and European imperialists was a threat to the Russian-speaking population in East and South Ukraine.

On May 2 came the indelible, horrific proof. As a pro-Russian revolt spread through the eastern oblasts (provinces), centered on the proletarian coal mining and steel manufacturing Donetsk Basin (the Donbass), 1,000 or more fascists descended upon the multi-ethnic Russian-speaking Black Sea port city of Odessa. The intention of these "Euromaidan" thugs was to teach the hated *moskali* (ethnic slur for Muscovites) a bloody lesson. With axes, revolvers, gasoline bombs and stun grenades they went about their deadly work with a vengeance, shooting several people, torching a tent encampment, chasing anti-Maidan protesters into the House of Trade Unions and then burning down the building. By official count, at least 48 people were murdered in the heinous massacre and hundreds injured, although nine days later dozens were still missing.

This was a well-planned operation, and not just by some ultra-rightist street gangs but by the Kiev junta in which fascists control the key "power ministries" – interior, police, military – and by oligarchs acting as regional warlords with their own private armies. The pretext was a soccer game between the



Fascist attacker throwing gasoline bomb at trade-union headquarters in Kiev, Ukraine, May 2. At least 48 died in the massacre and over 200 were injured.

lines of police just stood by, doing nothing to stop the violence. And when pro-Russian survivors managed to escape the burning building they were arrested, while the nationalist attackers went free. Two days later crowds of pro-Russian protesters stormed police headquarters and freed the scores of prisoners.

The Odessa massacre of May 2 is the ugly face of Ukrainian fascism backed by state power. The same day that the fascist "hundreds" were dispatched to Odessa, national security chief Andriy Parubiy (a founder of the Hitlerite Social-National Party) ordered the army to assault rebel-held Slovyansk. On May 3, ten unarmed civilians were killed as troops and paramilitaries overseen by deputy security chief and Pravy Sektor capo Dmyto Yarosh stormed Kramatorsk. Also that

day, hard-line interior minister Arsen Avakov, who labels all pro-Russian protesters "terrorists," claimed that the victims in the House of Trade Unions were "attackers" who hurled Molotov cocktails on "civilians" and this supposedly set off the fires, despite multiple videos showing the opposite. Naturally, the Western press repeated this "official story," or simply excised any mention of who had torched the building.

The May 2 massacre was a *pogrom*, which like the Odessa pogrom of October 1905 was launched by the authorities in order to crush a rebellion. A century ago the targets were Jews, who played a leading role in the 1905 Revolution against the tsarist autocracy; today it is pro-Russian rebels resisting the Kiev junta. In 1905, the pogrom was led by Black Hundred (*chernovaya sotnya*) squads, modeled on the units of the Cossack army. Today the murderers are the Maidan "sotnyas" led by the Svoboda and Pravy Sektor fascists.¹ Then and now, they carried out their carnage knowing that they enjoyed impunity. And like the German Nazis they model themselves on, they celebrate their bloody deeds, only today instead of *Deutschland über alles* they sing "Ukraine has not yet died ... our enemies will vanish."

Outrageously, some "leftists" have abided the pogrom, including the Autonomous Workers Union (AWU), a small group of supposed revolutionary syndicalists, whose comments have been widely circulated in the cyber-anarchist milieu. An AWU "Statement on the Odessa Tragedy" (5 May) gives a supposedly "even-handed" account. Thus the "pro-Ukrainians" are described as a "civilian crowd" (although with some "football hooligans") which became "enraged" by anti-Maidan attacks. Of the cold-blooded murder at the Trade Union House the AWU writes that "both sides fired shots and hurled Molotov cocktails both to and from the roof

¹ According to an account by Borotba, "Some of them had shields where it was written: '14th hundred [sotnia] of Maidan self-guard'" ("Neo-Nazi Terror in Odessa: More Than 40 Killed, Hundreds Injured," 3 May 2014).

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The Internationalist

Odessa Chernomorets and the Metalists of Kharkiv. Hundreds of fascists were brought in on buses and trains posing as "just" soccer fans. Throughout Europe, soccer fan clubs often shade into right-wing goon squads. But in Ukraine, Svoboda built up its paramilitary squads based on the "Banderstadt Ultras," a club connected to the Lviv team which displays portraits of Stepan Bandera, the anti-Soviet Ukrainian fascist nationalist who allied with Hitler's Nazi invaders in World War II, and the red-and-black flag of his Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

The stage for the massacre was set in advance when the traditional march by hometown fans to the stadium was turned into a "march for Ukrainian unity" and it was decided to bring Maidan "activists" – i.e., the paramilitary squads. This was a deliberate provocation by the Kiev regime. On the day of the march, local anti-Kiev militia members set out to stop the fascists but badly miscalculated the balance of forces. Outnumbered, they retreated and barricaded themselves in a nearby shopping mall. When police cars arrived, the ultra-rightists headed

to the Kulikovo Pole Square where there was an anti-Maidan tent city. The tents were quickly set afire with Molotov cocktails. The couple hundred people in the camp that day, many of them reportedly women and elderly men, sought refuge in the nearby House of Trade Unions.

What happened next was sheer mass murder, a massacre carried out by the fascists and other Ukrainian ethnic nationalists. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the lower floors of the building, which burst into flame. As fires spread quickly, smoke billowed through the building. Dozens of people died from asphyxiation or burned to death. Others were shot, strangled and stabbed as the fascists entered the building to finish off their victims. Many fled to the roof, trying to barricade themselves there against the killers. Desperate people tried to jump from window ledges: some perished in the death leap, others were only injured but then were beaten and several were killed with bats by the fascist stormtroopers. This included a member of the leftist Borotba group and a regional deputy who was campaign manager for the Borotba candidate for mayor.

As this gruesome slaughter was going on, the nationalist crowd stood in Kulikovo Pole Square singing the national anthem and chanting "Glory to Ukraine," "Death to enemies," and "Knife the *moskali*" (anti-Russian ethnic slur). "As the building burned, the Ukrainian activists continued to scream mottos about Putin and sing the Ukrainian national anthem," reported *Ukrainska Pravda*. A member of the Pravy Sektor neo-Nazis, Dmitry Rogovsky, told a reporter for the London *Guardian* (3 May) that, "The aim is to completely clear Odessa [of pro-Russians].... They are all paid Russian separatists."

Moreover, this massacre was carried out with the complicity, at the very least, of the Kiev junta. There were few police around at first, most having been dispatched to guard another building. When they did arrive, an hour or more after the fires started,



Police stood by as building burned, dozens died.

U.S./European Union Anti-Russia Drive Backfires Self-Determination for Crimea – Oppose Sanctions!

Ukraine: Down with Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup!

MARCH 12 – Since late November, Ukraine has been convulsed by a right-wing nationalist and pro-imperialist mobilization culminating in a coup d'état that drove out the widely despised president Viktor Yanukovich and promptly split the country in two. Within hours of seizing power, the usurpers decreed that Russian would no longer be accepted as an official language, enraging the Russian-speaking east and south of the country. Russian president Vladimir Putin perceived the coup as a blow aimed at Moscow by the U.S., European Union and NATO backers of the mobilization, which it was. He struck back swiftly by taking over the Crimean peninsula, home of the Russian Black Sea fleet, to the applause of the majority Russian local population. Now the Western imperialists are sputtering, with the U.S. threatening economic sanctions and worse.

The talk in the media of a new Cold War underscores that the standoff over Ukraine is a byproduct of the destruction of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. The 1991-92 counterrevolution led to impoverishment of the population in the post-Soviet states as capitalism devastated whole industries, women lost rights and interethnic hostilities were stoked. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky brought down the Russian Empire of the tsars, a notorious “prison house of peoples,” by uniting the working people of different nationalities. In Ukraine, long enslaved by the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, the Bolsheviks achieved victory in a multi-sided civil war by uniting the struggle for social revolution with national liberation. As commander of



Sergei Grits/AP

As tottering Yanukovich agreed to concessions on January 25, fascist squads in Maidan escalated action (above).

the Red Army, Leon Trotsky issued an order of the day on 30 November 1919 calling for a “free and independent Soviet Ukraine.”

But contrary to the early Soviet policy of promoting Ukrainian language and culture, the bureaucracy that usurped political power under Stalin aggressively pursued Russification, having abandoned the strug-

gle for world socialist revolution in favor of the illusion of building “socialism in one country.” In addition, Ukraine suffered several million deaths as a result of Stalin’s forced collectivization of peasant agriculture, and his purges hit Ukraine Communists harder than in any other Soviet republic. The Stalinist bureaucracy’s Russian chauvinism

bred anti-Communist Ukrainian nationalism. Despite this heavy burden, the planned economy of the USSR provided the framework for a multinational state. Capitalism, in contrast, is based on the national state, and so counter-revolution was marked by a resurgence of reactionary nationalism.

As in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, another multinational bureaucratically deformed workers state ripped apart by the restoration of capitalist rule, in Ukraine today we are seeing “all the old crap” return, including the growth of violent fascist nationalist movements. And as always,

the “democratic” Western imperialists are busily stoking the fires. In the new “government” in Kiev, cobbled together under U.S. and EU supervision, there are five ministers, including a deputy prime minister and the minister of defense, who come from or out of the Svoboda (Freedom) Party, a fascist outfit that blames Ukraine’s ills on a “Jewish-Russian mafia” and communists. Instead of setting off alarm bells, the presence of outright fascists backed up by neo-Nazi gangs was prettified as just “peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators” in the media.

Putin’s decisive takeover of Crimea without firing a shot has put the coup regime in Kiev in a bind, lacking the means to challenge it. It also won broad support in eastern Ukraine, with tens of thousands joining pro-Russian demonstrations in the industrial centers of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. The Western imperialists so far have come up with nothing more than U.S. visa denials and pulling out of a Group of Eight (G8) summit scheduled for the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi in June. Berlin would be hard put to do without energy supplies from Russia, which provides much of the natural gas that fuels German industry. But even if Putin’s aims are limited, particularly to protect the strategically located home port of Russia’s Black Sea fleet, imperialist ultimatums and provocative actions by Ukrainian nationalist and fascist bands could spark a



Fascist thugs of Svoboda with swastika-like “wolf hook” arm bands during riots in Kiev, February 6.

Against Russian and Ukrainian Nationalism and Anti-Semitism – For Workers Revolution!



Internationalist Group/LFI at New York City protest, February 27, demanding U.S. hands off Ukraine and Venezuela.

shooting war.

Trotskyists recognize that ever since the fall of the USSR, the overwhelmingly Russian-speaking population of Crimea has chafed under Ukrainian rule, first proclaiming independence and then achieving a degree of autonomy in 1992. We support self-determination for Crimea and would oppose any attempt to prevent or undermine that, whether imperialist sanctions, military threats or cutting off supplies of water and electrical power. Marxists would also support demands for autonomy of Russian-speaking Odessa and eastern Ukraine, which rightly fear attacks by new rulers in Kiev, as well as for Crimean Tatars. However, a full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine would likely become a reactionary national conflict, with Russia driven by great power ambitions and Ukraine by anti-Russian nationalism backed by U.S./EU imperialism.

The League for the Fourth International calls instead for internationalist struggle to overthrow all the capitalist rulers through *workers revolution*. Meanwhile, we demand that the *U.S. and European Union imperialists and their NATO military machine get out of Ukraine* and call on working people to resolutely *oppose any and all sanctions against Russia*. The real instigators of the conflagration in Ukraine are the capitalist would-be masters of the world in Washington and Wall Street, in Brussels and Berlin. For the last two decades, they have sought to

encircle Russia with client regimes, from the Baltic republics to Poland, Georgia and the big prize, Ukraine. And if the West succeeds in drawing Ukraine into its orbit, austerity “reforms” imposed by the International Monetary Fund will further impoverish the working people.

Fascists and Ukrainian Nationalists Lead Kiev Mobilization

The occupation of Kiev’s Independence Square, or Maidan, began in late November as a protest against Yanukovich’s decision to accept \$15 billion in Russian aid rather than sign an agreement with the European Union that had been in the works for some time. Many of the protesters were from the western Ukraine, brought in by the busload. While some western Ukrainians naively hope that attachment to “Europe” would raise living standards, the protest leaders had a very different agenda. “Euromaidan,” as the occupation of the square was dubbed, was dominated from the outset by Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and outright fascists infused with hatred of Russians, Jews and communists and bent on provoking a crack-down. When police did attack, only to withdraw shortly afterwards, the provocateurs were emboldened, and the resulting injuries and deaths inflamed the public.

But while the Western press kept repeating its mantra about “peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators” set upon by a brutal regime, the leaders and hard core of several thousand protesters in the Maidan were anything but peaceful ... or pro-democracy. In the run-up to and following the coup there has been an orgy of vicious Ukrainian nationalist, anti-Semitic and anti-communist attacks. The first Lenin statue was toppled as early as December 8. In an incident in January, neo-Nazi skinheads burned a Soviet flag while displaying a Celtic cross symbolizing “white power.” In the 24 hours following the February 22 coup, no less than 16



First Lenin statue toppled in Kiev, December 8.

Lenin statues were torn down, making 25 in total. On February 23, the HQ of the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) was attacked, and the next day the house of the KPU leader was ransacked and torched.

At the same time, in the town of Styri near Lviv in western Ukraine a monument to the “Soviet Soldier” commemorating those who died fighting the German imperialist invaders in World War II was removed with a crane. In addition, several hundred offices of Yanukovich’s Party of Regions (PoR) were reportedly burned. This party, which won large majorities in Russian-speaking eastern and central Ukraine (and was supported in the parliament by the KPU), was seen as a representative of Russian influence in Ukraine. Since the victory of the coup, a Regions Party legislator was beaten in front of the Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Council). In the same post-coup session, a bill was introduced to outlaw the PoR and the KPU.

There have also been repeated attacks on Jews. Here is a partial list:

- On January 10, an Israeli-born Hebrew teacher, Hillel Wertheimer, was assaulted at his apartment building by four men who had followed him home from synagogue services.
- On January 17, a Jewish man, Dov Baar Glickman, was stabbed multiple times in the leg by three assailants who attacked him outside a synagogue in Kiev (*Times of Israel*, 18 January).
- On February 6, it was reported that a Holocaust memorial in the town of Oleksandria, in the Kirovograd district was desecrated, with swastikas and “Death to Jews” scrawled on it. (Bolshevik leaders Grigorii Zinoviev and Leon Trotsky both came from the area.)
- On February 20, leading Kiev rabbi Moshe Reuven Azman closed Jewish schools, told members of the Jewish community to avoid leaving their homes and urged them to “leave the city and even the country if possible,” out of fear of attacks (*Maariv*, 21 February).
- The rabbi’s fears were justified as immediately after the coup, on February 23, the Giymat Rosa Synagogue in Zaporizhia, near Dnepropetrovsk, was firebombed (*Timenews.in.ua*, 24 February).

The Israeli government has dismissed reports of anti-Semitic violence and instead highlighted the presence of several Israeli army veterans among the “fighting squads” of the anti-Yanukovich movement. Yet in

Israel members of the Israeli Knesset called on the Netanyahu government to “prepare an emergency plan to bring Ukrainian Jews to Israel” (World Jewish Congress website, 27 February). This is not a contradiction, as Zionists going back to Ze’ev Jabotinsky (and David Ben Gurion) have a history of collaboration with Nazis and other anti-Semites to promote Jewish immigration to Palestine. (Israeli prime minister Netanyahu’s father was Jabotinsky’s secretary.)

Certainly many who demonstrated at the Maidan were incensed at their corrupt rulers, and no doubt many dreamed that “Europe” would bring them democracy and prosperity. But there is a concerted effort in the imperialist media (particularly by liberals, parroted by social-democratic leftists) to pooh-pooh the incontrovertible evidence of *fascist and Ukrainian ethnic nationalist ultras in the leadership of the Kiev protesters and the post-coup government*. Hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil about Maidan are the orders from their imperialist commanders. Anyone befuddled by their cynical cover-up would do well to watch some of the many videos available online of brutal actions by the sinister Nazi gangs. For starters you can look at the compilation put together on the RT (Russia Today) TV Internet site at: <http://rt.com/news/ukraine-nationalists-fears-video-674/>.

You can see there how in mid-February masked thugs in combat fatigues and black boots from the **Svoboda Party** manhandle activists from the group “For a Clean Kiev,” mostly women, who came out to sweep up debris, collect trash and dismantle barricades; how the fascist goons knock down young men and beat them bloody with batons and baseball bats, repeatedly kicking them in the head; how they throw lighted Molotov cocktails and fire rockets at the defenseless activists. You can see squads of **Pravy Sektor** (Right Sector) goons giving Nazi-style stiff-arm salutes as they chant “Ukraine for the Ukrainians” and shout “Glory to the nation! Death to enemies!” You can see “SS” inscribed on their shields as they wield potentially lethal spiked flails at women and strike martial poses with their revolvers.

You can hear them explain: “National Socialist themes are popular amongst some of us. A clean nation. Not like under Hitler but in our own way, a little bit like that.” Asked about Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, they reply: “Those who like Russia, let them move to Russia.



Dmytro Yarosh, leader of the neo-Nazi Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) storm troops, speaking at the Maidan, February 21. This fascist coup leader, now deputy defense minister of Ukraine, is planning a paramilitary National Guard.

Reuters

Ukraine will be just for Ukrainians.” A spokesman for C14, an anti-Semitic youth group linked to Svoboda, tells BBC TV that, “Many ethnic groups have control of business structures, some economic, some political.” Which ethnic groups? “Russians, and Jews and Poles.” Also active in the Maidan were the neo-Nazi street fighters of **Patriot of Ukraine**; the racist **White Hammer**; **Trizub** (Trident, named after Ukraine’s coat of arms) which sponsors military training of youth; the **Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists** and **Ukrainian Platform Sobor**. The purpose of these armed gangs is to terrorize any opposition.

“Mainstream” bourgeois apologists for the Maidan mobilization, echoed by some leftists, generally admit what by now is impossible to deny – the prominent participation by anti-Semitic ethnic nationalists and fascists in the mobilizations – but seek to minimize it, claiming that they represent only a minority of the protesters, etc. A German academic who teaches in Kiev, Andreas Umland, earlier argued that “Svoboda has been and probably will remain a minor Ukrainian political force,” while saying it was a “strategic mistake” for other protesters to take up the ultra-nationalists’ slogans (*Kyiv Post*, 28 December 2013). In January he circulated a petition by academics saying “the heavy focus on right-wing radicals in international media reports” is “unwarranted and misleading.” More recently (AFP, 1 March), Umland argued that Svoboda’s influence was “hyped” and Pravy Sektor was “overrated.”

Even if this were true, which it is not, there can obviously be no common action with fascists and racists, they must be smashed. Underestimating the threat of neo-Nazis, white racists and anti-Semites can be fatal. And in fact, *Svoboda and Pravy Sektor were top leaders of the Maidan occupation*. One of the three main spokesmen was Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnibok, a member of parliament who in 2004 gave a speech complaining that Ukraine was run by a “Muscovite-Jewish mafia.” Later he called on the government to “stop the criminal activity of organized Jewry.” Last year, Tyahnibok was barred from entering the United States citing his virulent anti-Semitism. But in December, Republican senator John McCain appeared on the platform in the Maidan with this Jew-hater, and U.S. undersecretary of state Victoria Nuland met with him.

No. 2 in the Svoboda hierarchy is Yuri Mykhalchyshyn, who openly promotes fascism. Mykhalchyshyn founded the organiza-

“F**k the EU!”: U.S. Diplomats Select Ukraine Premier

A peek behind the curtain of imperialist machinations over Ukraine was provided when someone leaked part of a conversation between U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and posted it on YouTube on February 6. Given the past year of revelations about global NSA snooping, with the U.S. listening in on everyone including leaders of top American allies like Germany, it was indeed poetic justice when the snoopers themselves had their conversations blasted over the Internet.

In their not-so-secure chat, Pyatt and Nuland decide that Klitschko should not be a member of a future govern-

ment, which they want formed around Yatsenyuk, as in fact occurred a few weeks later. If their references to “Klitsch” and “Yats” in this dialogue make you think of nicknames for household pets, you are not far off the mark. Nuland further decrees “what he [Yatsenyuk] needs is Klitsch and [fascist Svoboda leader] Tyahnibok on the outside.”

After deciding on the marching orders for the Ukrainians and proposing a UN cover to deliver them, Nuland adds: “And you know, fuck the EU.” Nuland’s language about the European Union is simply an crude expression of imperialist rivalries. The U.S. not only wanted to move faster

while the Europeans wanted more discreet “regime change,” they also preferred different puppets. Klitschko, the former heavyweight boxer but political lightweight, was the German candidate, heavily backed by the Christian Democrats’ Adenauer Foundation.

The media focused on the “undiplomatic” language when the real story is how the U.S. was caught organizing the future deployment of Ukrainian politicians on the political chessboard and even micromanaging their scheduling. And after the putsch, Ukraine now has an “interim government” headed by “Yats” and minus “Klitsch.” So much for “Ukrainian sovereignty”!

tion as the Social-National Party in 1991, mimicking the name of Hitler’s National Socialists. He calls the Holocaust “a bright episode in European civilization,” founded a think tank originally called the “Joseph Goebbels Political Research Center,” published a volume of tracts by Italian, German and Ukrainian fascists, dresses in skinhead neo-Nazi style and leads torchlight parades behind banners with SS symbols. If Tyahnibok is mainly anti-Semitic, Mukhalchyshyn is particularly anti-Russian, referring to Ukrainians from east of the Dniepr River as “Asiatic dogs.” Last October he introduced a bill to the Rada to require public employees to speak and write Ukrainian or be fired.¹

No longer minor players in Ukrainian politics, Svoboda and other rightist ethnic nationalists managed to get their themes and chants taken up by the Maidan protests. And having played a key role in the coup, many of these ultra-rightists are now prominent in the post-coup government. Svoboda has deputy prime minister and economics minister *Oleksandr Sych*, who earlier introduced a bill to ban all abortions, including in cases of rape; ecology minister *Andriy Makhnyk*; agriculture minister *Ihor Shvaiko*; and the important position of prosecutor-general, *Oleh Makhnitsky*. Education minister *Serhiy Kvit* is a “former” member of Svoboda, as is *Andriy Parubiy*, in the key post of head of the national security and defense council, in charge of the military, while the deputy chief is *Dmytro Yarosh*, the top leader of Pravy Sektor.

¹ For this and more about Svoboda’s adulation of fascism, see Per Anders Rudling, “The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right,” in Ruth Wodak and John Richardson, *Analyzing Fascist Discourse* (2013).



Reuters

Fascist shock troops of Pravy Sektor in the Maidan, February 20. Helmet is painted with red-and-black flag of Stepan Bandera’s UPA which fought together with Nazi SS against Soviet Red Army.

The post-coup regime, which seized power with armed mob action, is a coalition of fascists and ethnic nationalists representing Maidan on the one hand, together with economic free marketeers, representing the oligarchs and their international backers notably the “prime minister” Arseniy Yatsenyuk, spokesman of the Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party and second main leader of Euromaidan. A banker and stand-in for Batkivshchyna chief Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister and oligarch who was imprisoned by Yanukovich for corruption, Yatsenyuk was the American favorite. (Yatsenyuk has a villa only a stone’s throw away from ousted president Yanukovich’s lavish spread.) The third Euromaidan party leader, world boxing champion Vitali Klitschko of the Ukrainian Democratic Reform Party (UDAR), is out, having been vetoed by U.S. diplomat Nuland in her infamous leaked phone call (see box on this page).

This cabinet is now preparing to impose the draconian economic “reforms” dictated by the International Monetary Fund, in exchange for a few billion euros and dollars which won’t begin to cover the devastation. According to a draft document obtained by the Ukrainian edition of the Russian business paper *Kommersant*, plans are afoot to cut pensions in half. This will no doubt soon be followed by demands for more privatizations, and (especially with the end of Russian discounts) an end to natural gas subsidies, which have kept Ukrainians from freezing to death in the frigid winters. Wage cuts won’t be far down the line, although much of that may be accomplished by a

drastic devaluation of Ukraine’s currency, the hryvnia, by 50% or more (it is already down 25% since December), which will send prices for basic necessities soaring.

Meanwhile, the coup regime has named prominent “oligarchs” to be unelected rulers of the eastern Ukrainian provinces. Sergei Taruta was appointed governor of Donetsk and Ihor Kolomoisky governor of Dnipropetrovsk. Taruta owns ISD, with major steel mills in Ukraine and also the largest steelworks in Poland (Huta Czystachowa) and Hungary. Kolomoisky is Ukraine’s third-richest man according to the Forbes’ billionaires list as head of the Privat Group conglomerate controlling banks, airlines, iron and steel mills, oil and chemical plants, and more. The new powers in Kiev are apparently hoping that with the Party of Regions out of the picture, Russian-speakers in eastern Ukraine will have confidence in these robber barons who claim to be providing jobs (after looting the remnants of the collectivized Soviet economy).

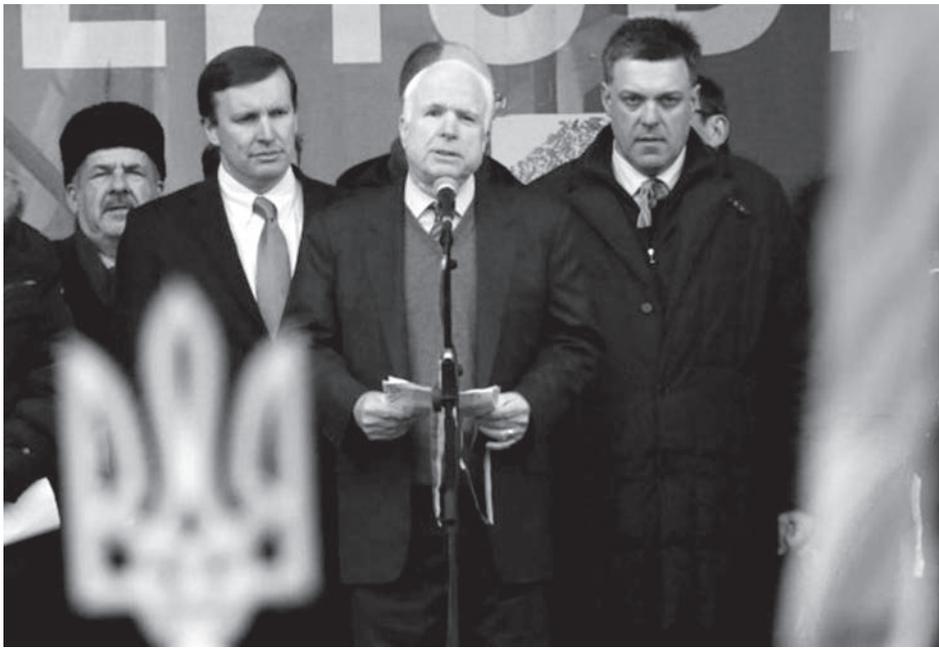
So this is the “democracy” promoted by U.S. and EU imperialism: the naked dictatorship of monopoly capital.

But according a U.S. State Department paper, there have been “no incidents of attacks on churches.” The firebombing of a synagogue doesn’t count? There has also supposedly been “no retribution against political opponents.” So what about the assault on Party of Regions deputy Vitaly Grushevsky outside the Rada? What about the banning of the Communist Party and Party of Regions in the districts of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil and Poltava? Or the at-



Ukrainian racists burn Soviet flag while displaying Celtic cross, symbol of “white power” fascists in Europe, January 2014.

May-June 2014



Republican senator John McCain (center) and Democratic senator Chris Murphy on stage at Kiev's Maidan together with Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the fascist Svoboda party, 15 December 2013. Anti-Semitic anti-communist Tyahnybok railed against "Muscovite-Jewish mafia," now he is embraced by U.S. imperialism.

tack on the KPU office in Zaporozhia, or the burning of KPU offices in Kiev, Dnipropetrovsk and Kryvy Rih? Or the attack on the secretary of the Communist Party in Lviv, Rotislav Vasilko, who was smashed in the face with a cross and tortured in Mariinsky Park, driving needles under his fingernails, beating him with clubs, puncturing a lung, breaking his nose and three ribs, cracking his skull and threatening to kill him, his wife and children?

"Calm has returned to Kiev," declares the State Department. It recalls German Communist Rosa Luxemburg's famous January 1919 article, "Order Reigns in Berlin," bitterly mocking the claims of the social-democratic government and bourgeois media after the former smashed the leftist opposition. Hours later, she and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and murdered on government orders by the fascist thugs of the Freikorps.

Imperialists Stirring the Ukrainian Cauldron

Ukrainian president Yanukovich refused to sign off on the EU pact no doubt in part because of pressure from Moscow, but also because the deal included brutal

austerity measures dictated by the IMF which he calculated would provoke massive discontent and lead to his downfall. So instead he faced a revolt by those who claimed he had dashed their dreams of joining Europe. This came largely from the western Ukraine where anti-Russian nationalism has always been strong. Once the fascists and ethnic nationalists gained leadership of the protests early on, you had a combustible mixture. Throw in the match of a deeply corrupt ruler anxious to protect his loot, periodically cracking down but then backing off out of fear of a civil war, and you got an explosion.

But what lay behind this outcry for a pact that would mean a drastic fall in living standards? In addition to Ukrainian nationalism there was the blowback from the failure of the so-called "Orange Revolution" of December 2004, which once before threw out Yanukovich as president on claims of election fraud. This was one of a series of "color revolutions" (such as Georgia's "Rose Revolution" of 2003) sponsored by the U.S. working through various "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs). (See our article "U.S.-Sponsored Coup d'État in Ukraine," *The*

Internationalist No. 20, January-February 2005.) But the "orange" governments of Viktor Yushchenko followed by the filthy rich Yulia Tymoshenko proved to be every bit as corrupt as Yanukovich, who was elected in 2010, mostly with votes from eastern and southern Ukraine.

The same imperialists who were behind the 2004 "revolution" are active today, and the main driving force has been "centrist" U.S. Democrats. "Neo-conservatives" around George W. Bush talked of spreading "democracy" at gunpoint by overthrowing formerly U.S.-allied regimes in Islamic countries (the Taliban in Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein in Iraq), while ensuring U.S. control of Near East oil. The Democrats focused on securing U.S. world dominance, notably by preventing post-Soviet Russia from becoming a "superpower." This was the strategy of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Polish-born national security advisor of Democratic president Jimmy Carter, laid out in his books *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997) and *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* (2004).²

Control of Ukraine is key to this operation. In an article, "A Geostrategy for Eurasia," in *Foreign Affairs* (September-October 1997), Brzezinski argues that Russia should be induced to give up the "futile effort to regain its status as a global

² In our article, "U.S. Sponsored Coup d'État in Ukraine," we quoted from *The Grand Chessboard* where Brzezinski spells this out:

"Ukraine, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Turkey and Iran play the role of critically important geopolitical pivots..."

"Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire..."

"However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia..."

"Neither the West nor Russia can afford to lose Ukraine to its geostrategic and economic adversary."

power," and should be carved up into "a European Russia, a Siberian Republic, and a Far Eastern Republic." To bring this about, he wrote, the U.S. should ensure that "the newly independent post-Soviet states are vital and stable," adding: "A sovereign Ukraine is a critically important component of such a policy..." It should be recalled that Brzezinski boasted in a 1998 interview with the French magazine *Nouvel Observateur* about how he and Carter secretly began aiding the Islamic reactionary mujahedin in Afghanistan in 1979 with the aim of "drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap."

In carrying out the Democrats' strategy in Ukraine, the drive to ally with the European Union has been pushed by an annual Yalta European Strategy (YES) conference held at the site of the World War II summit of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. The confabs are sponsored by the No. 2 Ukrainian oligarch, Victor Pinchuk, the son-in-law of former Ukraine president Leonid Kuchma, and have included such imperialist A-list luminaries as former U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush the elder, Henry Kissinger and ex-IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Pinchuk has donated some \$13.1 million to the Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation, and at the latest YES meeting last September introduced Hillary Clinton, who "delivered a keynote address about strengthening Ukraine's economic ties to the West" (*New York Times*, 13 February).

So two months before the protests break out in Kiev, the Clintons are in Yalta pushing the EU-integration agenda. From the beginning, Kiev's Maidan was crawling with imperialist agents and NGOs (see box below). One of the key players in the U.S. imperialists' "Operation Maidan," Deputy Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland told a meeting in Washington on December 13 that she was just back from her third visit to Ukraine in five weeks. In addition to her famous phone call, she spoke from the stage to anti-government protesters and handed out food in the Maidan! Nuland, who was appointed by then secretary of state Clinton, was earlier Principal Deputy National Security Advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney, and is married to

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Ukraine on the Auction Block As NGOs Prepared Coup in Kiev

At a December 13 meeting of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation in Washington, Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland declared that "we've invested over \$5 billion to assist Ukraine" to "build democratic skills." So who got the dough? While Washington stonewalls in the face of Moscow's charges that it was bankrolling Maidan, it is possible to track some of it down. The *New York Times* (9 December 2013) refers to "Svitlana Zalischchuk, one of a small coalition of civic organizers who have been leading the protests from behind the scenes..." Zalischchuk used to be press secretary to the chief of staff of President Yushchenko, Oleh Rybachuk, and with him co-founded the NGO Centre UA, which has a U.S.-funded project "Platform for Analyzing the European Integration Policy of Ukraine."

Centre UA reports grants from the U.S.' National Endowment for Democracy (NED), set up to replace funding by the CIA when that was exposed in the 1970s.

It also gets a bundle from the Omidyar Network, set up by the founder of eBay, the Internet auction site. So now it's "Who'll be the highest bidder for Ukraine? Do I hear \$5 billion? \$15 billion? \$35 billion? Sold to the IMF, EU and USA! Next up is Venezuela. It's a steal, with great cash flow from oil revenue, beauty queens and more. Who will start the bidding? NED?"

But the largest single donor to Centre UA is an outfit called Pact Inc., which turns out to be a conduit to "facilitate the distribution of small USAID grants to PVOs" (private and voluntary organizations). Centre UA has also gotten seed money from the International Renaissance Foundation, part of George Soros' Open Society constellation of foundations. And Soros' IRF has been up to its neck financing Maidan groups, notably Spilna Sprava (Common Cause), which occupied several government ministries in late January and was accused by "moderates" and even the fascist Svoboda of staging provocations.



U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt (left) and Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland pass out cakes to anti-government protesters in the Maidan, 10 December 2013.

The Return of Banderaite Fascism

All the ultra-rightist groups embrace fascist nationalist Stepan Bandera, whose wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) and its Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) engaged in guerrilla war against the Soviet Red Army during World War II in alliance with the German imperialist invaders. Bandera worked out of Krakow, HQ of the German administration of occupied Poland. He trained mobile squads in German intelligence (Abwehr) military camps, helped form the Ukrainian Nachtigall and Roland battalions to fight under German command, and received 2.5 million Reichmarks for anti-Soviet subversive activities. When relations between the Nazis and the UPA soured, Bandera was “kept in reserve” in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, but was then released in 1944 to fight the advancing Soviet Red Army.

In later years, apologists for Bandera have tried to claim that he also fought the Nazis. This is a sheer invention, and those who propagate it are apologists for fascism. When German troops invaded Ukraine in June 1941, the OUN leader proclaimed a Ukrainian state whose founding document declared that it “will work closely with the National-Socialist Greater Germany, under the leadership of its leader Adolf Hitler.” Bandera’s deputy and “prime minister” of the phantom state Yaroslav Stetsko, who is honored in eastern Ukraine today, called for “the destruction of the Jews” by “bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine.” In 1943-44, the UPA massacred over 90,000 Poles and thousands of Jews. When Bandera resumed the struggle in 1944, he set up an office in Berlin while the Germans supplied UPA units by air.

When Lviv was occupied by the Germans on 30 June 1941, there was a pogrom lasting three days, organized by the SS Einsatzgruppen (paramilitary death squads) but mainly carried out by the Nachtigall Battalion under Roman Shukhevych, the future commander of the UPA, and by Bandera’s OUN directly. Up to 10,000 Jews and Communists were slaughtered in the most hideous manner. A second pogrom in Lviv took place three weeks later, called the “Petlyura days” (after anti-Soviet Ukrainian *hetman* Symon Petlyura), mainly by Ukrainian nationalist squads, killing another 2,000 Jews. Later, following a 1943 decision by the OUN-B to drive out all non-Ukrai-



Svoboda marchers with Nazi symbol and photo of Stepan Bandera, October 2013.

nians, the UPA systematically carried out massacres of Poles in the Volhynia region (40,000 to 60,000 killed) and eastern Galicia around Lviv (30,000-40,000 killed).

The Banderaite OUN were Nazi-allied fascists just as were the supporters of the puppet dictator Tiso in Slovakia, the Croatian Ustasha or the Romanian Legionnaires. Moreover, while today Ukrainian nationalists try to disguise Bandera’s anti-Semitism and collaboration with the Hitlerites, *they hail the Nazi Waffen-SS Galizien Volunteer Division*, which many UPA members joined. In April 2011, Svoboda held a march of several thousand in Lviv on the anniversary of the founding of the Division. Fortunately, the Galizien SS was destroyed and most of its troops killed in July 1944 at the battle of Brody as Marshall Konev’s First Ukrainian Front of the Soviet Red Army liberated Lvov (now Lviv). Unfortunately though, 2,000 survivors joined the Banderaite UPA which continued unsuccessful anti-Soviet guerrilla actions into the 1950s.

When the Social-National Party of Ukraine was founded in 1991, it chose as its symbol a mirror image of the *Wolfsangel*, or wolf hook, a swastika-like design used by several Nazi SS Divisions and which has been used by neo-Nazi groups since World War II. Although the SNPU changed its name to Svoboda in 2004 and tried to soften its image along the lines of the National Front in France, the Freedom Party in Austria, the NPD in Germany and Jobbik in Hungary, all fascist parties that strike a right-wing populist pose on social issues



Stepan Bandera (center) wearing uniform of German Abwehr (military intelligence) with order of merit.

(e.g., against immigrants), it kept the *Wolfsangel*. During the recent mobilization, Svoboda squads sported yellow armbands with the Nazi symbol. Svoboda also promoted Bandera as a national hero, including a Nazi-style torchlight march in Kiev on January 1 to celebrate the Ukrainian fascist’s birthday.

Ultra-rightist Ukrainian nationalists have been able to exploit the Bandera mythology largely because it was shared with the “mainstream” bourgeois parties out of common hatred for the Soviet Union. In his infamous 2004 anti-Semitic speech, Svoboda leader Tyahnybok praised the OUN-UPA for having fought the “Muscovites, Germans,



While Ukrainian nationalists glorify Nazi collaborator Bandera, we hail Ukrainian Soviet partisans who joined with Red Army in defeating the fascist scum. Shown here are members of the Sydir Kovpak partisan detachment.

Yids and other scum, who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state!” Yushchenko during his presidency set up a Museum of Soviet Occupation which presented a sanitized patriotic version of the UPA, and declared Bandera and Shukhevych, the organizer of the Lviv pogrom, national heroes. So when fascists Svoboda and Pravy Sektor marched along with other Ukrainian ultra-nationalists with the red-and-black flag of Bandera’s UPA (symbolizing blood and earth, *Blut und Boden* in Nazi language) and chanted “Glory to the nation, Glory to its heroes. Death to its enemies,” it fit right in at the Maidan.

But this Ukrainian nationalist iconography whitewashing Nazi collaborators repulsed many in the Russian-speaking east who had parents and grandparents who fought in the Soviet Red Army against the German invaders and later against the Bandera bands. When they saw the Banderaite flag waving at the Maidan, they feared those protests were directed against them. And when the victorious fascists and

ultra-nationalists immediately passed a law banning the use of Russian in official business, their fears were confirmed. That also confirmed the academic Umland’s worry that praising Bandera’s UPA could alienate “millions of eastern and southern Ukrainians” who regard them as “despicable traitors in the Soviet Union’s nations’ joint struggle against fascism,” and could lead to “tearing the young Ukrainian state apart.”

Svoboda, Pravy Sektor and the other fascist and ultra-nationalist groups that have played a leading role in the Maidan protests are not a uniquely Ukrainian phenomenon. Significant fascist movements have appeared in different parts of Europe in the wake of counterrevolution in the USSR and former Soviet bloc, and particularly in recent years as a reflection of the capitalist economic crisis that exploded in 2008 and continuing mass unemployment. This has become a mass movement in countries where the bourgeoisie has whipped up hatred of immigrants and national minorities, such as Jobbik in Hungary, the National Front in France and Golden Dawn in Greece. Appeals for ethnic purity are an essential ingredient in this hysteria, along with the usual anti-communism of fascist movements, which

has been particularly strong in Ukraine.

Svoboda went from being a minor political actor to a major electoral party beginning in 2009, when it received over a third of the votes in a regional election, and in 2012 when it won 10% of the vote in parliamentary elections and more seats than the KPU in the national Rada despite having significantly less votes. Many of those who voted for Svoboda were working-class, angry over unemployment and the vast corruption of Ukraine’s political leaders. But the base of the fascists is, as always, among the enraged petty bourgeoisie who want to bludgeon their way into power. What they have achieved is for one faction of the traditional capitalist politicians to replace another, which may not satisfy their base. That could produce discontent in western Ukraine, which will likely be the first region to feel the brunt of EU-dictated austerity. While this could provide an opening, to build a *class* opposition to all the “oligarchs” requires above all revolutionary internationalist leadership. ■



Imperialist media had a field day with photos of ousted Ukrainian president Yanukovich's lavish estate (top right). But new "prime minister" Yatsenyuk installed by fascist-led, imperialist-backed coup has a villa (lower left) in the same upscale neighborhood. No petting zoo with rare giraffes, though.

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Robert Kagan, co-founder of the neo-con Project for a New American Century.³

So here you had top American and European officials openly embracing fascists and speaking from a platform of a protest in Kiev's main square whose declared purpose was to overthrow the Ukrainian government. You had the U.S. pumping in literally billions of dollars to fund anti-government NGOs. It was the height of imperialist

³ The Clinton connection goes even deeper. One of oligarch Pinchuk's confidants in the corridors of power in Washington is Melanne Verveer, a Ukrainian American who was Hillary's chief of staff in the White House and more recently ambassador at large for women's issues. Chelsea is married to a Ukrainian American, and as the Wall Street Journal noted, it was not some right-wing Republican but Democratic front-runner Hillary who compared Putin to Hitler. The Clintons are tracked on Ukraine.

arrogance. If Russia tried anything even remotely like this, Washington would go ballistic in a minute over interference in internal affairs. On top of this, Western media have been on the warpath for months against Russia over its support of Syria against the U.S./NATO-backed Islamist reactionaries. And the coverage of Russia's successful Sochi Winter Olympics was practically begging for blood, asking over and over will there be a terrorist incident, an equipment failure leaving athletes dead?

"Operation Maidan II" was quite literally an imperialist plot, fostered by U.S. rulers and Clinton/Obama Democrats in particular. Many protesters were undoubtedly sincere in their professions of democratic ideals and illusions in "Europe." But they were unpaid extras in this orchestrated rerun of Maidan I in 2004, when tons of paraphernalia suddenly appeared, all in the same hue of orange, just

like the "green movement" in Iran in 2009 with its trademark spring green fabrics. Leadership is key. The main organizers in Kiev were either on the imperialist payroll, or were fascist/nationalist paramilitaries paid and trained by who knows who. All in order to stage a putsch to bring down the Yanukovich government, which while plenty corrupt, oligarchical and intermittently brutal was, after all, elected by majority vote.

The imperialists and their media lapdogs naturally try to disguise what's going on. Their job is to spread lies. *But any leftist who claims that Maidan II was an uprising for democracy against autocracy is either a fool or a charlatan.*

Which doesn't mean that the plotters were necessarily all on the same page all the time. At certain points, the imperialist negotiators' playbook was pushing to leave Yanukovich as a figurehead while replacing his government with their own flunkies. The Ukrainian and Russian presidents were even willing to go along with this, although Putin evidently had his qualms. But the fascists' willingness to unleash civil war tipped the balance. Now mainstream bourgeois commentators are opining that being in power may "moderate" these killers. It was the same refrain when Hitler took office in 1933: "After all, Hindenberg is still president..." *The fascist/nationalist coup should have been smashed early on by workers action.* The Russian and Ukrainian rulers didn't do so because whatever their differences, they all represent capitalism.

Build a Trotskyist Party! Ukrainian and Russian Workers Unite in Fight for International Socialist Revolution!

The fact that the current upheaval has exacerbated hostilities between Ukrainian and Russian-speakers was by no means inevitable. The origin of the unrest lay in the terrible economic conditions of Ukraine, intensified by the worldwide capitalist eco-

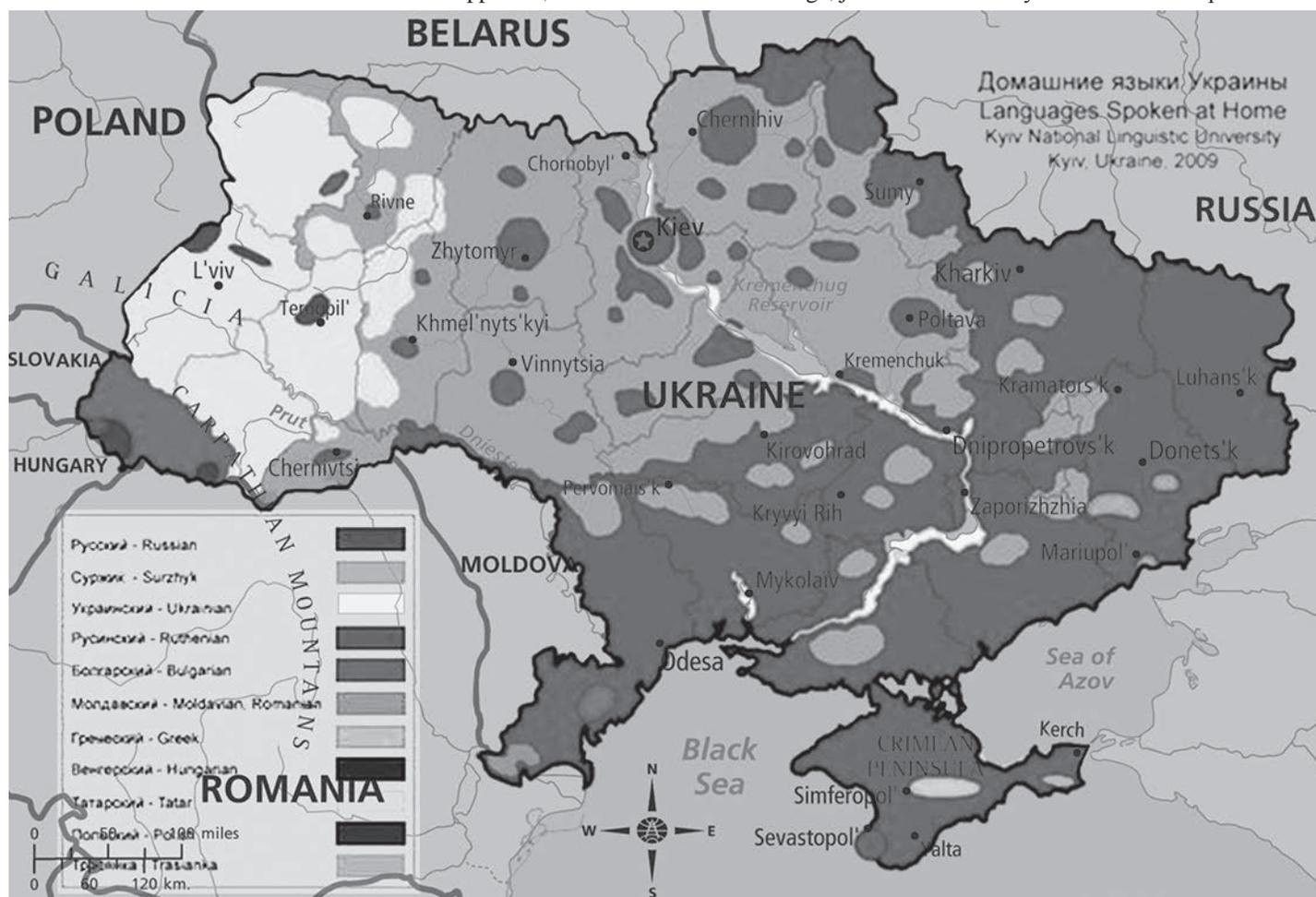
nomics crisis, and the limitless corruption of the country's rulers. Nowhere has rule by "oligarchs" been as blatant as in Ukraine, as one set of robber barons after another used the bourgeois state apparatus to gorge themselves on the remnants of the collectivized economy while the working people are left in poverty. By 1999, the Ukrainian economy had plummeted by 50% from Soviet levels. Today average incomes are less than half those in Russia, and far lower in the Ukrainian-speaking west than in the Russian-speaking east and south.

This could have laid the basis for common working-class struggle against all the oligarchs and their politicians. That would have undercut the populist and nationalist appeals of fascists like Svoboda and Pravy Sektor. Instead the so-called Communist Party supported Yanukovich up to the end. Today KPU leader Pyotr Simonenko shamelessly talks of the "deep social discontent and discontent with the rule of Yanukovich and his entourage," of the "impudent corruption of the Yanukovich clan, nicknamed the 'Family,'" observing that this was not a class conflict but "a fierce battle between the two factions of the same class of exploiters, the oligarchic bourgeoisie" (Message to KPU cadres, 23 February). Yet KPU legislators supported Yanukovich in the Rada, including voting for the anti-democratic January 16 law banning demonstrations!

The "Communist" Party of Ukraine has a working-class base, winning 13% of the vote in 2012, particularly in the industrial areas of eastern Ukraine, but politically it has defended the interests of elements of the former Stalinist *nomenklatura* acting in concert with Russian nationalists, including fascist elements. A "people's militia" set up in Luhansk included the reactionary Slavic Guard, which denounces the "alien values" of the EU. And on January 24 in Odessa, the KPU joined with Russian Cossacks and "Slavic Unity" to defend the regional administration building. The KPU defended Yanukovich and acted as a Russian nationalist party, aiding the dominance of anti-government protests by Ukrainian ultra-nationalists. For genuine communists, there can be no common action with fascists, either Ukrainian or Russian! What about tendencies standing to the left of the KPU? The halting attempts to try to form a "left sector" of the Maidan protests, which have been praised by various Western leftists, were a total bust. A "Manifesto: 10 Theses of the Leftist Opposition in Ukraine" (LeftEast website, 14 January) of the Socialist Union "Left Opposition" presented a minimum program of penny-ante reforms that were a reformist fantasy, particularly given the rightist dominance. The "10 Theses" call for a luxury tax and progressive personal income tax ("following Denmark's example"), workers' "right to take out loans at the employer's expense" ("following Portugal's example"), nationalization of basic industries, "prohibition of offshore capital transfers," "separation of business and government," "transition from a presidential to a parliamentary republic," etc.

Nothing in this wish list would alter in the slightest the capitalist nature of the regime, but Ukraine is no Denmark. Back in the real world, where ultra-rightist forces are in the ascendant, as a result of Maidan Ukraine has a government of fascists and oligarchs. Instead of "dissolution of special forces," the police are about to become a Gestapo while the Nazi-led Maidan "self-defense guards" are to be transformed into

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A majority of Ukraine's population speaks Russian (dark gray) at home, particularly in the more populous eastern industrial area. Ukrainian (white) is predominant in the more rural western parts. In the central areas a mixture (light gray) of Russian and Ukrainian dialects is spoken. There are also pockets of Tatar (in Crimea), Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian and Ruthenian in the western border regions.

Who Were the Snipers Who Killed Kiev Protesters and Police on February 20?



Snipers who shot down protesters and police on February 20. Whoever they are, these are not uniformed cops as claimed by the imperialist governments and media.

Editor's Note: Since this was first published on the Internet and in a supplement to The Internationalist, an important investigation by the German ARD TV network was broadcast showing in great detail that much of the deadly fire against the demonstrators on February 20 was from the protesters' HQ. See addendum at the end of the article.

The incident which led to the overthrow of Ukrainian president Yanukovich after almost three months of protests was the carnage on February 20, when 70 or more protesters and 3 policemen were killed, and 27 police hospitalized. The massacre was almost universally blamed on the government, as protest leaders and Western media in unison claimed police did the shooting. The visceral outrage that this slaughter sparked was used by the protest organizers to mobilize a march on parliament the next day. With a caravan reportedly on the way from Lviv in western Ukraine with some 1,500 guns looted from government arsenals, Yanukovich fled. The coup was consummated.

But who was behind the killing is very much in question. By all accounts, many of the victims were shot down by snipers. Asked about this at his March 4 press conference, Russian president Putin answered:

"You know, some people, including those who were recently among the protesters, have expressed the opinion that these were provocateurs from one of the opposition parties.... You and I saw for ourselves when the Berkut fighters [riot police] stood there with their shields and were shot at – and those were not air weapons that were used against them but assault weapons that pierced their shields. That is something we saw for certain. As for who gave the orders – that I do not know."

Putin's statement was dismissed out of hand by the Western media. The *New York Times* (5 March) wrote: "He suggested at one point that it was provocateurs from the opposition posing as snipers — and not government forces — who shot and killed many of those who died, a statement inconsistent with numerous witness accounts." Others called him "incoherent" and cited his statement as evidence that the Russian president "has lost his mind."

So what did happen on February 20? Even the *New York Times* (21 February) admitted that the fighting started with the hard-core groups breaking a truce negotiated hours beforehand. "Protesters said they decided to retake the square because they thought the truce, announced about midnight, was a ruse," declared a picture caption. "The widespread

use of firearms in the center of Kiev was a new and ominous phase for the protest movement," said another under a photo of a protester with a pump-action shotgun. There had already been numerous photos of masked, black-clad Maidan occupiers brandishing pistols. Another article in the same paper, "Converts Join with Militants in Kiev Clash," reported:

"The Ukrainian authorities and their allies in the Kremlin identify the source of the increase in violence as extremists and terrorists, the young militants of sometimes sinister, far-right political affiliations with ideologies formed in the struggle against Polish and Soviet domination. They have provided much of the front-line muscle in increasingly bloody clashes with the police....

"[T]he murky nature of the opposition gathered in Independence Square, at least on its fringes, is causing problems for the United States and the European Union, which would prefer a neat apposition of peaceful, pro-democracy demonstrators versus the thuggish kleptocracy of President Viktor F. Yanukovich. But that line of thinking often blurs in the streets."

Some of the firing took place in front-line clashes, but a large number of the dead and wounded, both of protesters and police, were killed by sharpshooters firing from above. The *Times* reported, "Snipers also opened fire, but it was unclear which side they were on." In a subsequent interview, photographer Sergey Ponomarev recounted the scene (*New York Times*, 4 March):

"I was on the front-line barricades on Feb. 20 when protesters suddenly broke through and rushed towards police lines. This was so sudden that the police didn't manage to form proper lines or barriers to stop the protesters who quickly advanced up the street. They were almost in front of the retreating police vehicles and water cannon trucks....

"Then I went downstairs to follow protesters – just a few minutes before snipers started to shoot protesters from a small tower nearby.... I didn't understand why this happened, why the snipers are shooting towards the protesters who had only clubs and shields."

While several accounts claimed that

the snipers, seen at a distance, were wearing police uniforms, they also describe the shooters as "dressed all in black, their faces hidden by balaclavas" (*The Independent* [London], 21 February). But that description also fits many of the fascists and rightist nationalists who were among the hard-core Maidan occupiers.

Yanukovich insists he gave no order to fire on the protesters. Several police officials also say no such order was given, and that no rifles were issued to the police. Instead there are numerous photos and video of police with only shields and riot clubs being overpowered by demonstrators tossing firebombs and firing explosive devices. And there is the question of *cui bono*, who benefits? Why would regime supporters single out women, bystanders and medics as targets, which would only inflame protesters and set public opinion against the government? Blogger Dmitry Orlov summed up these incongruities in a March 1 posting, "Reichstag Fire in Kiev," noting the parallel to the February 1933 event, blamed on the Communists but likely carried out by the fascists, which sent Nazi vote totals soaring and sealed Hitler's assumption of power.

The London *Guardian* (21 February) quoted Dr. Olga Bohomolets saying, "What is happening right now in Ukraine is criminal and anti-human. All the people killed here had no guns or arms." The doctor was the coordinator of the medical units in the Maidan, is the head of Kiev's dermatology and cosmetology institute and was President Viktor Yushchenko's personal physician after his dioxin poisoning in 2004. On February 26, Olga Bohomolets was appointed deputy prime minister for humanitarian issues in the post-coup "government." But several hours later she turned down the job, apparently without explanation. Now we may know part of the reason why.

On March 5, the RT (Russia Today) Internet site posted an article and audio file of a leaked conversation between Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet, who had just returned from Kiev on February 25, and Catherine Ashton, the European Union foreign affairs chief. In that phone call, Paet reports:

"In fact, and what was quite disturbing, the same Olga [Boholomets] told as well that all evidence shows, that the people who were killed by snipers, from both sides, among policemen and people from the streets, that they were the same snipers killing people from both sides.

"She also showed me some photos, and that as a medical doctor she can say it is the same handwriting, the same type of bullets. And it's really disturbing that now the new coalition, that they don't want to investigate what exactly happened. So **that there is now stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers, it was not Yanukovich, but it was somebody from the new coalition.**" [our emphasis]

Paet added that "this already discredits from the very beginning this new coalition." Interestingly, the day before this phone call was leaked, the mayor of Estonia's capital Tallinn, Edgar Savisaar, was quoted in

a local newspaper saying that "the self-proclaimed Ukrainian government was put into power by people with baseball bats," and that "it lacks both credentials and the capacity to solve the crisis in the country."

So here we have the prime minister of one of the Baltic Republics that broke away from the Soviet Union as it was coming apart telling the head of EU foreign policy that the doctor who was in charge of medical teams at the Maidan, who was named deputy prime minister, told him that the same snipers killed people from both sides, and that there is "stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers, it was not Yanukovich, but it was somebody from the new coalition." Naturally, not a word of this was reported in the Western press, at least until now. Yet rather than more and more people "losing their minds," including those in a position to know and with no reason to slander the occupiers, there is **more and more reason to suspect that the bulk of the killings were carried out by provocateurs from the Maidan.** ■

ADDENDUM: On April 10, the "Monitor" program of investigative journalism on the West German ARD television network broadcast an extensive story under the title: "Todesschüsse in Kiev: Wer ist für das Blutbad der Maidan verantwortlich?" (Deadly Fire in Kiev: Who Is Responsible for the Bloodbath on the Maidan?) The journalists (Stephan Stuchlik, Olga Sviridenko and Philipp Jahn) spoke with numerous witnesses, obtained audio tapes of the Berkut riot police communications and visited the site from which most of the shots were fired: *Hotel Ukraina*, which was the headquarters of the protesters, and particular the fascist groups leading the action squads in the Maidan.

Their account definitively proves that the claim by the Ukrainian junta that seized power in a coup d'état four days later, and by Western governments and media, that the snipers were from elite units of police under Yanukovich's command is a lie. The official Ukrainian investigation was led by the attorney general, who is a member of the fascist Svoboda party, who blamed the ousted president. However, a high-ranking member of the investigating commission told the ARD reporters that his own research contradicted this claim. Lawyers for the victims complain that they have been given no documentation by the government.

Videos show demonstrators who were moving toward government buildings being hit from behind. Demonstrators said shots came from the 8th or 9th floor of the *Ukrainia*. This was confirmed by an investigator from the trajectory of bullets that hit trees. A doctor who treated the wounded said that all the bullets were of the same calibre. Russian TV showed scenes of right-wing snipers at the windows of the hotel. On the police radio, voices ask who is that shooting from the *Hotel Ukraina*, and from a yellow building and a cinema. Voices answer, "It's not us, we don't shoot on unarmed people."

Some time later, the audio taken from the police radio was removed by ARD without explanation. But copies remain.

Ukraine's Revolutionary History

From the moment it took power in Petrograd in November 1917, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky insisted that workers revolution in the Russian Empire could only be secured by extending it westward to the imperialist centers of Europe and throughout the world. Seizing political power 1923-24, the conservative Stalinist bureaucracy came up with the anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country” to justify its own privileged position and parasitic rule. Three-quarters of a century after Red October, this illusion was shattered as the Soviet degenerated workers state came apart at the national seams and collapsed under the hammer blows of imperialism. Counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc was led by the imperialists and their agents, but the lack of massive working-class resistance was due to the destruction of revolutionary socialist consciousness by Stalinism.

Nowhere was this more true than in Ukraine. From the outset, the Bolsheviks supported Ukraine's right to national self-determination, while steadfastly fighting counterrevolution. When the bourgeois nationalist Rada took power in Kiev in December 1917, Lenin sent a telegram saying (a) that the Soviet power recognized the Ukrainian republic “and its right to secede from Russia,” and (b) giving the Rada 48 hours to break from the counterrevolutionary Whites under tsarist general Kaledin or face a “state of open war with Soviet power in Russia and the Ukraine.” During the Civil War, Red Army chief Trotsky in his November 1919 order of the day calling for a Soviet Ukraine countered Great Russian chauvinism, insisting:

“The Ukraine is the land of the Ukrainian workers and working peasants. They alone have the right to rule in

the Ukraine, to govern it and to build a new life in it... Keep this firmly in mind: your task is not to conquer the Ukraine but to liberate it.”

In a multi-sided war against Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists led by Petlyura, tsarist White Guards, the German Army and its satrap Hetman Skoropadskiy, and the anarchist peasant army of Makhno, the Bolsheviks prevailed in good part because of their internationalism. They were able to unite the two communist parties, the largely Ukrainian UKP and the heavily Russian KP(b)U, with the left Social Revolutionary/left-nationalist Borotba group. After initially being pushed out by the Whites, the Red Army returned under Ukrainian Jewish general Iona Yakir, whose command included a unit of Chinese immigrant laborers who volunteered to fight the exploiters. The Bolshevik Kiev government was led initially by the Ukrainian left Communist Georgy Pyatakov and then by the Bulgarian-Romanian revolutionary Christian Rakovsky.

The Communists energetically carried forward a policy of “Ukrainization,” fostering Ukrainian culture and language which had been suppressed under tsarism. (This has nothing in common with post-1992 bourgeois policies directed against Russian-speaking Ukrainians.) But in part because of this internationalist heritage, Stalin's anti-Communist purges hit the Ukrainian Party particularly hard. They began with the Borotbists and went on to include Left Oppositionists and even loyal Stalinists. All were executed – Pyatakov, Rakovsky, Yakir and 80 out of 83 members of the UKP's central committee “liquidated” while Stalin's lieutenant Nikita Khrushchev presided. And in August 1940, the greatest Ukrainian communist revolutionary of all, Leon Trotsky, was assassinated by a Stalinist agent.

Meanwhile, Stalinist bureaucratic



Ukrainian Jewish Red Army general Iona Yakir

zigzags led from a policy of enriching the kulaks to forced collectivization of agriculture centered on the Ukraine, traditionally the breadbasket of Russia, leaving over 3 million dead in the ensuing famine. Then in World War II, Stalin resorted to forced transfers of almost 200,000 Crimean Tatars to Central Asia on charges of collaborating with the Nazi invaders. After the war, Poles in western Ukraine were pushed out to resettle in lands to the west seized from Germans, who were likewise expelled en masse. Meanwhile, the Banderaite terrorists of the UPA joined the Nazi SS in massacring Jews and later carried out pogroms against Poles as part of a drive for an ethnically homogenous Ukraine. These forcible population transfers followed the deadly logic of nationalism, which we see again today. ■

to try to build a ‘second front’ against the government as well as the far-right. This should be done from outside of Maidan, not from inside it.” A statement after the overthrow of Yanukovich (“Fifty Shades of Brown,” February 24) notes that “New dictators hasten to take the place of the Party of Regions,” that “in order to stay in power, Yulia Tymoshenko's team will have to appease the far rightists,” which it has already done. With the prosecutor's office in the hands of Svoboda and the police controlled by the Right Sector, both of which have had connections to the security forces in the past, the AWU spokesman expects “violence against the left or racist attacks” tolerated (or sponsored) by the new regime.

So unlike many Maidan enthusiasts, the AWU is not blind to the dangers staring it in the face. They also resist the “patriotic” fervor against Russian intervention in Crimea, while calling for respecting the Tatar minority. Yet they sign joint statements with pro-Maidan groups, and do not present a revolutionary program to bring down the new rulers (or even refer to the seizure of power as a coup) nor for working-class struggle against all the oligarchs. And as “revolutionary” syndicalists, AWU does not call for the necessary *political* instrument to lead that fight, a revolutionary workers party built on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, for international socialist revolution. As a result, it can only be reactive at best, prevented by the limitations of its own program from providing leadership to the masses of working people who desperately need it.

In contrast to the social-democratic and anarchist groups that unsuccessfully sought to join the rightist-dominated Maidan, the leftist Borotba (Struggle) Union has denounced the putschist regime and before that declared (statement, January 27) that the mobilizations were being led by oligarchs, ultra-nationalists/fascists and Western-financed NGOs while outraged citizens were being used as pawns; that a Maidan victory would be a reactionary turn to the right and an even more authoritarian regime; but that leftists could not support the oligarchic Yanukovich government. Since the coup, Borotba has organized an Anti-fascist Resistance Center, supporting self-determination for Crimea as well as eastern and southeastern regions which are holding referendums on autonomy, at the same time as it opposes “fratricidal war.”

Borotba defines itself as revolutionary Marxist, anti-capitalist and anti-fascist, standing for internationalism, gender equality, a “socialist alternative” and “revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system.” It was formed in 2011 as a fusion of the KPU youth,

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a paramilitary National Guard. And now a March 7 “Left Opposition” statement denounces “Russian aggression in Crimea,” which it claims is “patently imperialistic” – despite strong support from the local Russian-speaking population (labeled “bandit office holders who have become separatists”) – and “aimed against the revolutionary republic” (sic!) At bottom the “Left Opposition” are vulgar Ukrainian nationalists.

Even more blatant are several articles by Russian socialist Ilya Budraitskis, a veteran con artist⁴ and one-time Moscow leader of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), who specializes in peddling his wares to Western left and academic audiences. Back in December, Budraitskis wrote an article declaring the Maidan mobilization a “revolution,” even though if victorious it would lead to “a coalition government of rightists and ultrarightists,” and counseled Ukrainian leftists to embrace “progressive patriotism”! In a subsequent piece, “Is a ‘Left Sector’ Possible?” Budraitskis criticizes local leftists for being too squeamish about embracing the rightist-led protests. His praise of the “direct democracy” in the Maidan is grotesque: as one might expect from a move-

ment dominated by fascists, there was *no* democratic decision-making.

One of the most illuminating and lucid accounts of the situation in Ukraine comes from an extended interview with a supporter of the revolutionary syndicalist Autonomous Workers Union (AWU) of Kiev on “Maidan and Its Contradictions” (20 February). Denis of the AWU notes that “‘Europe’ was never the main aim of the protesters. Anti-government and anti-Russian sentiments were much stronger,” and the far right groups “now openly state that they don't care about the EU.” For anyone operating under the illusion that Maidan was not controlled by the rightists, he reports that:

“Another part of the left repetitively tried to join the movement, even after they were repetitively kicked out of it. Some of the ‘euro-enthusiastic’ leftists came to Maidan in November with red flag (instead of blue of the EU), with banners for free healthcare and education, and with feminist slogans. They were brutally attacked by Nazis. Then there was an episode when the far-right attacked the tent of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine near the Maidan... A mob of Nazis has broken ribs of the trade union activists, tore their tent with knives and stolen their property. The victims hadn't been doing anything ‘leftist’ per se, but they were members of the left movement, known to their political adversaries, and that was enough.”

There was even a group of supposed anarchists with reactionary, anti-woman, xenophobic positions who tried to unite with the Nazis and threw firebombs at the police together:

“A week ago they, together with some actual leftists who wanted to ‘act,’ decided to form an ‘anarchist sotnia’ [hundred, or centuria] in the Maidan self-defence. In order to do that they were prepared to give an oath to Andriy Parubiy [the fascist-nationalist commander of the storm troops]. But when they formed their ranks to do this, they were met by approximately 150 Svoboda fighters with baseball bats and axes. The fascists accused them of being racially impure and politically irrelevant and forced them out of Maidan.”

After recounting these incidents, Denis of the AWU concludes: “The most reasonable strategy for the left ... is



Borotba held banner honoring Red Army commanders at rally in Donetsk, February 23.

⁴ See our article, “A Band of Political Impostors and Swindlers in Ukraine,” *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003.



Red Army commander Leon Trotsky speaking with a young soldier during the Civil War.

trade-union youth, a Che Guevara youth group and others. Its has a minimum-maximum program characteristic of Stalinists (and pre-World War I social democrats). It is politically eclectic, epitomized in a banner of “legendary Red commanders” from Ukraine, unfurled at a rally in Donetsk on February 23, Soviet Army Day, depicting Leon Trotsky, the founder of the Red Army, next to Kliment Voroshilov, who as Stalin’s henchman played a key role in the bloody “anti-Trotskyite” purges, including signing at least 185 execution lists and denouncing fellow officers!

These are not just historical questions, but directly intersect burning issues in the present historic crisis in Ukraine. While Borotba has participated in important actions such as defending the Lenin statue in Kharkiv and has confronted Russian chauvinists, its *political program* in this situation bordering on civil war is purely reformist. Its Communiqué No. 3 (26 February), titled “Ukraine On the Brink of Fascist Dictatorship,” calls to guarantee equal rights for all; stop commercialization of health care and education; institute public control over prices for public utilities, essential commodities and public transport; ensure full compliance with labor laws; nationalize the largest companies and institute workers control in state enterprises; eliminate offshore schemes, etc. *Nice, but none of this would stop the fascist/oligarchic regime in Kiev.*

This program corresponds to the social-democratic “minimum program” and the Stalinist “stagist” conception, in which an “anti-fascist” (or anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, etc.) stage based on bourgeois democracy must precede the struggle for socialist revolution. Yet fascism becomes a mass phenomenon precisely when key sectors of the bourgeoisie come to the conclusion that democratic mechanisms are no longer adequate to preserve its class rule in the face of economic catastrophe or the threat of revolution, and so they unleash mobs of enraged petty-bourgeois to do their dirty work. Neither in Austria and Germany nor in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s was it possible to stop the fascists with bourgeois-democratic means. To smash the fascist threat it was necessary to mobilize workers in struggle for socialist revolution.

It might be objected that Ukrainian workers are not ready to launch a socialist revolution. Surely not, their consciousness having been destroyed by decades of Stalinist class collaboration and perversion of Marxism. It is precisely in such situations that the Trotskyist *transitional program* is key to serve as a “bridge” between the

present consciousness of the working class and the conquest of power by the proletariat. In the face of the squads of fascist thugs who have been dispatched from Maidan to Kiev, and have popped up in eastern Ukraine, it is necessary to form anti-fascist *workers militias*

rooted in the factories, mines and unions. The militias that have appeared in places like Luhansk and elsewhere do not have a *class* character, which is vital to mobilizing workers’ power and ensuring *internationalist* defense of *all* ethnic, religious and national groups.

To recover the robber barons’ ill-gotten gains and counter the Kiev rulers’ appointments of well-known oligarchs as regional governors, calls for nationalization are wholly inadequate: that would simply place control in the hands of whoever is running the Ukrainian capitalist state. Instead there should be a call for workers to *seize the plants of all* the oligarchs and capitalists and institute *workers control*. This would buttress *worker/peasant/neighborhood committees to control prices and ensure supplies* of food and other necessities, and facilitate the establishment of *soldiers councils* to win over key sections of the battered military ranks and ensure arming of the militias. It would also point the way to *workers councils* (soviets) that could be the basis for a *workers government to expropriate* the oligarchs and *overthrow capitalist rule* altogether.

What’s needed is to organize *class* struggle against Ukraine’s predatory capitalist rulers and their imperialist backers – the forces that have condemned the population to penury while they wallow in luxury, and which would now impose the dictates of Brussels bureaucrats, New York bankers and the International Monetary Fund. This would enable overcoming hostilities between east and west, between Ukrainian- and Russian-speakers, that have kept the masses divided. Achieving even some transitional demands would set the stage for a protracted fight for power, and even if unsuccessful in the short run an internationalist struggle for such objectives would point the way forward.

The workers of Ukraine have power. The aircraft and tank plants of Kharkiv, the steel mills and coal mines of Donetsk, locomotive works of Luhansk, auto and truck assembly plants of Zaporizhia and Kremenchuk, the bus manufacturing plant of Lviv and heavy industrial plants of Dnipropetrovsk are bastions of proletarian power. If those workers joined in class struggle they could make quick work of bosses who accumulate billions off their labor, swearing devotion to Ukraine while stashing their wealth in Cyprus banks and buying up London real estate. What’s key is leadership, and that requires a revolutionary workers party built on the *internationalist*

program of Lenin and Trotsky, which in 1917-21 enabled the Bolsheviks to overcome far more powerful enemies than some fascist bands and flabby “oligarchs” who will flee as quickly as Yanukovich if their wage slaves revolt.

But that struggle must begin now, before it’s too late. Ukraine is not yet a fascist dictatorship, although getting their hands on state power will greatly strengthen the neo-Nazis and ultra-nationalists. To overcome appeals to Ukrainian nationalism, it is necessary to assiduously defend the democratic, national and linguistic rights of all sectors of the population. As well, such a revolutionary, working-class struggle against fascism requires close collaboration with the workers of Russia and East and West Europe. A free and independent Ukrainian Soviet Republic as envisaged by Trotsky can only be built under the watchword, “Workers of the world unite!” ■

Odessa...

continued from page 12

of the building,” and repeats the fiction that “it is still unclear which factor contributed the most to the fire, which burned some and suffocated others to death.” Unclear? Only to the willfully blind.

The AWU doesn’t mention the large numbers of armed fascists in organized fighting squads, which is amply attested to in other accounts and video footage. What is behind this pronounced “pro-Maidan” tilt? A main motivation is evidently to attack the leftist Borotba group and to get “any left or anarchist organization in the world to sever any ties ... with this organization.” The AWU attacks Borotba for having been present among the defenders of the Trade Union House – hardly a crime! – neglecting to mention that Borotba’s comrades and supporters were badly beaten and two of them killed. To justify its shameful position, the AWU piously laments that “proletarians are busy fighting each other for the interests of various bourgeois cliques.”

The same theme is reflected in a similarly titled commentary by the International Socialist Organization in the U.S., “The Tragedy in Odessa” (13 May). “There were undoubtedly fascists involved in the worst of the attacks, and the police clearly played a role,” the ISO avers, albeit not mentioning which side the fascists were on or what the role of the police was. It points a finger at “nationalism, both Ukrainian and Russian,” and says that “the ultimate provocateurs of violence and division across Ukraine ... are the competing blocs of imperialists and oligarchs.” But the ISO is particularly

exercised against “Russian imperialism” which it accuses of “expanding into eastern Ukraine, having already seized Crimea.”²

This hand-wringing over the Odessa “tragedy” and posing a supposed equivalence between both sides – pro- and anti-Maidan, Ukrainian and Russian nationalism – is a *cynical cover up for a fascist pogrom*. There is no equivalence: the “pro-Russian” or “anti-Maidan” protesters are resisting the attack by an imperialist-backed, Ukrainian nationalist and fascist junta that took power in a coup d’état and is now slaughtering Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the south and east. Intervention by the Kiev regime or its Nazi attack dogs in Odessa is intended to subject the population of this culturally Russian city. Resistance to it is just. The ISO claims: “Opposition to Russian imperialism does not mean support for Western neoliberalism, and it is not a surrender to fascism.” Actually, *the ISO policy is support for Western imperialism and excusing fascism*.

Even more explicit is “A Socialist Eye-Witness in Odessa” (6 May) which appeared on the web site of the “Left Opposition” group in Ukraine and has been reproduced by several leftist sites in the West. “Who were the culprits in the Odessa tragedy? For me, the answer is clear – Russian fascists and the police,” writes “eye-witness” Serhiy. The author, it turns out, was hardly a neutral observer but worked with the masked Maidan activists. He then repeats the well-worn lie: “No-one knows who set the House of Trade Unions on fire: the Molotov cocktails were flying from both sides.” Except the gasoline bombs were thrown *into* the building, igniting the deadly blaze. And he ends by blaming the pro-Russian protesters: “The death of your supporters on Kulikovo is entirely on your conscience.”

Were there reactionaries among the anti-Maidan protesters? No doubt. Proletarian internationalists would not make common cause with Cossacks and Russian chauvinists who want to recreate the tsarist empire. But faced with an assault by murderous Ukrainian-nationalist thugs and neo-Nazi stormtroopers, sent by the Kiev junta backed by U.S. and European imperialism, we defend those who resisted and vow to avenge those who died in this pogrom with workers revolution. The anarcho-syndicalist and “socialist” apologists for fascist terror in Ukraine should be reviled by honest revolutionaries and class-conscious workers the world over. ■

² See “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism,’” at www.internationalist.org.



Unarmed civilians block National Guard armored personnel carrier in Kramatorsk, May 2. Government forces killed 10.

CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS

VOTE NO!

On Mike Mulgrew's Sucker-Bait Contract

The following leaflet by Class Struggle Education Workers, an opposition tendency in New York City education unions (United Federation of Teachers and Professional Staff Congress), was distributed at the May 7 UFT Delegate Assembly. In the membership vote, the contract was approved by a margin of about 3 to 1.

Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT

The Romans had a phrase for it: "caveat emptor," buyer beware. In New York we call it *sucker bait*. Here's what Mike Mulgrew and the UFT leadership are selling as a "victory" and a "contract for education":

- A "wage hike" that isn't, amounting to no more than the rate of inflation.
- A decade delay in retro pay, with no interest.
- Throwing ATRs under the bus, with fast-track termination on vague grounds of "problematic behavior."
- Acceptance of teacher evals including student scores on junk science standardized tests.
- Mysterious health care "savings" totaling several billion dollars, coming from where?
- Sneaking in "merit pay," undermining solidarity and giving thousands of dollars extra to "ambassador," "master" and "model" teachers.
- Eliminating union contract protections for up to 200 schools, including longer school days and school year with no mention of wage increase.
- Replacing tutorial time for helping students with endless PD to push Common Core.

Plus this proposed contract has **nothing to close the salary gap for lower-paid newer teachers; nothing for the underpaid, overworked paraprofessionals; and nothing to redress the deliberate reduction of the number of African American, Latino and Asian educators.**

In the disastrous 2005 contract, then UFT president Randi Weingarten pushed through the elimination of seniority transfer rights, creating the horror show of a ballooning Absent Teacher Reserve, and other givebacks by producing a substantial pay raise. This time, Mike Mulgrew and the Unity Caucus bureaucrats are again undercutting and eliminating job protections with the *illusion* of salary hikes and retro pay years down the road: "pie in the sky in the sweet bye and bye," as the Wobblies used to say. Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) calls on delegates, teachers and paras to **DECISIVELY VOTE DOWN THIS GIVEBACK CONTRACT.**

The Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) reform caucus calls on UFT leaders to "go back to the bargaining table." That will produce nothing. When the



Why are they laughing? From left: Mayor Bill de Blasio, UFT president Michael Mulgrew and NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña announcing tentative contract between the union and the city, May 2.

membership voted down the 1995 contract, the UFT tops came back a year later with substantially the same terms. We should demand an *elected negotiating committee* to carry out transparent bargaining in full view of the membership rather than the bureaucracy's closed-door wheeling and dealing as it sells out our union gains. And when Mulgrew & Co. try to scare the ranks with the "S word," the CSEW calls for the UFT to begin *serious preparations to strike together with NYC transit and other public workers in defiance of the New York no-strike Taylor Law.*

Probably the biggest betrayal in this travesty of a contract is *selling out UFTers consigned to the Absent Teacher Reserve.* We all know that these are not "bad teachers" as the media portray them. Some of the most dedicated and accomplished educators are ATRs, placed there because their schools or programs were closed, or because administrators couldn't make trumped-up charges against them stick. Principals don't hire them because they are more expensive, and they know their rights. Randi Weingarten said the DOE would have to fire ATRs "over my dead body." Mulgrew has made similar statements. At the January Delegate Assembly, in response to a challenge from Marjorie Stamberg, a delegate from District 79 and supporter of CSEW, Mulgrew said the union was not selling out the ATRs. Now he is doing just that.

The Memorandum of Understanding released yesterday stipulates that ATRs will be sent for interviews when vacancies open up in their license area. But schools chancellor Carmen Fariña says principals can send them back to the ATR pool the next day if they don't like them. Under the MoU, ATRs can be disciplined or terminated for "behavior that is inconsistent with the expectations established for professionals working in schools." What

are these "expectations," who established them? Two citations in two years will trigger that process. Teachers will then be tried in "expedited" 3020a hearings within 20 days of charges being filed. This is a blatant undermining of their tenure rights. And the "buyout" is a sick joke, with one week's severance pay for teachers with up to three years on the job!

Remember, if you're not an ATR today, you could be tomorrow. *The CSEW demands that seniority transfer rights be reestablished and full-time positions be offered to all ATRs who want one.*

Then there is the *retro pay* and *pay hike hoax.* Only those who retired from 2009 to date, or who retire by 30 June 2015, will get a lump sum. Everyone else will have to wait until 2020 to get all their back pay, and those who resign get nothing. The "salary increase" is 18% over nine years? Do the math: $18 \div 9 = 2\%$ a year. Average annual increase of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for the metropolitan New York area from 2009 to 2013 = 2%. You don't need to pass the Regents Exam (which we doubt the members of the NY Board of Regents could do) to know that works out to *no real wage increase at all.* Zero, zip, nada, goose eggs. And if inflation picks up just a little bit, it amounts to a *wage cut.* You know that any salary schedule that takes an accountant to figure out is a scam. No thanks, Mike. *Fuggedaboutit!*

No doubt there will be plenty to say about the *mystery health care "savings,"* but so far nobody's talking. The *merit pay for principals' pets* will create animosity among teachers. The principal will have sole discretion in selecting those who get between \$7,500 and \$20,000. A joint DOE-UFT committee can nominate, but selection will be by the principal alone, and can't be grieved. The Memorandum has pages and pages of detailed rules and

measures of student learning (MOSL), of "growth model conversion charts," linked and group measures and similar hocus pocus. The bottom line is that under this contract, the *UFT will agree to teacher evaluations based on student test scores,* a union-busting measure to get around seniority, which has no pedagogical justification and will hurt students in poor and oppressed communities.

There are plenty of clauses that are plain ridiculous, like the "Central Paperwork Committee (the 'Central Committee')"! But a particularly ominous provision is the "Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE)." You know right off the bat that anything with the word "excellence" in it is a capitulation to the Bill Gates, Wal-Mart and Wall Street hedge fund billionaire education "reformers." This is an attempt to turn public schools into de facto charters minus the corporate ties, with almost no job protections. You can get an idea of what this will look like in the UFT's contract with the Green Dot charters, with its "un-timed 'Professional Day'" requiring teachers to stay late, and a longer school year. But at least they got a 14% pay increase. Teachers in the 200 schools in this plan will get nothing.

This deal is typical for the Weingarten-Mulgrew bureaucracy. Give the bosses most of the takebacks they are demanding, and then proclaim it a victory because the union didn't give back everything. Charter schools, closing schools, merit pay, elimination of seniority, Common Core, teacher evals based on student test scores, you name it, the AFT/UFT tops have agreed to all in one form or another. Like the rest of the union bureaucracy – the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class" – they are beholden to the Democratic Party, which is leading the war on public education and teachers unions, from Barack Obama to Andrew Cuomo. Many had illusions in Bill De Blasio, while the CSEW warned this liberal Democrat would be "Bloomberg Lite." Sure enough, De Blasio approved almost all the co-locations, and has done a complete 180° on charters.

The fight over this contract is a battle in a wider war. In order to *defeat* the bipartisan onslaught of capital against the rights of the poor, oppressed and working people, in order to defend unions and fundamental democratic rights such as free, equal, quality, integrated public education for all, it is necessary to break with the Democratic, Republican and all capitalist parties and build a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government. ■

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¡Acciones obreras para detener las deportaciones! ¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!

El volante que publicamos a continuación fue emitido por el Grupo Internacionalista para convocar a un contingente internacionalista en la marcha del Primero de Mayo de 2014 en la ciudad de Nueva York.

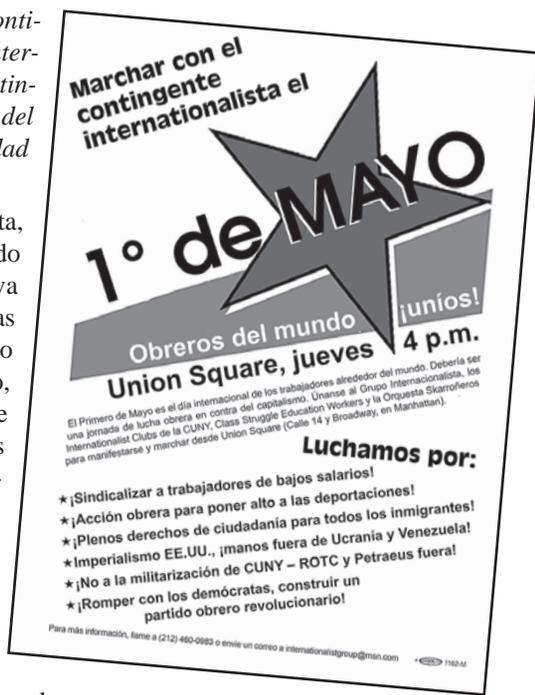
¡La reforma migratoria está muerta, al menos por el momento. Todo mundo lo sabe. Cualquier acción legislativa previsible sobre cuestiones migratorias será brutalmente antiinmigrante. Y eso no sólo debido al bloqueo republicano, como sostienen muchos grupos de presión a favor de los derechos de los migrantes. Los dos partidos el capitalismo norteamericano representan los intereses de los patrones que se benefician de que los trabajadores tengan salarios bajos y carezcan de derechos. Demócratas y republicanos son enemigos de los inmigrantes. Toda lucha real a favor de los derechos de los inmigrantes debe oponerse a los partidos del capital.

Para la inmensa mayoría de los inmigrantes indocumentados, la iniciativa que han presentado los demócratas en el Senado no ofrece ninguna “vía hacia la ciudadanía”. La orden de Obama, Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA – Acción Diferida para los Llegados en la Infancia), únicamente es un limbo y no va a ningún lado. El “DREAM Act” de Nueva York (que no ofrece nada para los jóvenes trabajadores) fue derrotado debido al sabotaje de los demócratas. Además, Obama es el “deportador en jefe”, pues ha expulsado a más de dos millones de inmigrantes indocumentados, 400 mil al año, que son muchos más que Bush.

No obstante, los inmigrantes tienen poder: poder económico. Sectores enteros de la economía norteamericana dependen del trabajo de los inmigrantes: la agricultura, la construcción, los restaurantes, los taxis, lo que queda de la industria del vestido. El Primero de Mayo de 2006 más de un millón de inmigrantes pararon labores. Las plantas empacadoras de carne se vieron obligadas a cerrar. Presionar a los políticos capitalistas es un callejón sin salida. Los trabajadores – todos los trabajadores – debemos usar nuestro poder para bloquear la ofensiva antiinmigrante.

En la época de la Guerra Civil norteamericana, Karl Marx escribió que “El trabajador de piel blanca no podrá emanciparse allí donde se hierra al trabajador de piel negra”. Hoy en día, los trabajadores nacidos en EE.UU. no pueden defender sus intereses si los millones de trabajadores inmigrantes están privados de derechos iguales. Llamamos a acciones proletarias en todos los niveles, desde exigir que las localidades dejen de cooperar con la migra, hasta la realización de movilizaciones de masas para detener las deportaciones.

Este Primero de Mayo habrá más llamados desesperanzados para que se realice una reforma legislativa para los inmigrantes. Grupos izquierdistas llaman por la “legalización”, lo que incluye la emisión de licencias de conducir (para apoyar a la policía), pero no la ciudadanía, así como por programas de “trabajadores huéspedes” que no son otra cosa que programas para la servidumbre por contrato. Los “Dreamers” (soñadores) están



de acuerdo con el plan republicano que les daría una oportunidad para conseguir la ciudadanía, pero no a sus padres.

Nuestra posición es simple: todo aquel que esté aquí debe tener el derecho a quearse, con iguales derechos que todos los demás. La defensa de los inmigrantes también está inextricablemente atada a la lucha en contra del imperialismo: en toda guerra de importancia que EE.UU. ha librado a lo largo del último siglo, los inmigrantes han sido hostigados al ser estigmatizados como el “enemigo interno”. La presencia de un criminal de guerra en la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York es una amenaza para todos. Estudiantes, profesores, inmigrantes y trabajadores exigen: ¡Que se largue David (“Escuadrones de la muerte”) Petraeus!

A pesar de las solicitudes que le hacen muchos grupos a favor de los derechos de los migrantes, Obama no detendrá jamás las deportaciones. Es nuestro turno. Únete al contingente internacionalista el Primero de Mayo para exigir:

¡Sindicalizar a los trabajadores de bajos salarios!
¡Acciones obreras para detener las deportaciones!

¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!

Imperialismo norteamericano: ¡manos fuera de Siria, Ucrania y Venezuela!

¡No a la militarización de CUNY – ROTC y Petraeus, fuera!

¡Abajo demócratas y republicanos!
¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario! ■

Bajos salarios...

viene de la página 24

clases medias del movimiento Ocupar parezcan no más que un petardo. La pregunta no es si estallará o no una revuelta de los trabajadores, sino cuál será su resultado. ¿Va a minarse su energía mediante acciones simbólicas? ¿Habrá un acuerdo podrido que deje intacta la esclavitud a bajos salarios? La voluntad de luchar existe. El resultado depende de dos elementos: la dirección y el programa.

La cuestión central es la del poder. La oposición a subir el salario mínimo no es encabezada por delis familiares ni por la bodega de la esquina, sino que viene de empresas multimillonarias como McDonald's

y Walmart. Las ganancias estratoféricas de estos megacapitalistas dependen de salarios brutalmente bajos. Jamás van a ser derrotados por sindicalistas vendidos cuya divisa es la colaboración de clases. Para que los trabajadores con bajos salarios logren victorias de verdad es necesario forjar una dirección basada en un programa de inquebrantable lucha de clases.

Las pancartas afuera del restaurante Wendy's de la calle Fulton en Brooklyn el pasado 5 de diciembre decían “Mantengámonos juntos por \$15 y un sindicato”. La respuesta de Wendy's fue cerrar la tienda. A pesar de toda la atención mediática y de las esperanzas incitadas por las protestas de los trabajadores con salarios bajos, éstas no han sindicalizado un solo establecimiento. ¿Por qué no? Porque el propósito de los burócratas sindicales y de los “socialistas” reformistas que van a su cola es contener la lucha de clases y usar esto como moneda de cambio para ganar influencia política dentro del partido gobernante del racista capitalismo estadounidense, el Partido Demócrata.

El hecho es que los burócratas sindicales no están intentando sindicalizar a los trabajadores en las industrias donde prevalecen los salarios bajos. Incluso lo dicen. El 29 de mayo de 2013, la Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) y su patrocinador, el Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), amenazados mediante un juicio que Walmart inició en su contra, convocaron a desmontar piquetes durante 60 días y prometieron categóricamente a la Junta Federal de Relaciones Laborales (el National Labor Relations Board) que no estaban intentando sindicalizar a los trabajadores de Walmart y que no pretendían hacerlo. Lo único que quieren es mantener a Walmart fuera de los centros urbanos.

Entretanto, a pesar de los millones de dólares provenientes de cuotas de sus miembros que han gastado en el proyecto, la burocracia del Service Employees International Union detrás de la campaña “Fast Food Forward” se limita a realizar ardiditos publicitarios baratos en los que un puñado de trabajadores son usados como elementos de utilería para que políticos del Partido Demócrata promuevan sus inmerecidas

reputaciones como “amigos” de los trabajadores. Pero millones de trabajadores que reciben bajos salarios están hartos de promesas vacías, quieren resultados verdaderos y tienen toda la valentía y la iniciativa que la lucha requiere.

Una lucha clasista en contra de los salarios de pobreza buscaría construir sindicatos combativos, comenzando con asambleas de los trabajadores de bajos salarios. Apelaría a la clase obrera para que apoyara los piquetes, y ahí donde hubiera suficiente apoyo entre los trabajadores, pararía el trabajo en establecimientos particulares (especialmente de cadenas nacionales) que no paguen al menos 15 dólares la hora. Al oponerse a los burócratas vendidos, insistiría en realizar acciones masivas e independientes del Partido Demócrata y de los demás partidos y políticos capitalistas, que no son más que sirvientes de los patrones y jefes de los policías rompehuelgas y racistas.

Una ofensiva clasista no debería limitarse a estrechas reivindicaciones económicas por “pan y mantequilla”. Al reconocer que la mayoría de los trabajadores con salarios bajos son mujeres, lucharía por guarderías gratuitas disponibles las 24 horas. En particular, dado que un alto porcentaje de los trabajadores con salarios bajos son inmigrantes indocumentados, exigiría plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes. Bien consciente de que los jóvenes trabajadores afroamericanos son blanco del terror policíaco desde el instante en que salen a la calle, llamaría por la movilización obrera en contra de la represión racista. Y se opondría a la campaña guerrillista.

Sobre todo, los trabajadores debemos luchar por la independencia política con respecto a los partidos de los patrones, para comenzar a construir ya un partido obrero, no sólo para defendernos del ataque capitalista, sino para dirigir una contraofensiva por el establecimiento de un gobierno obrero que pueda acabar con la moderna esclavitud asalariada e inicie la obra de una revolución socialista internacional. \$15 no es suficiente. ¡Los trabajadores con bajos salarios, y todos los trabajadores, necesitamos un aumento enorme, sindicatos combativos y un partido obrero revolucionario! ■

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¡No se dejen engañar por las promesas de campaña de los demócratas!

¡Luchar contra la esclavitud de bajos salarios! ¡Movilizar el poder obrero!

¿Cuál “recuperación económica”? ¿La ha notado en su sueldo últimamente? Las rentas suben –igual que la comida, el transporte y todo lo demás– y los salarios bajan. Los trabajos mejor pagados están siendo remplazados con trabajos mal pagados. A pesar de las mentirosas estadísticas del gobierno, todavía hay desempleo masivo. La verdad es que estamos ya en el sexto año de una crisis económica capitalista a la que no se le ve el fin. Pero los trabajadores no van a aguantar indefinidamente: ya viene un estallido de lucha de clases.

¿“Recesión”? Para nada. Una recesión es una caída cíclica. Lo que hay es una *depresión*: la economía desplomó y sigue abajo. Ciertamente, los patrones están lucrando a manos llenas, y los trabajadores pagamos el precio –especialmente los de bajos salarios. La lucha contra los salarios de pobreza debe ser una lucha de todos los trabajadores. Y debe librarse en primer lugar en contra del Partido Demócrata, desde la Casa Blanca hasta los gobiernos de los estados y las ciudades.

La propuesta del presidente Obama de subir el salario mínimo a nivel federal de \$7.25 a \$10.10 es poca cosa. Los republicanos no van a aceptar ni eso, por eso mismo es que los demócratas lo proponen: para ganar votos en las elecciones de este año. Pero hasta los \$10.10 del “Obamasalario” dejarían a los trabajadores sumidos en la po-



Protesta contra los bajos salarios frente a un restaurante McDonald's cerca de Times Square, Nueva York, el 15 de mayo.

Incluso \$15 es un salario de pobreza

breza. Los demócratas no son “amigos de los trabajadores”: al igual que los republicanos, son un partido capitalista que representa los intereses de los patrones que explotan a los

trabajadores de bajos salarios – y a todos los trabajadores.

A lo largo del último año y medio ha habido una oleada de llamados a subir el salario mínimo a \$15 la hora. Protestas en numerosas ciudades en contra de los bajos salarios –que comenzaron en 2012 con las manifestaciones a escala nacional afuera de las tiendas Walmart y con una “huelga” de los trabajadores de la comida rápida en Nueva York en diciembre de ese año– se han sumado a la exigencia de un salario mínimo de \$15. El 1º de junio el concejo de la ciudad de Seattle aprobó subir el salario mínimo local a \$15, pero con un plazo de cuatro a siete años para alcanzar dicho nivel.

Un salario mínimo de \$15 sí sería un aumento y no un insulto, pero aun así seguiría siendo completamente insuficiente. Los trabajadores que ganan salarios bajos corean en las manifestaciones “we can't survive on \$7.25” (no podemos sobrevivir con \$7.25) y exigen un salario mínimo vital. Pero tampoco se puede vivir con \$15 y llegar a fin de mes, sobre todo si se tiene familia. Un trabajador en Seattle tendría que trabajar dos semanas y media a tiempo completo para pagar la renta promedio de un departamento

(\$1,540) – y esto antes de impuestos! En Nueva York, la renta de un departamento de una recámara (\$2,666) tomaría más que lo que se ganaría en un mes!

El hecho es que un salario de \$15 la hora sigue siendo un salario de pobreza. Sería necesario *triplicar el actual salario mínimo a \$25 la hora y más* para siquiera comenzar a brincar el umbral de la pobreza. Pero más allá de los números, los gobernantes van a usar todo truco a su disposición para mantener bajos los salarios (en Nueva York, la esperanza liberal Bill de Blasio habla de un salario mínimo de \$13.33), atrasando los aumentos y cargando los salarios con todo tipo de exenciones como el seguro médico. Apelar a los demócratas es un callejón sin salida: los trabajadores tendremos que usar nuestro poder para *golpear mediante huelgas* a los patrones donde les duele, en el bolsillo.

No obstante, las varias campañas (15 Now, Fight for 15, Fast Food Forward, etc.) se enfocan a presionar a los demócratas. Incluso cuando las dirigen supuestos socialistas, estas campañas son básicamente artilugios electoreros. Las “huelgas” que han convocado son puramente simbólicas: muy pocos de los trabajadores con bajos salarios participan, por una razón bien sencilla: sin protección sindical corren un fuerte riesgo de ser despedidos. Para contrarrestar esto lo que hace falta no es rogar a los “representantes electos”, sino movilizar el *poder* sindical.

Hoy en día se dice a los trabajadores que no tengan la expectativa de un retiro asegurado, un empleo estable ni una vivienda decente y económica. Somos acosados por un agresivo aparato policíaco, armado para una guerra civil, que apresa en sus garras sangrientas a uno de cada tres varones negros en este país y que persigue a los 12 millones de trabajadores inmigrantes indocumentados, rompiendo familias y arrojándolos a campos de concentración en espera de su deportación. Los sindicatos están bajo un ataque constante, a pesar de lo cual siguen encadenados por una burocracia vendida y patriotería que busca encadenar a los trabajadores a “sus” patrones capitalistas.

Presionada bajo esta carga de explotación y opresión, insultada por la brutal desigualdad que socava toda promesa de “democracia”, la clase obrera avanza hacia una explosión que hará que las protestas *sigue en la página 23*

¡Acciones obreras para detener las deportaciones!
¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!



Contingente internacionalista en la marcha del Primero de Mayo de 2014 en Nueva York. Ver la página 23.

**Lucha clasista contra el capitalismo
¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario!**