

DETROIT: General Strike Now!

Auto Bosses Destroyed It, Labor Can Rebuild It!

SEPTEMBER 22—For decades, the auto bosses have waged war against workers and made life hell for the people of Detroit—one of the most segregated and poorest cities in the U.S. Right now, the city's population is on edge and has its eyes sympathetically set on the UAW's next moves. At a basic level, everyone knows that a victorious outcome in this battle against the auto bosses would be a victory for them, too. Municipal services like street lights and garbage collection have been slashed, and whole chunks of the city's infrastructure and housing are completely crumbling. Factories that could provide thousands of jobs stand empty and in ruin, while basic human needs like food, housing, medical care, transportation and education go unfulfilled, all because it is not profitable for the bosses. The UAW strike cannot afford to be limited to just an economic struggle, as Fain is doing. *It must be a battle for all of Detroit and the whole Michigan region!*

The bosses' war against the workers and the oppressed extends well beyond Wayne County—from shuttered auto plants across the Midwest to Dow chemical spills in Midland to drugs and poverty in Saginaw to poisoned water in



WV Photo

Contingent from Louisville Ford plant at UAW strike rally in Detroit, September 15. Strike cannot afford to be limited to economic struggle. To win, it must be organized as a beacon for the whole working class under revolutionary leadership that places black liberation at center of battle.

Flint. The situation is dire and someone needs to fix things. Workers must take matters into their own hands, rebuild the Midwest and make the bosses pay for it. To win this strike, the UAW needs

to organize the masses of Detroit, all Wayne County and beyond on the front lines with them. It is necessary to call on all workers and the black community to *join the UAW in a general strike to end*

tiers, reindustrialize and fight for black liberation. Shut down Motor City!

In order to mobilize the broadest possible forces for a general strike in Detroit, UAW members must elect strike committees to prepare this battle. UAW delegates must be sent to city workers, teachers, health care and other unions to mobilize their workforces to go out. All of Detroit—the unemployed, the unorganized, every union and even small businesses—have an interest in joining this strike and can be mobilized to do so on the basis of a program that actually speaks to their needs. To that aim, we are putting forward the following plan of action to organize this struggle:

- Organize the unorganized, all those who are subcontracted out by the auto bosses must be brought into the UAW
- Organize the unemployed, jobs for all with training and hiring programs that spread the available work among all at no loss in pay
- Fight for the highest union wages for every worker in Detroit, cancel all personal debt
- Fight segregation on and off the job, for integrated low-cost housing and decent living conditions for all
- Rebuild industry under workers' control

• No Tiers

UAW

• Reindustrialization

• Black Liberation!

SEPTEMBER 15—The bosses gutted the auto industry and left the workforce to die. For decades, once major industrial hubs have seen populations plummet and poverty rates soar. Remaining workers live in crumbling cities, working longer shifts in more dangerous conditions, while real wages stagnate and fall. Job loss and deindustrialization destroyed

One Out, All Out!

Midwest metropolises like Detroit and Flint and made life a living hell for their majority-black populations.

Now the UAW contract has expired, and a strike is underway to fight for what UAW president Shawn Fain calls “audacious” demands. He says he wants an end to tiers, restored benefits, a huge pay raise and lots of other things workers desperately need...but he's already backtracking. He lowered the wage demands, and

now has shut down only a few plants. This “strategy” is a dive that weakens the strike, minimizing the impact on the bosses. The question is: What strategy *is necessary to win* and *why* is Fain backing down?

What Fain said he'd fight for sounds good, and if the UAW wins it, it'll be a victory for workers everywhere. But winning the things Fain promised will require a hard battle that strikes at the core of the American economy while the

U.S. ruling class is desperately trying to restore its economic dominance, and the car companies are struggling to compete internationally. The bosses won't give up easily. In this context, the fight to significantly improve workers' living standards must be organized for what it is: a fundamental clash of class interests.

Biden and Trump bicker over EVs in the lead-up to the elections, trying to dupe voters in industrial swing states. Neither will do anything to make things better for workers. Their job is to make sure the bosses can compete by squeezing workers and sending jobs to the “open shop”

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On Liberals, Self-Defense and Racial Polarization

14 June 2023

To *Workers Vanguard* editors:

Note:

HuffPost online had following information that was uncovered by reporters:

Sources used in earlier reporting on Neely's behavior on the train were police sources. Other sources (passengers) contradict these, Neely did not threaten others, did not throw trash or his jacket on passengers, only had a serious meltdown. Penny says his chokehold was not a chokehold, but a restraint for 5 minutes not 15 minutes. The following is a letter I was preparing to *WV* before I came across *HuffPost* info.

* * *

Workers Vanguard supplement 8 June 2023, *Neely No Angel, Penny No Hero* article was a well written article addressing a difficult subject and alarmingly painful incidence. I am sure *WV* readers appreciate it just as much as I did.

But I cannot accept the following in its entirety. Penny was a Marine veteran that was trained to kill, that's what they do. Perhaps his Marine training kicked in. However, I don't think anyone can say this was his intentions. The 15 minute chokehold was not simply excessive, it was deadly. The only verifiable fact here was Neely had a severe emotional mental breakdown that was horrible to witness; everything else is unverifiable. Now let me make this point, *fear is not a sufficient reason* to take a human life. We are not in a war where one is justified to kill first. The question is what did Neely really do to bring on his death in an act of self-defense by the killer?

"Neely was unhinged, *acted in a threatening manner and was said to have thrown trash at passengers.* (my italics)

"Juan Alberto Vazquez caught Neely's death on his phone and reported that Neely had shouted: 'I'm tired already. I don't care if I go to jail and get locked up.

I'm ready to die.' This wasn't a man who was moonwalking on the train and placed in a chokehold out of nowhere by a white racist looking for his next black victim. In the eyes of the passengers that day, Neely was a real-life threat. What would the liberals and fake leftists have them do? Wait until Neely had physically harmed or killed someone—*wait until it was too late?* (my italics) That's exactly what they want: for the proletariat to sacrifice itself in the name of liberal compassion!" These words sound like you are signing off on a preemptive action. This is wrong, but I don't think you really mean this, because these words are so cavalier.

Negrophobia has a long and bloody history in the U.S. going all the way back to black chattel slavery. It is alive and well today. Like the mother of the 9 years old girl who a grown white man neighbor called 911 on saying he sees a *black woman* and is "afraid", said this endangers black youth. I have a friend who jokingly said to me, "We should have one day in the year where every black person calls 911 to say, 'I just saw a white person and I am afraid!'" There is much truth here. Taking a human life because you are afraid works better with black people, not so well with whites. This is the real life effect of negrophobia.

Don C.

WV replies: It's not that you can't accept the article in its entirety. It's that you find the main point of our hard-hitting piece unacceptable. Neely's death was not the result of a racist attack but an act of self-defense that ended in tragedy.

You want the article to state that Neely was mentally ill, check. You want us to write that his death should've never happened, check. So, what's all the static about? Well, when it gets to the nitty-gritty, you would have us say that Penny snuck up behind Neely in the middle of a dance routine and killed him in cold blood, all because he was black—that Neely's death had nothing to do with self-defense and Penny is a racist. Well, that just isn't the case, and this wasn't decided by *WV*. It was decided by the reality of the events that took place and the brutal conditions of life in New York City perpetuated by the capitalist system. There's nothing cavalier about stating plainly the cold, hard facts.

Different passengers who were on the very train car where everything went down say that Neely was threatening them, that he was throwing garbage at them and that Penny along with another man, who wasn't white, intervened to prevent Neely from causing any harm during his mental break. This "preemptive action" is summed up by Juan Alberto Vasquez, who said in an interview that Neely throwing his jacket signaled that "there could be an act of violence here," because those things do happen all the time." One passenger interviewed by a few news outlets said they would testify in Penny's trial that if no one had intervened, Neely would've hurt somebody. But to you, all this is unverifiable—a position that plays well into the program of the anti-racist liberals, who choose to hear and see what they want to hear and see in the service of maintaining the status quo.

Here's another place where you are wrong. It is constant war on the streets

of NYC. Every day, the working masses throughout the boroughs endure cop-infested trains, only to then have to dodge or fight their way out of attacks by lumpen youth or the mentally ill, who are driven to crime by stifling impoverishment. The Neely/Penny situation is in no way unique. The housing crisis, deindustrialization, unemployment, the pandemic and other social catastrophes have led to increased homelessness and crime, much of which intersects the black population. But instead of dealing with reality squarely and providing a program to combat these crises, the anti-racist liberal says that acknowledging this harsh reality is racist or negrophobic. Let's face it, the reason the fake left and the liberals resort to these slanders is to undercut the fight for black liberation by driving a wedge between black people and white workers.

The working masses are told to eat it by the liberals and that their only hope is more cops on the trains. This is suicidal, as the police are in place to terrorize black and Latino youth, workers and the homeless. Other liberals call for more social workers, which cannot possibly make up for a dilapidated health care system and does nothing to challenge capitalism. To the liberal, if workers decide to fight back against someone who is worse off, they're uncompassionate and blamed for all the ills created by this irrational system. This response diverts attention from those actually responsible for social degradation, foments reaction in the class and chips away at the already eroded elementary right of proletarian self-defense.

Ignoring the concerns of the urban working masses (who are the main targets of lumpen crime) and pushing the liberal lie that every negative interaction between a white person and a black person is inherently racist—especially when the backdrop is burnt-out, rat-infested ghetto housing, schools that mimic Riker's Island jail and soaring food prices—will only split the class along racial lines, pushing some into the arms of reaction. That's why the program of anti-racist liberalism, while proclaiming "sensitivity" toward the needs of black people, provides not a damn solution for the working class, black or white. By deeming lumpen crime as something the proletariat should put up with, it bolsters the authority of the right wing. The right wing also provides not a damn solution for the working class, fanning the flames of racial discontent. It promotes vigilantism, telling white workers concerned about lumpen crime to take justice into their own hands.

In your letter, you choose to make the Neely/Penny case simply black and white, literally and figuratively. You flatten out the contradictions and complexities by comparing it to a real instance of racism: a 9-year-old black girl catching lantern flies having the police called on her by a white neighbor who was "afraid." But Neely wasn't a young black child innocently playing in his neighborhood. He was a schizophrenic who was notorious throughout the MTA system for assaulting transit workers and women, as reported by some MTA workers on the Local 100 Fightback Facebook group. Even then, Neely didn't deserve to die. But as Marxists, we believe that everyone has the

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Liberalism: Obstacle to Black Liberation

In a 1933 document, Max Shachtman, then a leader of the Trotskyist movement in the U.S., took aim at liberals who voice support to black liberation while seeking to maintain a ruling class whose most fundamental interests are bound up with black oppression. Against the liberals and reformist left, communists point the only way forward: fuse the fight for black freedom with the struggle of the working class to overthrow capitalist rule.



LENIN



TROTSKY

The liberal wing of the bourgeoisie does not rise to greater heights than outright reaction in the essential aspects of its "solution." The greatest concern of these "friends of the Negro" is to pour cold water on his flaming protests; to console him with soothing phrases in the moments of his anguish and misery, to beseech the Negro to have patience, while they are in turn beseeching the big bourgeoisie to make enough concessions to the black to prevent him from revolting. They insinuate into the mind of the Negro the treacherous idea that nothing is to be gained by flying in the face of prejudices, that the Negro must wait until his oppressors have evolved to a "higher understanding of his problems." They give him significant warnings that the "right people" will not be won to the cause of sweetness and light if the Negro does not behave like a good Christian, bearing his cross with dignity and grace, until those who have burdened him with it relent their unfairness. The best of the liberal friends of the Negro (save the mark!) reveal their fundamental white chauvinism the minute the latter turns toward the revolutionary movement or engages in a genuinely militant struggle which requires that the pretended friends lend their assistance in more concrete form than mere oratory and literature....

The petty bourgeois Socialist party embraces another group which supplies the Negro with assurances, promises, and consolations. In the American Negro question, the hierarchy of the Socialist party is unusually "radical." It refuses to look upon the Negro's problem as something "unique." It will not be diverted from the "straight Socialist" standpoint. As the Negro problem is created by capitalism, it will be solved when capitalism gives way to socialism. In the meantime, the socialists will carry on the same "struggle" for the Negro as they do for the white. The fact that the Negro masses in the United States occupy a *special* position, that they constitute a distinct racial caste of pariahs, is conveniently ignored by the Socialist theoreticians....

The Communists do not endeavor, therefore, to divide the fight for full social and economic equality for the Negro from the general socialist struggle of the proletariat as a whole against the capitalist class. On the contrary, they combine the two, thus distinguishing themselves from the petty bourgeois liberals who demand (in words) the abolition of inequality but want to preserve the capitalist class and its system intact, that is, people who want "equal rights for the Negroes" without the class struggle. The Negro masses will attain social, political and economic equality only by way of the class struggle. Talk of any other way is pure phrase-mongering, conscious or unconscious deception, in other words, petty bourgeois liberalism in the service of the white ruling class.

—Max Shachtman, *Communism and the Negro* (1933)

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Letters Policy

Workers Vanguard welcomes letters from our readers. Opinions expressed in letters do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the *WV* Editorial Board. We reserve the right to respond to letters either at the time of publication or at a later point. We verify the authenticity of letters published in *Workers*

Vanguard; only letters received with contact information will be considered for publication. Letters can be published anonymously if the author so desires. In order to facilitate the printing of letters, which we do not edit, please keep them to 500 words or less. Letters can be sent to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 or emailed to vanguard@tiac.net.

Stephen Bloomer



WV Photo

1947-2022



Our comrade Stephen Bloomer died on November 5, 2022 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. He was a long-time member of the New York City local, working in the Maintenance Department.

He first intersected the Spartacist League/U.S. in the late 1960s while studying engineering at Cornell University. He was then drafted into the army and stationed in Alaska during the Vietnam War, which politicized him. Our call that "All Indochina Must Go Communist!" really struck a chord with him.

In October 1971, beginning shortly before joining, he sent the party several contributions, once writing that the money came from "my first check from the Veterans Administration division of the ruling class." With these contributions, the party was able to set up its own offset print shop, which produced Spartacist pamphlets such as the first edition of *Lenin and the Vanguard Party*, *Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam* and *The Fight to Implement Busing*. Over the years, he regularly went above and beyond in providing financial support to the party, comrades and friends.

Steve joined the party's youth organization in late 1971 while at SUNY Stony Brook and continued working inside Students for a Democratic Society as a member of its Steering Committee. Our party's aim was to split the subjective revolutionaries away from the Progressive Labor reformists, who were also in the SDS leadership. While at Stony Brook, he helped lead an SDS campaign in support of a CWA telephone strike in New York state. The campaign leaflet explained why workers should oppose the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy, which tried

to isolate the strike, and should broaden their economic struggle into a political strike against the Vietnam War.

Steve later transferred to Los Angeles. There he became a CWA member and actively participated in the successful 1973 campaign to defend the Militant Action Caucus against the CWA bureaucracy's fabricated charges and attempted anti-communist purge of MAC supporters. After transferring to NYC, he worked as a union electrician at Harlem Hospital for many years.

The most important thing for him was his party membership, and he closely followed the work of other ICL sections, particularly Spartacist/South Africa. A friend of many years and party sympathizer wrote about how Steve explained to her as a young member that the reformist left capitulates to U.S. and world imperialism not because they are "stupid" but because "they want capitalism to exist with just a more human face."

Steve was generous to a fault. Although he had a wry sense of humor, he was reserved and rarely talked about himself. He was a passionate follower of college wrestling, loved learning about the latest scientific developments and had an extensive collection of LPs, particularly jazz. In his later years, he enjoyed bird watching in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

A comrade in Maintenance wrote: "One of the things I remember most about him is his revolutionary professionalism. He was a man of few words, always chosen carefully. Everything he did was precise, from maintenance repairs to providing security at protests." For Steve, there was no division between intellectual and manual labor.

Todd Nolan



WV Photo

1945-2022



Todd Nolan, a cadre of the Spartacist League/U.S. for more than 50 years, died on November 19, 2022. Our deepest sympathies go out to his wife of 35 years, Cindy Nolan. A longtime dedicated supporter of the party, Cindy fought to the end against the money-grubbing health care industry to try to get Todd the care he needed.

Born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1945, Todd took some pride in the Québécois heritage of his father. While a student at Stony Brook University in New York in 1970, he was recruited to the Spartacist League. Moving to New York City, he became the local treasurer, a post he held for ten years before moving to the Bay Area and becoming treasurer there in the early 1980s.

Being a party treasurer is not some routine accounting job. It is central to the existence and political functioning of a Bolshevik organization. Working together with the party leadership, the treasurer's job is both to scrupulously maintain the party's political and financial independence from state interference while ensuring our capacity to operate as an open, legal organization.

Todd was not only conscientious in handling the hard-earned funds from comrades and sympathizers who support our political work, he deeply understood that this money was an expression of political consciousness.

From the early days of the SL/U.S., he played an important political role in establishing our financial norms; and as treasurer of our two biggest locals, he trained many new party treasurers. In her eulogy to Todd, a former national treasurer of the SL/U.S. recalled his "gruff, grouchy, frequently barbed but always carefully considered advice and training."

Todd spent his working life in the printing/publishing industry, starting out in a hot-type print shop in New York City, where early issues of *Spartacist* were published. In the Bay Area, he worked for many years as a proofreader for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. A member of the Media Workers Guild, he was active in an eleven-day strike in 1994. Years later, in a 2009 report titled "For a Fistful of Dollars," Todd described the support among co-workers for his intervention against a deeply concessionary contract being sold by the union leadership.

Todd was also a very able amateur astronomer. The Hubble Telescope website features several color compositions of different galaxies and nebulae by Todd. He also corresponded with the developers of the computer planetarium program Stellarium.

We salute his dedication to the party and will sorely miss his witty and cantankerous comradeship.

Our comrade Linda Thurston died suddenly in her sleep on April 22 at age 73. A member of the Spartacist League/U.S. for over 45 years, Linda was first radicalized in the 1960s women's movement in Boston. As a student at Boston University, she and a group of friends researched and raised funds to publicize a handbook titled *Birth Control, Abortion and V.D., A Guide for the B.U. Student*.

At the time, abortion was outlawed, and in Massachusetts it was also illegal for anyone, other than a doctor advising a married couple, to distribute any information on birth control. As Linda wrote, "This was no idle threat," pointing to the case of Dr. Bill Baird, who at the time was facing ten years in prison for discussing birth control publicly. Linda and her friends distributed 24,000 copies of their pamphlet at B.U. Others reprinted it, and over half a million copies were circulated around the country. It is now available on JSTOR.

Linda joined the Boston local of the SL/U.S. in 1977, and later moved to New York City, where she worked in WV production. A typesetter and graphic designer, she helped train other comrades for jobs in the printing trade. In the early 1990s, she and her husband and comrade, Mark, moved to the Bay Area, where she was key to designing leaflets for our public events, one of our main

photographers at demonstrations and dogged in getting our press into bookstores and other venues.

Where Linda really made her mark was in publicizing the case of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was framed up and sentenced to death for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer. She was central to the Partisan Defense Committee's campaign to mobilize for Mumia's freedom, getting out his columns and arranging interviews with the PDC, particularly by the black press. Among those whose support Mumia acknowledges in his 1995 book *Live From Death Row* are the "three Lindas (two Thurstons and one Ragin)."

Her mother was of Cherokee descent; and throughout her life, Linda was a passionate advocate of Native Americans, assembling a prodigious library of their history and struggles. Getting her MA in education, she was a longtime teacher of journalism and graphic design, and union member, in the Bay Area public school system. She took pride in working with her students on the design and layout of their annual yearbook.

Linda was a tenacious, sometimes to the point of obstinate, comrade but always unwaveringly committed to the party and her comrades. Our condolences go out especially to her husband Mark.

Linda Thurston



Family Photo

1949-2023



Workers Need Class-Struggle Leadership

What Next for ILWU, UPS Teamsters

A golden opportunity has been spiked at UPS and the West Coast ports for labor to fight for itself and turn the tide of class struggle in its favor. Although 15-25 percent of Teamsters and ILWU members voted “no” on their recent contracts and many others did not vote at all, the trade-union tops managed to avert strikes in both industries. The UPS Teamsters leadership spouted militant talk, while the ILWU tops pledged not to strike, but *both* leaderships halted class battles and forced workers to surrender to contract bribes, shoring up Biden and the bosses. It’s no surprise the ILWU tops and the port

bosses were honored at the White House, with Biden saying the contract is “a good deal” for workers, companies and the United States. This is the very “national unity” blackmail that the trade-union bureaucracy promotes and workers must reject to move their struggles forward.

For those workers who want to fight, the task now is to prepare for the battles to come. This means building opposition caucuses within the unions based on a program explicitly opposing the losing strategy of the bureaucracy, which is clearly committed to not causing Biden too much trouble at the expense of the working

class. A WV supporter argued against the contract at an ILWU Local 10 meeting, saying:

“The crime is that the leadership of the ILWU and Teamsters refuse to take advantage of the government’s weakness. Why? Because they are in bed with the enemy. They sabotage any struggle in advance because they are committed to maintaining a system based on our exploitation.”

The program needed to advance labor’s cause is laid out in the articles below: “Labor Can Turn the Country Around! UPS, ILWU: Vote No!” and “UPS Workers: How to Win!”

UPS Workers: How to Win

JULY 24—A Teamsters strike against UPS would be the biggest strike against a single U.S. employer in history, at a time when the working class desperately needs to push back against the attacks of the ruling class. Since the pandemic, when the bosses and their government dealt devastating blows to living and working conditions, things have gotten worse for workers. Enforced sacrifice, speedup and inflation have already pushed other “essential” supply chain workers, in rail and West Coast longshore, to try to fight back—and they are not even the worst off among the American working class. Teamsters *must fight* against poverty wages, deadly conditions and the tier system—issues plaguing workers across the country in many industries. But *to win* they must have a strategy that suits the situation they face.

Decades of deindustrialization and the disastrous response to COVID have weakened the domestic economy and international standing of the U.S. and, along with the U.S.-provoked war in Ukraine, put increased pressure on the supply chain. As a result, the enormous social power of supply chain workers has grown even greater. It must be used to fight for their needs and to open a broader counteroffensive against the bosses. The Biden admin-

istration already banned the rail strike and is attempting to bribe the West Coast longshore workers to prevent any disruption. The ruling class will use whatever means necessary to stop the Teamsters from making their increasingly unstable position even worse. Workers will only get what they want by wresting it from the bosses, and so they must be prepared for a real confrontation. They need a leadership and a program to win!

No Illusions in the Bosses’ State!

The enemy is not narrowly the “greed” of the UPS bosses, but the anti-worker political and economic interests of the whole capitalist class. This is a fundamental clash of class interests! O’Brien says he is ready to fight, but he is *not* preparing union members for the hard-fought battle that is needed and which will disrupt the supply chain. Especially with Biden seeking re-election, O’Brien has no desire to create a crisis that could imperil the campaign of the strikebreaker he calls the “most pro-union president in our lifetime.”

O’Brien can make tough speeches for cameras at practice pickets all he likes. But what these pickets reveal is that, if he doesn’t call the whole thing off at the

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Labor Can Turn the Country Around!

UPS, ILWU: Vote No!

AUGUST 19—Everyone can see that there’s a crisis and that conditions in the U.S. are only worsening, from housing to health care. Pensions are basically nonexistent and working people have astronomical debt. The working class is discontented but strikes to try to improve their immiserated conditions have not managed to fundamentally change anything for the working class. The country is heavily divided over which capitalist ruler should screw them, Biden or Trump. Both choices are repugnant to many workers. The Democrats’ main selling point is that Biden is not Trump. Biden is desperate to keep everything from falling apart before the elections. The last thing that “the most pro-union president” wants is a major union battle with the ILWU or Teamsters, which would cause a crisis. Crushing it would not bode well for Biden’s poll numbers. On the other side Trump is no better. Some workers sympathetic to striking think the way to stick it to Biden and the Establishment is to vote for Trump. But with all his anti-Establishment rhetoric and appeals to the working class, Trump’s loyalty lies with the bosses in charge of this country.

So what is needed? Clearly the politicians don’t have the answers and are only gearing up to make things worse. The real battle is not “democracy” vs. “autocracy”

or Biden vs. Trump, but workers vs. the Establishment! The way to change things is for labor to be an independent force that fights for itself. This could not only provide pay raises but it could change the total trajectory of this country. The purpose of the deals being dangled in the face of the workers is to prevent this. UPS, ILWU workers, vote “no”!

With economic crisis and a presidential election on the horizon, the bosses are trying to corral the workers movement (especially supply chain workers) into submission, either with a carrot in the case of these contracts, or with the stick, as with the crushing of the rail workers last year. These strategic workforces could cause the most trouble for the government. This is what lies behind the bribe of substantial pay raises being offered to the Teamsters and ILWU. The bureaucrats argue that the deals are a victory, but in actuality accepting these deals means that the labor movement surrenders! These offers are not a show of the strength of the union, they are a sign of the weakness of the enemy. Biden is very unpopular and is desperately trying to buy peace in the lead-up to the elections. Instead of taking advantage of this opportunity, getting the most concessions, and changing the

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New York, July 6: Workers wanted to strike but O’Brien organized practice pickets for PR campaign, not militant class battle, before calling off potential strike. Brett/ZUMA



Port of Seattle, day after June 9-10 work stoppage. Longshore workers carried out job actions after working without a contract for over a year due to ILWU bureaucrats’ pledge to keep supply chain moving. Scott/SOPA

UPS Workers...

(continued from page 4)

eleventh hour, he plans to run the strike like a pushy PR campaign in the court of bourgeois public opinion, and morally shame the company into coughing up a few bucks. The practice pickets are designed to give a platform to the bosses' politicians, like AOC, who crushed the rail strike in Congress. Workers don't need to hear the speeches of these charlatans, they need to be *politically prepared* to wage the strike with class-struggle methods. Like the Trotskyists who built the Teamsters in the 1934 Minneapolis general strike, workers need to prepare to *shut down* the company by *stopping* the scabs the bosses are training and their cop escorts. Instead, O'Brien cowers before the bosses' laws and wants a strike that is a peaceful, legal parade, one which won't risk him jail time.

O'Brien presents the state as a neutral arbiter, rather than leading the union with the understanding that the state is a tool of capitalist class domination. He rose to power with the endorsement of the TDU union-suers, who readily drag the union into the bosses' courts, inviting the class enemy into workers' affairs. Last year, O'Brien himself invited federal mediation into the rail dispute, colluding with the White House to cook up a rotten deal, which railroaders rejected. When Biden moved to stop them from striking, O'Brien rolled over, doing nothing to fight back, and later covered for the White House with the absurd lie that the administration didn't intervene. Now, he smugly assures workers that he's asked the White House not to intervene in a UPS strike, as though he can politely request the enemy not bring their big guns to war.

Full-Time Work for All Who Want It!

O'Brien says he is fighting for the part-timers, and workers want to do that. Everyone, especially part-timers, needs *massive* raises, and the union *must* fight for that. But this won't fix the problem. A raise will get eaten up by inflation and rising housing and health care costs, etc. Part-timers will still be under the whip, and they still won't get the hours they need. The company said they will get rid of the lower-tier 22.4 job category, which is good, but the union needs to fight to get rid of *all* the divisions in the workforce. The divisions make the workers weaker and the bosses stronger.

The pay differences between part/full-time, tiers, sub-contractors, personal vehicle drivers—these are all just ways for the bosses to make more money off lower-paid workers, drive down wages for everybody, and make workers feel like they have to fight each other for better positions. People shouldn't have to work for a decade or more in dangerous slave-labor conditions, barely able to get enough hours, before they get a regular job. The existence of non-union labor at Amazon and FedEx is another club used by the UPS bosses against Teamsters, which is why the union must seek these workers' solidarity and organization in this fight. *Organize the unorganized sub-contractors, personal vehicle drivers and all other industry workers! Equal pay and benefits at the highest level for equal work! Full-time work for everybody who wants it!*

In the U.S., the bosses always try to segregate black people into the lowest tiers of the workforce. They want to keep black people oppressed to divide workers along racial lines. This makes it easier for them to drive down wages for everybody and pit workers against each other. Black workers at UPS are concentrated in part-time inside jobs. The major expansion of part-time work in the 1970s and '80s screwed over both black and white workers, and made it possible for UPS to make increasingly greater profits.

As long as the bosses are in charge, they will oppress black people and divide workers to benefit themselves. The bosses shouldn't be allowed to decide who gets

to work on what or when. *For union control of hiring and scheduling!* We need union-run training and upgrading programs and a massive increase in hiring that consciously makes sure black and other minority workers aren't jobless or stuck in the worst jobs. Every worker works too hard, and there are too many people without jobs. *The work should be spread among all who want it with no loss in pay*, so white workers or anyone else with a better position now would benefit, too. The only people who should pay are the bosses.

O'Brien won't fight for what is actually needed to fix the real problem. He respects the "right" of the bosses to make the decisions about how "their" company runs—the decisions that screw over the people who actually do the work. He celebrates the token measure of getting a paid holiday on MLK Day. Workers should get a lot more paid days off, but that alone does nothing to break down the racial disparity in working conditions. By refusing to put the fight against black oppression at the center of a strike, he undermines the mobilization of the lower sections of the workforce and maintains the divisions that could prove fatal to a strike. *Down with the bosses' racist divide-and-rule! For full integration, on and off the job!*

For Union Control of Health and Safety!

Work at UPS is dangerous. The warehouses and trucks are overheated death-traps that maim and poison workers. The bosses don't want to spend the money to fix anything. O'Brien acts like he won something because the company supposedly agreed to put air-conditioning in trucks. The reality is that they're only going to put A/C in *new* vehicles *next year*, and that alone is hardly enough to make sure workers are safe. *Enough suffering and sacrifice!* Workers know what's safe, and what they need. As long as the bosses get to decide what conditions are safe, workers will continue to get hurt and killed. Workers need to *shut down production* when they think conditions are unsafe. *For union control of health and safety!*

O'Brien thinks that it was right that he and the rest of the union bureaucracy forced workers to risk their health and safety to protect the bosses' supply chain during the COVID crisis, rather than fighting against the bosses for what *workers* needed. He regularly talks about the devastating sacrifice workers made to keep the bosses' profits rolling and their system intact. UPS workers had to work crazy overtime, often in violation of the contract, to deliver the backbreaking increase in packages to a population locked up in their homes. Many were denied PPE and crammed into poorly ventilated facilities

A Program for UPS Workers to Win:

- No illusions in the bosses' state! Shut down the company! Stop the scabs!
- Massive raises that outstrip inflation for all!
- Full-time work for all who want it! Organize the unorganized! Equal pay for equal work!
- For union control of hiring and scheduling! Spread the work around with no loss in pay!
- Down with the bosses' racist divide-and-rule! For full integration, on and off the job!
- For union control of health and safety! Shut down operations when conditions are unsafe!
- Stop the bureaucrats' betrayals! For a militant class-struggle caucus based on a program to win!
- For a multiracial workers party that fights for a workers government!

or were stuck wearing masks in the back of oppressively hot trucks. O'Brien's only gripe is that now the bill is due, so workers should get a bit of cash. *They should get a lot of cash!* But it's not like workers agreed to give the bosses a line of credit with their lives as collateral.

No! It was a criminal betrayal—utter class treason—when the entire labor officialdom led workers to death and poverty to prop up the crumbling capitalist system at a time when it was obvious that the bosses' system couldn't meet the needs of workers and the oppressed. Labor misleaders carried out the bosses' blackmail in the working class, extracted sacrifice and givebacks, accepted mass layoffs and suppressed resistance. They are directly responsible for the horrible situation workers are in today. Workers need a leadership that will not literally lead them to slaughter.

O'Brien did not take a stand for the Teamsters during the pandemic, when workers were dying to keep the supply chain moving in the name of the "national interest." So how is he going to stand up to the entire establishment—the bosses, the media, the government—when the Teamsters *themselves* are crippling the supply chain? The pressure from the bosses to bow to the "national interest" will be as intense, if not more.

Fight for Socialist Leadership!

The question posed is not simply if the shipping giant will "pay up" for the sacrifice workers made to bring the bosses record profits, but if an opening shot will be fired in struggle against the current ruling-class offensive. The events to come will determine far more than the UPS contract. They will affect the balance of force between the workers and their capitalist masters in the coming period of increasing instability and uncertainty.

Socialist Tails on Teamsters Bureaucracy

Rank-And-File UPS Teamsters & Workers Strike Back Activists: Vote NO And Escalate The Fight For A Strong Contract!

By Workers Strike Back - July 28, 2023

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

July 28, 2023

LABOR MOVEMENT

UPS Teamsters, We Can Fight for More: Vote No on the Tentative Agreement

LEFT VOICE

August 1, 2023

Vote "NO" and Strike for \$25 – Plus AC – NOW! Next Up: Organize Amazon!



Internationalist Group League for the Fourth International

August 2023

Teamster-UPS Deal: No End to Poverty Pay

Socialist Alternative, Left Voice, The Internationalist (top to bottom) focused narrowly on contract demands and more militancy. While criticizing O'Brien, fake socialists sowed illusion that union bureaucrats can be pressured to fight in workers' interests. Internationalist Group called for class-struggle leadership, but pushed same trade-union economism compatible with pro-capitalist leadership.

The working class requires a leadership that can adequately prepare the battles to come. To chart a course forward, that leadership must understand the forces at play, the irreconcilability of the workers' and bosses' class interests, the role of the capitalist state and—most importantly—the necessity of the struggle for workers power. It is imperative that workers fight back against the present attacks and build a leadership that will not cede ground to the bosses.

The immediate task for socialists and union militants is to prepare the strike: build the union's strength, educate workers in the principles of the class struggle, reinforce class unity and fight for strike committees. Building the strike doesn't mean helping O'Brien. It means building the Teamsters *in spite* of O'Brien and his clique. Crucial to preparing the strike is exposing to workers how and why the current leadership is undermining in every way the preparation of the imminent fight. But every so-called socialist group in this country lines up behind O'Brien, either through open cheerleading or tepid criticism, which only sows illusions in his losing strategy.

Left Voice claims that because "expectations [are] raised...O'Brien will not be able to easily backtrack, even if he wanted to." They call to "increase the involvement of rank-and-file UPS workers" and "develop democratic shop-floor organizations" as part of strike preparations. But Left Voice's purpose for these organizations is not to expose O'Brien's strategy as an obstacle to winning the strike, but rather to give it a more democratic veneer. They draw no line against O'Brien's dead-end approach. In fact, they softball his collaboration with the bosses' government, stating: "The Teamsters leadership's friendly relationship with the Democrats doesn't guarantee that the government will be on our side." No, the O'Brien bureaucracy's "friendly relationship" all but guarantees that it will buckle when commanded by the White House. All of Left Voice's actions build illusions that a pro-capitalist leadership only needs to be pressured to fight in the interests of workers.

Socialist Alternative has a similar purpose for pressuring O'Brien, only one step removed. Their preferred vehicle is the TDU, which they state has "an especially important role to play in holding O'Brien's feet to the fire," but only if the TDU itself is sufficiently pressured from below. It is absurd to present the TDU as an alternate pole to the O'Brien leadership, when the TDU played a central role in his election and, according to SAIt, "has unfortunately taken a completely uncritical approach to O'Brien."

Pressuring the trade-union bureaucracy to be more militant is not a solution because their betrayals are not caused just by lack of militancy. Their methods and tactics *flow from* their allegiance to the capitalist system. The task of socialists is to fight against all elements in the trade-union bureaucracy. Left Voice and Socialist Alternative do not counterpose an alternative leadership of the unions; they lend these pro-capitalist traitors their authority. ■

Left Strikes Out on UAW

The battle at the Big Three is an acid test for those calling themselves socialists, and the rest of the left has failed miserably. The job of socialists in the labor movement is to fight for a class-struggle strategy and socialist leadership *right now*. The defining feature of such a leadership is its ability to guide the day-to-day workers struggle in a manner that advances the immediate and historic interests of the working class as a whole.

Crucial to this task is fighting to split workers away from the existing pro-capitalist union leaders, like UAW head Shawn Fain, who is leading the strike as though it is possible to get a “fair share” for the membership without in any way challenging capitalism itself. At the moment, Fain is relatively popular among auto workers—he has not only raised demands that would reverse major union concessions of the past but also initiated a strike against all three automakers, even if he is rolling it out in stages. The problem, though, is that the conditions of the working class cannot be qualitatively improved while respecting the objective of the U.S. ruling class to economically dominate the world. As a result, Fain’s brand of militant trade unionism is an obstacle, both to a victorious UAW strike and to making progress toward socialism.

The union demands can be won only by broadening the struggle, drawing in other workers and the oppressed masses, to land blows against the imperialist rulers and weaken their position. For that, a leadership opposed to imperialism with a concrete counterposed strategy to Fain’s is vitally necessary. Our proposal to auto workers is to organize a general strike in

Detroit to end tiers, reindustrialize the country and fight for black liberation. We aim to show not just that workers struggle and the black struggle go forward together or fall back separately but also that the underlying problem is capitalism, from which it follows that a revolutionary leadership is needed to uphold the interests of the working class and black people against the class enemy.

In contrast, every single one of the so-called socialist groups in this country is pushing the pure-and-simple trade unionism (economism) of Fain and the rest of the UAW bureaucracy. Take Socialist Alternative (SAIt). Its main beef with Fain is over the scale of the strike: they cheered his earlier “aggressive approach” and now criticize his “backpedaling.” SAIt openly rejects the need for socialist leadership in the strike and instead focuses on pressuring Fain to wage more robust economic struggle—a betrayal of the UAW strike and of the socialist cause.

IG: Centrist Cover for Economism

The whole content of our article and call for a general strike in Detroit is explicitly directed at exposing the bankruptcy of economism in the imperialist epoch, and it is particularly important to unmask those who cloak militant trade unionism in revolutionary phraseology, blurring the line between reform and revolution. Notable in this regard is the Internationalist Group (IG), which concludes its UAW strike article (14 September) by declaring:

“The fight for auto workers’ livelihoods, to escape from the low-wage misery they endure under decaying capitalism, requires forging a class-struggle leader-

ship to oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and politicians, and build a workers party, fighting for a workers government and international socialist revolution.”

Despite this formally correct statement, the IG’s purpose is *not* to fight for a class-struggle leadership in opposition to the Fain bureaucracy.

How can this be? The IG advocates class-struggle leadership, but its actual practice runs counter to its stated goal. Declarations of intent, or even the sum of revolutionary-sounding statements, do not constitute a fight for revolutionary leadership. To be on that track, it is necessary to struggle to break the UAW from the reformist shackles holding it back, which can only be accomplished by proposing an entirely different strategy for the union. This is what distinguishes authentic revolutionaries from centrists who recite all manner of Marxist lessons but abdicate leadership to the union bureaucracy.

The duty of revolutionaries is to reveal to workers what it is going to take to advance their struggle by exposing the deceptions of the bureaucracy. At the moment, the primary deception is that a strike for purely economic ends by auto workers alone can substantially improve their living standards in the context of U.S. imperialism in decline. Rather than present a clear class-struggle program for the strike to win in order to cut against this economism, the IG instead feeds the deception.

When it comes to the course they advocate for the strike, the article does not in any way motivate why UAW workers need a class-struggle leadership. The IG’s main call is for an “all-out strike” to shut down

the Big Three in contrast to the union leadership’s “token ‘strike’ at just three (!) plants.” To be sure, all auto workers should be out, but Fain’s rolling strike strategy is a symptom of his reformist outlook and not in itself his main betrayal. In fact, Fain is perfectly capable of expanding the scope of the strike, as he has already done. And what if he calls everyone out? Fain would then be doing exactly what the IG asks of a “class-struggle leadership” in this strike.

The IG’s call for an all-out auto strike (or for that matter SAIt’s to “escalate the strike”) does not provide a basis to build a revolutionary opposition to Fain. The key to winning the strike is not better tactics—that is, how well the battle as conceived by the UAW bureaucracy is conducted—but rather the right conception of the battle as an all-out confrontation with the ruling class. Fain launched the “standup strike” to pressure the automakers to cough up better terms at the negotiating table. The response of the IG and other left groups can be summed up as: To get better terms, apply more pressure, immediately! In other words, the problem is not Fain’s pro-capitalist perspective, which is the basis for his strike strategy, but the timetable for its implementation.

Unlike, say, SAIt, the IG makes points that go beyond simple trade unionism, but they are disconnected from the struggle at hand. For example, the IG discusses at some length how Fain won his post as part of a union-suing caucus in an election run by the Department of Labor. Opening the UAW’s door to the capitalist state is criminal—it has given the class enemy access to and control over union affairs.

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UAW...

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South. Fain believes the companies and the workers can mutually prosper. He shares the bosses’ goal of improving U.S. competitiveness, and takes a side with one of their parties—the Democrats—on how to do it. This class collaboration is at the core of Fain’s capitulation. Contrary to his outlook, it is the success of American business on the backs of workers that led to today’s crisis.

The issue isn’t just that politicians are unreliable or corporations greedy, as Fain says, although they are. The problem isn’t just that companies price gouge and refuse workers their “fair share,” although they do. It’s not moral failing or mistaken policy. The bosses aren’t just greedy, malicious and dumb. They’re doing what they’re doing because capitalism requires it as the international situation gets more unstable. The acute pains felt by workers today are the sharpening class antagonisms of capitalism in decline. Fain builds illusions in reviving the “American Dream” and clings to a strategy that got us here in the first place. Instead, we need a leadership to organize struggles knowing the ultimate goal is workers rule and a planned economy—not the preservation of this irrational system.

The only way workers are going to get Fain’s demands in America’s sinking, uncompetitive economy is through a major confrontation with capitalist interests. But Fain’s perspective is to negotiate within the limits set by capitalism. Rather than strike hard at the core of the bosses’ power, he just seeks to re-balance the scales between the workers and the bosses.

To land the type of blow necessary to wrest concessions in this strike requires working-class political unity against the bosses. But the bosses intentionally sow disunity, fueling the racially charged climate that defines U.S. politics. To overcome racial and other divisions and forge genuine unity within the working class, the workers movement must fight against



WV Photo

Detroit, September 15: Shawn Fain fist bumps Bernie Sanders at UAW rally. Union tops work in tandem with bosses’ “progressive” politicians to confine struggle to what is acceptable to capitalists.

segregation and all manifestations of racial oppression.

However, Fain has avoided racial topics in the strike mobilization, for fear of being divisive. But the working class is already deeply divided along racial and political lines. By not taking on black oppression, Fain implicitly stands with the status quo, thus weakening both the labor movement and the strike. Either the union will cut through the racial and political divisions in the working class or the bosses will use those divisions to cut through the union.

To win, the UAW must organize the strike to provide a beacon for the whole working class to: **End tiers! Reindustrialize the country! Fight for black liberation!**

Racial Divisions and the Strike

For the bosses, oppressing black people isn’t just about profits—it’s also about power. The ruling class relies on racial divisions to maintain its political stability. This is obvious in the circus around Trump. Working-class misleaders endorse Democrats, which proves a rotten deal. The open bigot makes appeals to white workers fed up with empty promises from liberals who screw them. Then, Biden pretends to defend black people and minorities, with nothing to offer but platitudes. Workers see no alternative that corre-

sponds to their class interests, so they end up divided, supporting one or the other of the bosses’ parties. Neither one advances the interests of workers or black people—they represent the bosses who need both economic and racist oppression. The cycle of “lesser evilism” only deepens the divisions among the oppressed.

While Fain has been reluctant to officially endorse Biden, he is currently sharing the stage with Bernie Sanders. This “progressive” has done nothing for workers all the years he’s been in office—except rope them back into the Democratic Party. Like Trump and Biden, Sanders works for the bosses. The instant the bosses feel that the union has gone too far and is encroaching on their profits (which is necessary to obtain any of its demands), Sanders will try to limit the struggle to what is acceptable to the bosses, no matter how “pro-worker” he may talk. In contrast, workers need to be trained in the methods of class struggle and the principle of class independence.

If there is a major confrontation that costs the auto bosses billions and jeopardizes Biden’s electoral bid, the pressure on the union to submit will be intense, for fear of the racist Trump getting back in office. Liberals will say the most important thing for black people and minorities is to keep Trump out, and that

the strike isn’t worth it. They’ll admit that Biden isn’t the best, but argue he’s “less evil.” They’ll blame white working-class Trump supporters for racial oppression. Some workers will be swayed by the liberal argument, while others will be repelled by being baited as racist. A leadership like Fain’s will fold in the face of this pressure. His current backpedaling is just a taste.

The *only* way to improve things for workers and black people is to fight on the basis that the struggle for black equality is inseparable from the struggle for workers emancipation. Combating homelessness and unemployment requires: massive public works projects to build integrated housing and infrastructure, massive union hiring drives, organizing the unorganized, training and hiring programs that spread the available work among all and massive reindustrialization under workers’ control. The black community and workers need lots of the same things, and they all go against the capitalists’ interests. This will provide a much stronger basis for working-class unity than economic struggle alone.

Fighting for black people without a class-independent program leaves white workers fearful of liberal crusades that claim to “help” black people at their expense. Fighting for higher wages without fighting to improve the situation of black people leaves black workers at the bottom and ignores the need for real social change. White workers must have the understanding that, in order to advance their own interests, they must destroy the bosses’ most prized “divide-and-rule” scheme: keeping black people segregated at the bottom. Black workers must be won to the understanding that in order to get social, economic and political equality they need to unite with white workers to carry out this struggle.

Rust, Race and Tiers

The material foundation of black oppression in the U.S. remains segregation. The ruling class keeps black people ground down and separated in every aspect of their lives to more easily under-

UPS, ILWU...

(continued from page 4)

balance of forces for the class as a whole, the bureaucrats insist that these deals are the best that can be done. At bottom the bureaucracy is pushing these contracts because of their strategy to not challenge Biden or the capitalist order.

On the one hand the bureaucrats face pressure from their ranks to fight for improvements. On the other, their strategy dictates sacrifice in support of the Democrats and the capitalists. They obscure the fact that the situation at hand is a fundamental clash of class interests in an increasingly unstable period and that ultimately the only solution to workers' immiseration is the defeat of the bosses and their government. The bureaucracy disarms workers with illusions of amicable settlements and deludes them with the idea that backing the bosses' representatives in the Democratic Party is the way forward. The question posed is who really calls the shots in this country, the workers or the government? To fire an opening shot of a counteroffensive by labor will require breaking with the union tops' class-collaborationist strategy.

The government and bosses argue that giving supply chain workers what they need would cause a crisis. However, this is proof that irrational capitalist class rule cannot serve the workers but must be swept away, not accommodated. There is no doubt that a serious struggle by the ILWU and Teamsters would face an onslaught of blackmail for disrupting the supply chain. But this is no proof that workers have an interest in sacrificing to keep the bosses' profits rolling. It is proof that the political treachery of the union leaders disarms the workers and forces them onto their knees before the bosses' and the government's blackmail.

The most recent example of "national unity" blackmail was during the Covid-19 pandemic, when union leaders sacrificed the interests of the workers to keep the government and the supply chain up and running in the name of "saving lives," rather than fighting against the bosses

to ensure the workers' health and safety. Their betrayals then led directly to the horrible conditions now. In longshore and UPS these same misleaders are again sacrificing the interests of the working class in this contract battle, in order to maintain the stability of the capitalist status quo.

For Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions!

Today's union battles must be guided by a totally new political program and socialist leadership independent of and opposed to capitalist politicians—a leadership that understands that the capitalists must be defeated, not conciliated. To win, workers must advance towards fulfillment of their class interests—i.e., the right to a decent living, a safe work environment, a shorter workweek, etc.—at the expense of the capitalists, whose program is cheap labor, underinvestment in infrastructure and safety equipment, massive overtime, etc. The moment for labor to do this is so ripe that it's rotten. The real thing about these deals is not if the workers should get \$21/hour or \$25/hour (they should get more!), or if part-time workers do or don't get the short end of the stick (they do!). The real question is if labor will use its power to its own advantage and to the advantage of every worker in this country, or else let the criminals in the government get some breathing room, allowing the capitalists to regroup, shore up their position, crush the unions, and make sure things continue to go to hell.

Workers have everything to gain from rejecting these deals and fighting back right now. What better way to get the most concessions on and off the job than putting a weakened enemy on its knees? If you don't give us better wages, affordable health care and decent housing we'll make it hell for you! Every worker will benefit from this, especially black workers. Biden is desperate to get the votes of black workers in order to have a better chance of winning in 2024. But as black people know Biden has done absolutely nothing for them, which is why the Democrats are worried about losing their votes. Black people, allied with the whole working class, have the most to gain from



Teamsters
April 2022: Teamsters head Sean O'Brien with Biden at White House. O'Brien later worked with government to quash potential rail strike, then squashed UPS Teamsters strike to avoid causing crisis for president.

rejecting these deals which are meant only to prop up decrepit politicians. Teamster and ILWU tops brag that their workers can now make up to and over 100k due to these contracts, but this would not change the fact that a black worker would continue to go back to his segregated, crime-infested neighborhood, have to take his children to crumbling schools, and still be at the bottom of his workforce and society. In pushing to accept these bribes, the union leaders are doubling down on the already horrible conditions of black life in this country and accepting degraded conditions for all workers.

What is needed to really make labor a force to be reckoned with and come out on top is a united front of the ILWU, Teamsters, ALU, UAW, Hollywood workers and all other unions negotiating and striking to take on the bosses of this country together. In order to wage an offensive that wins, the unions must be run according to a totally different political strategy—one that is independent from capitalist politicians and in the interests of the working class—and fight to advance the position of labor, from the day-to-day

struggles right now, all the way to a workers government.

While fake socialist organizations—from Left Voice and SAIt/Workers Strike Back to the Internationalist Group (IG)—are campaigning for a "no" vote on the contract, their motivation is that it is insufficient to meet the needs of the workers given the massive profits that UPS has made. This outlook is fundamentally the same as the O'Brien bureaucracy: to negotiate the best deal possible in the framework of what is acceptable to the capitalist bosses. The bureaucracy's betrayals are not caused simply by a lack of militancy to get the bosses to "pay up" for the "sacrifices" workers made. The job of Marxists is to show how the struggle facing the working class is political in nature, i.e., it requires a fight against the bureaucracy's defense of capitalism.

These fake socialist groups both tail the bureaucracy and talk about the need to build an independent workers party. Groups like Left Voice argue that "neither Democrats nor Republicans are on the side of the working class," but cover up that O'Brien's leadership and the entire union bureaucracy are the vital link of the unions to the Democratic Party and are actively undermining the struggle before it has even begun. Workers must break with the reformist program of the bureaucracy to advance the struggles of the working class and oppressed. The task of fighting for class-struggle leadership in explicit opposition to the pro-capitalist strategy of the union bureaucracy is what Left Voice, SAIt and the Internationalist Group reject.

In order to wage a winning offensive with a united front of labor right now, we put forward the following points and encourage union militants to fight for:

- **Wage and pension raises pegged to inflation! For a shorter workweek with no loss in pay!**
- **Down with all tiers! Full ILWU benefits for all workers in the United States!**
- **Build a Workers Party, independent of the Democrats, Republicans and Greens, fighting for a government that serves the workers!**

mine workers struggle. The entire auto industry—the backbone of American capitalism—is built on racial segregation from the shop floor, to where workers live, to the "open shop" South. The horrors of the crumbling ghettos demoralize black workers and minimize the mixing between black and white.

The tier system is one way the bosses maintain segregation in the workplace. To abolish tiers requires taking on segregation by challenging the bosses' right to hire and fire as they please. We must fight for union control of hiring and training and for programs that target chronic unemployment in the black ghettos! In contrast, Fain's silence on segregation and acceptance of capitalist property undermine the fight against the tier system.

The bosses move production to the South because the workers there aren't organized, and the reason they aren't is because labor leaders won't fight black oppression head on. Anti-union forces in the South make a practice of whipping up reaction against the UAW by portraying it as a force that will leave white workers worse off. The only way for the union to cut through this reaction is to unfurl the banner of integration as part of union organizing battles, while making clear that white workers have every reason to back the union as a fighting force for *all* workers against the bosses. The existential threat to the union in the "open shop" South should be reason enough for any decent trade unionist to fight for black liberation.

The UAW bureaucracy's record of dismal failures in organizing the unorganized is a direct reflection of its losing class-collaborationist program, which has led to endless givebacks in recent years. Who wants to join a union that goes backward? On the other hand, a powerful and victorious strike now would lead hun-



Walter P. Reuther Library
Striking auto workers pour out of GM plant in Detroit, 1945. Black workers have long been militant backbone of UAW.

dreds of thousands of unorganized workers at Tesla, the battery plants and foreign automakers to want to join the UAW.

The workers movement must fight for black equality off the job as well. Black people are harassed, tortured and murdered by the cops every day. Liberal moral appeals to the bosses, their politicians and their cops to "care" about black people do nothing. The racist crimes of the cops must be exposed to all. The UAW and other unions must demand that the police archives be opened as a basic measure of self-defense not only for black people but also workers. These very same cops will be the companies' strikebreaking thugs if the battle heats up. Fain does not see the capitalist courts and cops as a tool of class domination,

and he is not preparing the strike with this understanding.

The UAW taking up the cause of the besieged black population would be a powerful lever to improve the situation for all working people. A union fight to force the auto bosses to fund quality, low-cost integrated neighborhoods could get decent housing for everyone from the homeless to UAW members. Such a struggle would not end black oppression, but it would begin to break down the walls of residential segregation. Workers should also seize the vast amounts of empty luxury real estate and office space for housing. These things all require major inroads against segregation and capitalist profits.

The standard of living in this country cannot be significantly improved through

a militant negotiation with the bosses—which is Fain's strategy. The bosses have hollowed out manufacturing and built an economy that is a debt-riddled house of cards. Back when they were economically strong, the bosses sought even higher profits abroad, and their offshoring devastated communities. This led them to slash social services, health care and education, which they saw as superfluous. The bosses poisoned Flint and destroyed Detroit when they no longer needed those workers.

Workers must fight to reindustrialize the economy in order to have good jobs with good pay instead of fighting over crumbs. To expand industry to its benefit, the working class must fight as one with the aim of taking over industry itself. The fights for industrialization and against racial oppression are inseparably bound up in the fabric of American capitalism today. The working class must confront them as intertwined in order to advance its interests.

Black oppression has crippled the workers movement since the beginning—"Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded" (Karl Marx). If it is to find a way forward, labor must put the fight for black freedom at the center of its struggles, which requires a leap in consciousness. That means there must be a leadership to bring this about—a revolutionary leadership. In order to be able to unite the class and win the UAW strike, we put forward the following program for auto and all other workers to fight for:

- **One Out, All Out!**
- **No Tiers!**
- **Organize the South!**
- **Reindustrialization!**
- **Black Liberation!**

New York City Subway Killing

Neely No Angel, Penny No Hero

The following was issued as a WV supplement, dated 8 June 2023.

Last month, Jordan Neely, a homeless, schizophrenic black man with a criminal history of violent attacks, threatened passengers on a subway train and was choked to death for 15 minutes by a white man, Daniel Penny. Crime and crazed outbursts are concerns that working people who ride the subway face every day. Transit workers are terrorized daily on the job; riders are pushed on the tracks, mugged and killed. It is a basic right of working people to not be terrorized and to defend themselves. When it comes to the details—we are not indifferent to Neely's killing. The 15-minute chokehold was excessive, and Neely did *not* deserve to die. But when confronted with the threat of physical harm, Penny had the right to defend himself and others against Neely.

When the case first hit the news, many working people—black, white and Latino—were sympathetic to Penny. Responses like “Someone finally stepped up to protect riders” and “If someone steps to me, I’m taking them down, too” expressed the brutal reality of what would have to be done if faced with the same situation. The multiracial proletariat, traveling to poverty-wage jobs with bosses who serve them on a silver platter to injury and death and back to rat-, roach- and mold-infested project buildings and ghetto housing, has to take New York City mass transit, where all the ills of capitalist society are thrown on their heads inside a crowded metal box.

While many workers understood that Neely's killing was nothing like the murders of Trayvon Martin or Ahmaud Arbery, they fear that this incident will be used by racist white vigilantes as an excuse to come out of their holes. This justified fear was further stoked by the anti-racist liberals when they declared Neely's killing to be a racist attack. For days, the media bombarded the proletariat with constant footage and images of the incident. But one thing was different. To further push the narrative that Neely was the victim of a race-fueled crime, and not threatening a crazed assault on passengers, the two men who helped Penny restrain Neely were cropped out; one of them was either black or Latino.

This propaganda barrage only reinforced the liberal narrative that Penny,

who now faces second-degree manslaughter charges, was a racist intending to kill Neely for the color of his skin, shifting the consciousness of some of the working masses to this perspective. The existing black leadership has had a hand in this as well. Reverend Al Sharpton struck the same theme when he spoke at Neely's funeral service: “Jordan was screaming for help.” “We keep criminalizing people with mental illness” and “A good Samaritan helps those in trouble.” Sharpton and other black Democrats have placed

This moralistic blackmail completely alibis the capitalist ruling class that is responsible for the surge in the mentally ill homeless population and the overall rot of this society, conditions that will produce many more Neely-and-Penny situations. The only way to stop the decay of the urban centers and the rest of the country, and provide a solution to the mental illness crisis, is by overthrowing the capitalist system. This requires a communist leadership that will stop at nothing to expose how the liberals seek

ing any gains in housing, health care, etc., will require the mobilization of force by the proletariat against the class enemy, not compassionate pacifism that begs the capitalists to treat more kindly the very victims they create. The prerequisite for the working class to struggle and win its most basic needs is breaking with the anti-racist liberal program pushed by the fake left, which serves as an obstacle to advancing its interests.

The disaster for working people that results from the left's embrace of liber-



Lichtenstein/Getty



Rally protesting death of Jordan Neely, New York City, May 5. Left Voice echoes liberal propaganda, further stoking racial polarization by presenting Neely's death as racist lynching, not tragic end to act of self-defense.

themselves in the forefront of lining up the black population behind the anti-racist liberal program, amplifying the racial divisions in American society.

Liberals argue that Neely should have been “met with compassion” and deny that black lumpen crime is even a problem. According to them, any talk of threats from mentally unhinged black people who are having a meltdown is racist and shows indifference. This liberal garbage blames Neely's death on working people forced to use the subway day in and day out. An example is the op-ed titled “Making People Uncomfortable Can Now Get You Killed” (*New York Times*, 4 May) by rad-lib Rutgers professor Roxane Gay, who declares: “The people in that subway car prioritized their own discomfort and anxiety over Mr. Neely's distress. All of the people in that subway car on Monday will have to live with their apparent inaction and indifference.”

to subordinate the proletariat to the capitalist ruling class and how their program fuels the racial divide.

Many liberals and their tails like Left Voice claim that the Neely case has nothing to do with self-defense. Rather, as Left Voice puts it, he “was executed for being poor, Black, and disabled,” painting Penny as a racist and any physical confrontation involving a white man defending himself against a black man as automatically driven by racism. These fake socialists write that “Jordan Neely brought joy to subway riders by impersonating Michael Jackson” and on that fatal day was just “hungry, thirsty, and tired” and was killed for it. But that is just another invention to further divide the working class along racial lines. Neely was unhinged, acted in a threatening manner and was said to have thrown trash at passengers.

Juan Alberto Vazquez caught Neely's death on his phone and reported that Neely had shouted: “I'm tired already. I don't care if I go to jail and get locked up. I'm ready to die.” This wasn't a man who was moonwalking on the train and placed in a chokehold out of nowhere by a white racist looking for his next black victim. In the eyes of the passengers that day, Neely was a real-life threat. What would the liberals and fake leftists have them do? Wait until Neely had physically harmed or killed someone—wait until it was too late? That's exactly what they want: for the proletariat to sacrifice itself in the name of liberal compassion!

Left Voice proposes more mental health workers on the trains to deal with the homeless and mentally ill, instructing the unions to “join the call in New York City for care, not Cops” and “for increased mental health services...rather than bloated police budgets.” NYC certainly needs more social services, but the main obstacle to that is the liberal politics pushed by Left Voice, which physically and politically disarm the working class, obstruct united class struggle across racial lines and tie workers and black people to their oppressors. Achiev-

alism was on vivid display during the pandemic. In an act of utter class treason, Left Voice and the overwhelming majority of the left supported the lockdowns, which exacerbated the recent explosion in homelessness and mental health issues, disproportionately devastated black people and unleashed anti-union attacks. By looking to the capitalist state as the arbiter of public health, these labor traitors politically disarmed and divided the working class, blocking the necessary struggle that is and was necessary to protect workers' lives and livelihoods against the apparatus of class oppression.

The liberals deny reality. The conditions of black people in Biden's America are increasingly desperate. With Biden's only selling point being that he was the vice president to the first black president, it is blatantly obvious that his administration will make no attempt to improve the situation of the black masses. Forcibly kept at the bottom of American society and making up the “last hired, first fired” reserve army of labor, black people have simply been written off by the capitalist rulers who have no jobs for them. This has been greatly intensified by the pandemic lockdowns and their aftermath, especially in New York City. The hotel programs, which provided housing to mainly black homeless men, came to a crashing halt when the city no longer wanted to pay, and thousands were evicted. Mass layoffs and the end of the rent moratoriums added up to a perfect storm for a homeless population explosion.

The increased desperation of those living on the street without the basic necessities of life has led to a spike in schizophrenic psychoses and paranoia among the majority black homeless. The capitalist system literally drives people to insanity and crime. But anybody who looks at reality squarely and states this truth will quickly be branded a racist by the liberals.

It is to be expected that the economic and health crisis generated by the lockdowns, along with worsening social con-

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Letters...

(continued from page 2)

right to defend themselves and others—even a 24-year-old retired Marine who is white. This position has sent the liberals and fake left into a frenzy, because they think every white person is a racist and the lumpenproletariat can do no wrong.

* * *

29 August 2023

Dear comrades,

In my letter to you of August 7 I noted your reference, in the Perry [sic] /Neely article, to Marx's remark about "human garbage". Surely Marx was using the phrase ironically and not pejoratively, as a way the bourgeois might refer to the most oppressed and deprived of the bourgeoisie's victims. I don't believe that Marx would have referred even to the criminal lumpen as "garbage" in that pejorative way. I have not been able to find a reference to that statement by Marx anywhere online, so without that context it's impossible to say.

You also refer to the fact that liberals have written that Neely should have been "met with compassion". Compassion is not only felt by liberal bleeding hearts. Their compassion is just hypocrisy. (Or more accurately, the degree to which their compassion is not hypocritical is the degree they would be attracted to the workers movement in a revolutionary situation.) Neely definitely should have been met with compassion, though the desperate like him could only have been met with true compassion by communists, or by worker defense guards in the manner I described in my August 7 letter. Unlike the true human garbage in Washington and downtown Manhattan, the Neelys of the U.S. would deserve and find therapeutic compassion in post-revolutionary socialist society.

You also suggest that Perry's action was not necessarily motivated by racism. He may not be a white supremacist, but do you think Perry would have acted as he did if Neely were white? One can

only speculate, but it seems to me that that kind of public retribution is usually reserved for black people.

For these reasons I believe the SL must surely reject "Neely No Angel, Penny No Hero" if it is to maintain its proud history as the champion of the oppressed. I am continuing my financial support of the SL (but as it seems like the PDC is in hiatus (?) I will hold off on those contributions temporarily).

In communist solidarity,
John D.

WV replies: Your criticism of our rhetoric signifies a squeamishness not uncommon on the left. Marx effectively used terms like "human garbage" to refer to the lumpenproletariat, and he was not being ironic at all. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx described how Bonaparte claimed "himself chief of the lumpenproletariat" and saw "in this scum, offal, refuse of all classes the only class upon which he can base himself unconditionally." The lumpenproletariat of 19th century France society had been organized by Bonaparte to take from the working class, "benefiting themselves at the expense of the laboring nation." It was a layer of society that the proletariat needed to defend themselves

against, just as much as they needed to defend themselves against Bonaparte.

It is true that liberal compassion comes from a place of hypocrisy. But it's also the case that the mentally ill and homeless population need a whole lot more than compassion. They need resources that will pull them out of the poverty and degradation imposed on them by the capitalist system. The resources necessary to solve the problem of homelessness, crime and other societal ills are nowhere to be found under this system. In fact, to resolve the issue of housing, unemployment and health care would require a massive confrontation with the ruling class.

But how would the working class be able to do this if it is completely disarmed and divided along racial lines by anti-racist liberalism? Well, it wouldn't. The liberal program would make sitting ducks out of workers, leaving them unable to defend themselves against any attack by the state or the lumpenproletariat. That's what liberal compassion—which is completely divorced from class society and against working-class interests—gets workers, blackmailing them into "keeping the peace."

We Marxists do not claim to be in Penny's head. But speculating that Penny would have acted differently if Neely had

been white is just more of the same mess being pushed by the liberals. It's a way to cast doubt on self-defense and to convince the working class that the Neely case was automatically a racist attack because it involved a white man and a black man in a violent incident. This corrosive position can only serve the ruling class, as they profit off racial divisions in society.

The same goes for your line on "public retribution." Almost two months after Neely's death, another black man, Devictor Ouedraogo, was killed by Jordan Williams, who is also black, on a NYC train. Ouedraogo was acting unhinged and threatening riders. Williams himself had been assaulted by a woman, who put a knife to his eye just a few weeks before. This time, as Ouedraogo went to assault a woman, Williams intervened. And the left? Absolutely silent. There's no need to speculate here. The reason the liberals and the fake left didn't take up this incident and condemn the killer as a racist is because this time the killer was black. It didn't fit their narrative of racist vigilantism gripping New York City. Penny had the right to self-defense, just like Williams. And just like Neely, Ouedraogo didn't deserve to die. But when in a situation of life or death, the working masses have the right to defend their lives. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD
The NYC "Subway Vigilante"
 No. 370
 11 January 1985

Letter
 NYC "Subway Vigilante": On Contradiction
 No. 371
 25 January 1985

WV articles on NYC "subway vigilante" Bernhard Goetz combated liberal squeamishness opposing self-defense against lumpen crime. Liberal support to gun control, reliance on cops is directed against black people.

ditions, will produce deprived human beings, as the "Empire City" slides into the barbarism of decaying American capitalism. It is intolerable that such "human garbage," as Marx described the criminal elements of the lumpenproletariat, can terrorize the public at will. This is why the *only* solution to spiraling crime rates and to the increase of the mentally ill and homeless populations is not greater compassion but the abolition of the capitalist system that breeds poverty, crime and insanity. In the meantime, it is not just an elementary reflex but of crucial importance to the working class, not least its black component, to be able to defend itself in the midst of social decay.

To the liberals, working class self-defense is racist and uncompassionate. So, instead, the liberals call for more cops on the streets and subways. In the face of crime, some workers ask themselves: "Where are the police?" The cops are never there when you need them, they are too busy pummeling or shooting fare beaters and graffiti artists and rousting homeless people for being homeless. The black and Latino working masses know that more cops on the subways can only spell disaster by giving the thugs in blue more opportunity to catch minority youth and workers in their crosshairs. The liberal response of "no" to self-defense and "just trust the cops to do their job" is suicide for the working class.

Liberal illusions in the police and the decaying conditions of society have led some workers to turn to politicians like Democratic NYC mayor Eric Adams, a former transit cop who ran on a "law and order" platform, as a savior with an answer to crime and the immiseration of both the working class and the mentally ill. Reliance on capitalist politicians is deadly and a dead end, because the bourgeoisie's response to crime is to strengthen its own repressive apparatus, while disarming the population through measures like gun

control and smashing strikes and picket lines. The main purpose of the capitalist state apparatus—the cops, courts and prisons—is not to protect the population but to maintain the oppressive status quo, which breeds violent crime.

This is the same status quo the anti-racist liberals want to maintain by tinkering with the worst excesses of capitalism and the capitalist state. The cops' badge and gun are a license to terrorize the ghetto, harassing, shaking down and murdering black people. "Mental health" and "de-escalation" training do not change this fact. Disarming black people and Latinos means they will be killed in greater numbers by vigilantes, criminals and police. Marxists must struggle against the monopolization of the means of violence in the hands of the capitalist state, while upholding the right of working people to defend themselves, as Malcolm X said, "by any means necessary."

The hard fact is that oppression oppresses. Marauding by the mentally ill on the NYC subways is a mass phenomenon and has become a major concern for New Yorkers. Is it racist to say that? The liberals think so. By their lights, to mention crime by mentally ill black people or to acknowledge that the working class has fears of being victimized is to fuel racist reaction. But denying this concern is what will push the white masses into the arms of the racists. It is profoundly dangerous and demoralizing to keep the population, black as well as white, in a constant state of helpless fear. Such desperation among white people spawns fascist mobilizations and racist vigilantes.

The right wing has also inflamed the racial polarization, hailing Penny as a "hero" and calling for more "law and order." This response can only inspire ultraright and fascist elements to terrorize the poor black masses in the name of fighting crime. The fear among work-

ers that the Neely case will be a rallying point for these unsavory sections of society is warranted. While upholding the right of individuals to defend themselves, we strenuously oppose any kind of vigilantism, which could only become a racist pogrom. We do not call on the working masses to implement the bosses' racist "law and order."

But there is something here that the liberals refuse to face. Crime by the destitute is no joke, and its usual targets are the urban proletariat and ghetto residents. Not addressing the issue can only foment reaction in the class. The bourgeoisie's pandemic response, as well as the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations, intensified all these ills of society. In racist capitalist America, the lumpenproletariat and the mentally deranged overlap to a large degree with the oppressed minority population. Crime and vigilantism are

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1179

The Crisis of Germany's Liberal Order

A Communist Answer

by G. Perrault

The following document, submitted for discussion on 14 June 2022, is translated from Spartacist (German-language edition) No. 33 (May 2023), journal of the International Executive Committee.

In the 30 years since the counterrevolutionary destruction of East Germany (DDR), German imperialism has been on the offensive. By grinding down the working and living conditions of its working class, it has extended its economic stranglehold over all of Europe. Now, the relative political stability of the post-Soviet period is over. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine have caused dramatic shifts in the world situation. Every indignity of capitalism has been magnified dramatically, the world is increasingly unstable, and the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD) promises only more hardship. These changes have provoked a crisis in the Left Party (Linkspartei) and the pseudo-Marxist left. After having spent decades in lockstep with the bourgeoisie—their utter subservience to the government during the pandemic being the high-water mark—they now find themselves frantically trying to square the circle of being pacifist and pro-Ukraine. As the “peace” and “stability” of the liberal order breaks apart, the left longingly looks back, set on the reactionary and futile perspective of returning to the supposed glory days of the postwar and post-Soviet eras.

This can only lead the working class to catastrophe. All the seeds for the current convulsions of German capitalism were sown in the previous period of stability. The Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD), like the rest of the social-democratic left, has spent the last three decades capitulating to liberalism, the dominant ideology of German imperialism. To move forward, it is critical that the ICL's German section understands the material basis for the policies and ideology of the German ruling class, how the workers movement has capitulated to them and how the current status quo is breaking down. Only by assimilating these lessons can we truly expose the bankruptcy of liberalism and motivate why the road ahead for the workers movement lies not in the experience of the Social Democracy of the 1960s, '70s or '90s, but in the 1919 split between the revolutionary and reformist wings of the German Social Democracy following the first inter-imperialist war.

West Germany: From Anti-Soviet Front Line to “End of History” Poster Child

The West German state was set up with the explicit purpose of being a bulwark for the Americans against the Soviet Union. The counterrevolutionary and revanchist nature of West Germany was reflected in both the capital and constitution being explicitly temporary. Bonn was to be the capital until Berlin could be fully

reclaimed, and the constitution would be made permanent once Germany reunified. To destroy the DDR and reunify Germany on a capitalist basis was the main strategic aim of German imperialism. This was always the case, whether the government was following a policy of “confrontation” or “appeasement.” The anti-Soviet Cold War was the defining political question between 1945 and 1989 and lay behind all major policies, whether it was the establishment of the European Economic Community, the rehabilitation of Nazi officials, the persecution of communists or the indefatigable support to the U.S.

The destruction of the DDR, followed shortly by counterrevolutions in the Soviet Union and throughout East Europe, meant that German imperialism had fulfilled its immediate objective, leading to a dramatic change in its role and ambitions. With West Germany already economically dominant on the continent, it was clear that reunification would consolidate Germany's role as the leading power in Europe. Contrary to the projections made by the ICL, reunification did not lead to increased inter-imperialist confrontation. It was, in fact, approved and overseen by the U.S. The premise for reunification was that Germany would remain in NATO and that there would be further European “integration,” leading to the establishment of the



Willy Römer

Karl Liebknecht, 1919: Revolutionaries' fight to split from pacifist wing of Social Democracy was key to building German Communist Party.

EU and euro. The fact is that U.S. hegemony in Europe remained unchallenged; it continued to guarantee stability through its military while the European imperialists played the central role in “integrating” East Europe economically and politically into the West.

This does not mean that German imperialism has been a simple pawn of the U.S. without its own agency in world affairs—a nationalist argument raised by many social democrats. Germany is a major power that has already made two attempts at world domination. While it doesn't currently have the economic and military might to challenge the U.S. directly, it has room to maneuver in the transatlantic alliance and has options outside of it. However, for the time being, the German ruling class has been overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining its partnership with the U.S., accepting that this means playing second fiddle. This orientation must be seen in the broader context of the post-Soviet order, which was aptly described by comrade Jim Robertson in 1999:

“We and many others note that the ‘post-Soviet world’ has become like the pre-1914 period. Yes, economically—with the exception of no gold standard for the world markets. No, politically—because

there are no counterposed developing alliances of the several great powers. Rather we continue to see, for now, a disgruntled hierarchy with the U.S. very much on top. “These observations have a considerable bearing on the timing of renewed major inter-imperialist conflict (it did before 1914, too).”

—“Note on ‘Post-Soviet World,’”
SL/U.S. Internal Discussion
Bulletin No. 65

A central reason for the stability of post-Soviet Europe is that its configuration has been extremely beneficial for Germany. With the U.S. paying the military bill, German capitalism could focus its resources on industry and foreign investment. The EU gave easy access to new markets and cheap labor. The euro artificially depreciated the deutschmark, boosting exports. After pillaging the DDR and turning the screw on its working class, German imperialism has had an open field to strangle the rest of Europe economically. In this context, the entire political, economic and military strategy of Germany has been to avoid confrontation and take full advantage of Pax Americana, which enables it to export goods and capital across the world with relative ease and in a proportion that far outweighs its military might.

As the strategic interests of German imperialism changed, so did the dominant ideology. Marx explained in *The German Ideology* that “The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.” Having accomplished its strategic aim of “defeating Communism,” the ruling class adapted the ideology it used to justify its economic dominance to the requirements of its new policy of “peaceful” economic plunder. Instead of burying its past crimes, the German bourgeoisie claimed it had “learned the lessons of history” and that it is precisely the experiences of two world wars, the Holocaust and two dictatorships (Nazism and Communism) that made Germany the most modern and progressive democracy in the world today. This placed on Germany's shoulders the duty to guide the world toward the light of liberal democracy. Its newfound mission: to preach the Good News of democracy, pacifism, open borders, free trade, ecology and Christian charity.

Bourgeois ideologues have written reams of self-congratulatory essays explaining that it is because of a profound moral regeneration rooted in the experience and study of history that the German ruling class traded its Prussian-spiked military helmets for the technocrat's suit. But the source of this change lies in the pocketbook, not the history books and moral scriptures. Military and diplomatic entanglements are



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Left: In lockstep with NATO/U.S. imperialism, SPD chancellor Scholz ramps up German rearmament and war drive against Russia, 17 October 2022. Below: Left Party banner at April 10 Hamburg antiwar march reads, “Peace with Russia and China.” Pacifist left channels workers' anger into arms of “peaceful” imperialism.

picture-alliance



bad business if your strategy is centered on the export of industrial goods. More fundamentally, it is because the German capitalists have so far had a favorable economic and political position in post-Soviet Europe that they have “learned” to pursue their goals through economic rather than military means. Unfortunately, this success cannot last, and all the moral preaching in the world cannot solve the contradiction so aptly illustrated by Henry Kissinger: “Poor old Germany. Too big for Europe, too small for the world.” Those who would forget this “lesson of history” are in for a rude awakening.

The Subordination of the German Workers Movement to Liberalism

While the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz swears that it has morally regenerated and petty-bourgeois ideologues fully embrace this grotesque propaganda, the pill is harder to swallow for those who were and remain the victims of German imperialist exploitation. Crucially for the capitalists, German Social Democracy and pseudo-Marxists have been the staunchest converts to its new moral mission and have been more than happy to do the groundwork for its liberal crusade. Through propaganda, class collaboration and bribery, the German capitalists have rallied the labor movement to its objectives. This has been a crucial aspect of Germany’s economic success and political stability over the course of the last decades.

As the strategic interests of the German ruling class changed after 1989, so did the role and policies of the left. During the Cold War, the SPD loyally played its part in marshaling anti-Communism in the working class of West Germany and served as the Trojan horse for counterrevolution in the DDR. The rest of the workers movement followed in the SPD’s counterrevolutionary footsteps or capitulated to Stalinism (the Maoists succeed in doing both). The exception was, of course, the SpAD, which at the decisive moment fought against capitalist counterrevolution and for the reunification of Germany through socialist revolution in the West and political revolution in the East. The defeat of this perspective—for which the leaderships of the workers, East and West, hold central responsibility—led to capitalist reunification and the destruction of the Soviet Union.

This defeat had catastrophic consequences for the workers movement. In



Interphoto

U.S. imperialism has for decades been calling the shots in Europe. President Reagan, flanked by German chancellor Kohl near Berlin Wall, calls for counterrevolution in East Germany, 12 June 1987. Right: Ukrainian president Zelensky (center, rear) feted at imperialist G7 meeting, May 2023.



Rousseau/Getty

the East, the working class was demoralized and largely destroyed; in the West, it has faced a constant barrage of attacks on its living standards. A secondary consequence of the counterrevolution has been to change the center of gravity in the left, moving it away from the Russian question. During the Cold War, the splits within the workers movement in Germany (both between East and West and within the West) reflected the conflict of two antagonistic German states with rival modes of production. This is obviously no longer what explains divisions within the workers movement. Having a positive view of the DDR today—which much of the left has—is no longer a sharp dividing line because the DDR has been removed as a living threat to German capitalism. The Linkspartei is symptomatic of this change. It is a fusion of discontented left-wing SPD members and the remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy. While many of their leaders stood on opposite sides of the Cold War, they are united today around a common program of left-liberal social-democratic reformism.

The destruction of the Soviet Union and the DDR meant the final rollback of the split between Communists and Social Democrats in Germany. In 1919, the founding of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) represented the division between the program of reform and the program of revolution. The split was maintained under the Stalinist Comintern, although it no longer embodied the program for revolution but the foreign policy of the Soviet Union’s bureaucratic caste. Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933 without any resistance from the KPD decisively showed

that the party was dead as a revolutionary factor. When it was re-established following the victory of the Allies in World War II, the KPD was divided along the same lines as Germany. In East Germany, it became the main component of the ruling party. In West Germany and West Berlin, the KPD played a double role; it was on the one hand an agent of the DDR bureaucracy and on the other a minor component of the labor bureaucracy loyal to German imperialism. In West Germany, no matter how low the KPD (later renamed the DKP) stooped before German nationalism, it could not be reconciled with social democracy because of its connection to the October Revolution—a connection which lived only through the subsidies it received from the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. In the post-Soviet period, this cumbersome obstacle has been removed, enabling the entire German workers movement—extending all the way to leftovers of the Stalinist bureaucracy—to have a cozy spot along a right-left continuum of liberal reformism.

The leadership of the workers movement in Germany, whether it is the SPD, Linkspartei or trade-union bureaucracy, has been fully committed to the liberal orientation pursued by the German bourgeoisie for the last 30 years. This has been their new center of gravity. Underpinning the entire perspective of these organizations is that liberal bourgeois democracy and the post-World War II order are the essential guarantees against repeating the disasters of the 20th century. It is this deadly illusion that has served as the main propaganda tool to subordinate the proletariat to the interests of the bourgeoisie. The major

policy changes made by German imperialism following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine have somewhat changed the contours of German liberalism but have not moved it away from its key pillars.

On the domestic level, the constitution is viewed by the organizations of the working class as the ultimate guarantee against “authoritarianism.” Unlike countries such as France or the U.S., where the left is often highly critical of the constitution, in Germany it is considered a sacred document. In fact, the SPD, Linkspartei and the pseudo-Marxists generally present themselves as the true defenders of the constitution. The false lesson pushed by these organizations is that the fight against fascism starts by stopping the incremental erosion of democracy in the state and society. Thus, fascism is understood not as a paramilitary mobilization of the petty bourgeoisie against the working class and minorities but as anything that is to the right of (former chancellor) Merkel-liberalism. The programmatic conclusion is generally to call on the state to crack down on the right wing and fascists within the state and in society.

The bourgeoisie and its agents have been very effective in mobilizing anti-fascist sentiment in the working class to rally support for “progressive” bourgeois forces in order to electorally defeat the “right.” These “fight the right” politics have been the political basis for multiple popular-front governments and a key prop for the stability of German imperialism. Unlike in France and Spain in the ’30s, or Chile in the ’70s, the recent German popular fronts have not constituted the

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SPARTACIST

An Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

SPARTACIST
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THE BREAKDOWN OF U.S. HEGEMONY & THE STRUGGLE FOR WORKERS POWER

A PROGRAM FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Documents from the Eighth Conference of the International Communist League

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Inset: Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, who developed program of permanent revolution, addressing Red Army soldiers in 1920.

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The Breakdown of U.S. Hegemony & The Struggle for Workers Power

A PROGRAM FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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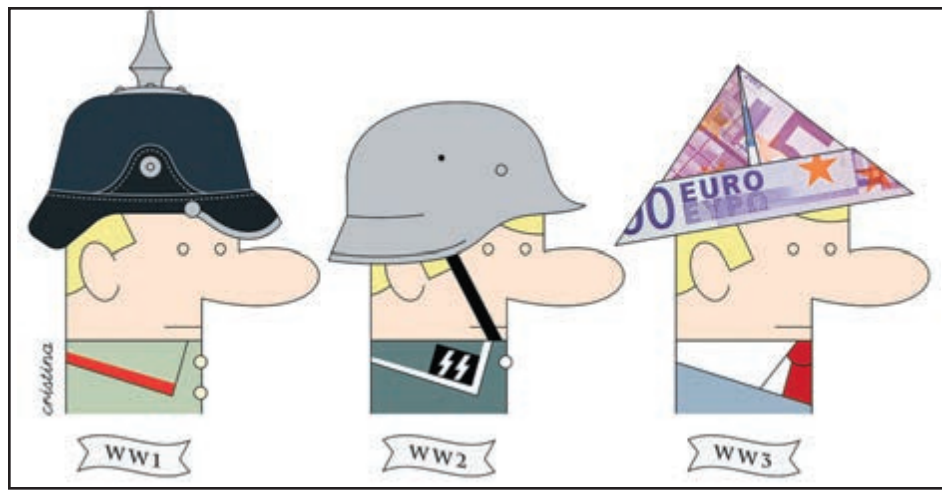
(continued from page 11)

last line of defense for the bourgeoisie before an insurgent proletariat but have been mere liberal coalition governments. Thus, it has been cheap for the left (and the SpAD) to oppose the formation of such governments. They have done so while at the same time capitulating to the “fight the right” program they are based on. For example, in 2017 the SPD youth group advocated that the SPD, by refurbishing its credentials in opposition to the government, could better stem the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). The SpAD’s “No GroKo” (Grand Coalition) campaign accepted this premise, adding only leftist rhetoric. Such examples show how opposing the formation of a popular front in the current German context—while necessary—is not inherently revolutionary. The crucial task is to break the proletariat from the politics of the popular front and from its social-democratic leadership. To do this, it is necessary to concretely show how liberalism is itself one of the principal causes for the growth of reaction and how it paralyzes any working-class fight for its own independent interests.

In terms of foreign policy, the leaders of the workers movement present the European Union as the guarantor of peace in Europe. It is seen not as a tool for German imperialist exploitation but as proof that Germany has transformed into a benevolent power. If anything, the labor misleaders are among the most fanatic defenders of the EU. They raise the most strident cries against the right-wing governments of other EU countries—especially those oppressed by German imperialism—that do not bow down to liberalism and sometimes seek to assert national sovereignty against the EU. In Germany, defending the EU is a central pillar of “fighting the right.” For example, the SPD agreed to join yet another GroKo in 2018 with the explicit goal of ensuring political stability in the EU against right-wing populist forces. The criticisms of the EU from the left—generally from the Linkspartei and pseudo-Marxists—are always based on holding the bourgeoisie accountable to the liberal utopian myths the EU was founded on: open borders, no militarism, a social Europe, etc. These “criticisms” are thus nothing more than a thin liberal veneer for their social-chauvinist support to German imperialism’s main instrument of foreign domination.

The campaigns by the leadership of the workers movement and the left for “pacifism,” “democracy,” “never again war, never again fascism” have been totally in line with the orientation of German imperialism, currently geared not toward military domination but toward economic domination of the domestic and European proletariat. As the left looked over their shoulder and saw the German capitalists proclaiming the same noble values as themselves, they were convinced that it was due to their own efforts. Excited and convinced they were the riders and the bourgeoisie the horse of this bloc, they resolved to redouble their collaboration toward the great liberal project of German imperialism. Now that the German bourgeoisie isn’t so committed to disarmament after all, the left is stunned and disoriented.

Over the last decades, the SPD has played a central role at the national level in running German imperialism, directly enforcing massive attacks against the working class domestically and abroad. Generally, the Linkspartei is nothing but a slightly left version of the SPD. Its main function is to serve as a harmless exhaust pipe for working-class discontent. There are two differences with the SPD that are nonetheless noteworthy. The first is the Linkspartei’s origins coming in part from the East German Socialist Unity Party. This means that no matter how much the Linkspartei is ready to crawl before bourgeois liberalism, it will never be considered by the bourgeoisie as a truly respectable party. The other important difference is the Linkspartei’s tepid opposition to



Cristina Sampaio/CagleCartoons.com

NATO. While its position is based on sound German liberalism, i.e., that one must oppose militarism—especially bad American militarism—it happens to clash with the very pillar of German liberalism: U.S. military domination of Europe. This pacifist anti-Americanism is totally acceptable in good liberal company, but it is not acceptable in government nor is it acceptable when there is an actual conflict—as the war in Ukraine graphically illustrates. These differences are, however, not of a qualitative programmatic nature, and the politics of the left wing of the SPD largely overlaps with the right wing of the Linkspartei.

The utter subordination of the workers movement to the liberal bourgeoisie is as much a factor contributing to the economic success of German imperialism as it is itself conditioned by this success. Put simply, the German bourgeoisie can afford to pay for complex class-collaborationist schemes, which have enabled it to drive down working conditions with a minimum of social conflict. Attacks against the workers are often agreed to by the plant councils and unions. Although there is much talk in the left about militant trade unionism, the left universally considers institutionalized class collaboration such as the co-management system and the dock worker dispatching agencies in the harbors as working-class gains.

The relative social stability enabled by class collaboration has been very profitable for German capitalists and is seen as a worthwhile investment for most of them. Unlike some of its imperialist rivals, Germany has maintained a large industrial working class, an important layer of which retains relatively high living standards. This upper layer receives a portion of German imperialist superprofits, while the exploitation of the lower layers of the working class has intensified through the use of tier systems and subcontracting. This increased fragmentation and differentiation in the working class has been directly enabled and overseen by the trade-union bureaucracy, which sacrifices the interests of the working class as a whole for the short-term sectoral interests of certain strata. This direct corruption serves as lubricant for the total ideological alignment of the leadership of the workers movement with the aims and interests of German imperialism. However, this system of class collaboration and bribery—just like the entire liberal edifice on which German imperialism is built—is being undermined by the very elements that were the source of its strength.

The Breakdown of Post-Soviet Stability and the Tasks of Communists

“In the present crisis, German capitalism reveals itself as the weakest link for the diametrically opposite reason [compared to Russia—ed.]: precisely because it is the most advanced capitalist system in the conditions of the European impasse. As the productive forces of Germany become more and more highly geared, the more dynamic power they gather, the more they are strangled within the state system of Europe—a system that is akin to the ‘system’ of cages within an impoverished provincial zoo. At every turn in the conjuncture of events German capitalism is thrown up against those problems which it had attempted to solve by means of war.”

—Trotsky, *What Next?* (1932)

Despite all the talk about European integration and unity, the truth is that

none of the contradictions that led to the two world wars in Europe have been solved—nor can they be under capitalism. The Cold War division of Europe, as well as U.S. imperialist hegemony, made it possible for the conflicts between the capitalist states of Europe to be temporarily suppressed but did nothing to eliminate them. The constant struggle between the imperialists to redivide the world inexorably leads to war. Moreover, the fractured nature of Europe—divided into myriad capitalist states with conflicting economic, political and national interests—gives conflicts on the continent a particularly explosive character. As the relative power of the United States in the world declines, the tensions within Europe will increase. As before, Germany will find itself in the eye of the storm.

Pax Americana has been the foundation stone on which postwar—and, in particular, post-Cold War—German imperialism built up its domination of Europe. As explained earlier, it enabled relative political stability in Europe and the world, allowed for increasingly open markets for goods and capital and minimized the expenditure on the armed forces. In this context, the transatlantic alliance has been extremely beneficial to Germany. However, this positive dynamic has now begun to reverse, and Germany is being increasingly squeezed and constrained by the requirements of this alliance.

For one thing, the cost of the U.S. calling the shots has been increasing for Germany. The burden of American conflicts is being shouldered disproportionately by Germany. Trump’s cancellation of the Iran deal meant European firms lost a lot of money, while the Americans were basically unaffected. The conflict in Ukraine, in both its previous version and even more so now, comes at a much greater price to Germany than to the U.S. The increasing tensions with China will also come at a relatively greater cost to Germany, which is more reliant on the Chinese market than the U.S.

On top of this, the weakening of U.S. hegemony means the benefits it accorded to Germany will be reduced. Protectionism and supply-chain breakdowns are on the rise and will probably increase much more. This is obviously bad news for an economy centered on exports. Political instability in the world will also continue to increase dramatically in the coming years, meaning Germany can no longer get away with a minimal military budget. As the costs of the transatlantic alliance

increase and the benefits decrease, German imperialism will once again start feeling the familiar squeeze that comes with not calling the shots on the world stage. Being the leading power in Europe, Germany will not accept being in such an uncomfortable position indefinitely. More and more, it will contemplate the option of making a renewed play for its place in the sun—knowing full well how high the costs of failure are.

A prevailing illusion in the social-democratic left is that Germany could somehow withdraw from the transatlantic alliance without major consequences. It could thus play a more peaceful role internationally and could get out of the geopolitical cross fire by becoming non-aligned. Longtime SPD politician Klaus Von Dohnanyi argues along these lines in his bestselling book *National Interests*: “Ultimately, Europe’s goal must be a position of neutrality towards alliances. For those who can no longer defend themselves effectively against a stronger party, it is always safer not to get involved in the conflicts of larger powers and also not to be bound by an alliance.” The DKP’s version of this is reflected in its call for “Peace with Russia! Out of NATO!” Although the war in Ukraine has temporarily poured cold water on such proposals, they show that there is already a certain sentiment toward breaking the link with U.S. imperialism. But it took two world wars and the Cold War for the U.S. to establish its dominance over Europe; to think it would simply let a German-dominated Europe slip out of its control is pure naivety. And to think all of “Europe” would want to follow the Germans down this route is pure imperial arrogance. The U.S.’s military supremacy in Europe has been the only thing stopping the continent from tearing itself apart once more. Any deep change in the nature of the transatlantic alliance is sure to have dramatic and violent consequences.

The liberal-nationalist myth underlying views such as those expressed above is that a German-led alliance, unlike the U.S.-led one, would be a force for peace. One would think that two attempts at conquering Europe militarily would lead most to be wary of this, but for German ideologues it is precisely this fact that is used as the main argument to rule out future military adventures! Germany has, after all, “learned from history.” Hergried Münkler tries to give a realist twist to this liberal drivel in his book *Power in the Center*:

“Independent from the fact that this policy failed the first time and led to catastrophe the second time, Germany no longer has an excess of military power, and as things stand, this will no longer be the case. In addition, as explained above, the value of military power has fallen significantly. In this respect, those who continue to warn against the militarization of German foreign policy are fighting against a constellation of the past. Today’s Germany, on the other hand, is a deeply post-heroic society.”

War has the ability of showing what is rotten, and the war in Ukraine has quickly swept three decades of such pacifist propaganda into the dustbin of history.

The left, which has indeed been warning about the threat of militarism, has not fared any better. The theory was that “never again war and fascism” would

Berlin, 29 May 2022: Spartakist banner reads: “Throw the EU/NATO Supporters Out of the Left! Ukrainian, Russian Workers: Turn the Guns Around!” The pacifists’ loyalty to German imperialism is shown by their refusal to toss out the social-chauvinists.



be achieved by making sure Germany upheld liberal values and pacifism. Suddenly with the war in Ukraine, the liberal position that EU-aligned Ukraine must be armed to the teeth against authoritarian Russia clashes with the pacifist utopian position that weapons are bad and cause conflict. Faced with the choice of giving up their hypocritical anti-imperialist stance or defending themselves against the openly pro-imperialist agents in the workers movement who are on the offensive, the left has so far opted for the time-tested strategy of putting their heads in the sand. Their answer is to cosmetically patch up the divide by repeating yesterday's pacifist slogans, unable to understand why their calls suddenly clash with bourgeois respectability. With no strong dissenting voice, the general mood in the country has been largely in favor of the government position of rearmament and full military support to Ukraine. So far, the misleaders of the working class have faced little pushback in mobilizing behind German imperialism in the Ukraine war. However, as the conflict drags on, and the costs to the working class pile up, this unity is bound to crack.

Though significant, the war in Ukraine is only one of many factors leading German imperialism into its familiar corner. The pressure is slowly rising on multiple fronts. Tensions within the EU are bound to erupt anew once the initial political impact of the Ukraine war eases and the economic crisis hits again with a vengeance. Although largely ignored in the media, issues such as the military conflicts in the Sahel, the Near East and Libya, as well as the impending famine throughout the neocolonial world, will necessarily have deep political repercussions in Europe. It will also be impossible to stay clear of the economic and political fallout from the growing conflict between the U.S. and China.

On the economic front, the situation is gloomy. The European economy was already in a bad state before the pandemic, the rise of inflation and the war in Ukraine. Germany is far behind its competitors when it comes to digital technology. Its heavy industry sector, which has been at the heart of its success, is starting to lag as well. For example, German car manufacturers are scrambling to catch up with the Americans and Chinese in the production of electric vehicles. The latter have made good use of their economic ties with Germany to copy a number of its industrial techniques and technology. This increased competition is occurring in a context where Germany has committed more of its resources toward the military and where the best-case scenario is low growth. The Chinese market, which has been German industry's main prospect for growth, is becoming more competitive, more restrictive and is not growing as quickly as before. Looming over all of this is the decade-long policy of major central



Hamburg, March 27: One-day strike by rail and service unions shows workers' willingness to fight. Trade-union misleaders are obstacle to workers struggle and must be replaced by revolutionary leadership.

banks of "solving the economic crisis" by pumping huge amounts of cash into the financial markets. During the pandemic, they did this on an even larger scale to compensate for the shutdown of the economy. Sooner or later (probably sooner), the resulting financial bubbles will burst. Already, inflation is raging, and it is only a matter of time until the crisis evolves into a full-blown economic crash. Confronting this economic situation, the German capitalists' only available option will be to further tighten the screws on its working class and on the rest of Europe.

Domestically, this will put the normal workings of class collaboration under increased pressure. There will be fewer crumbs available to bribe the progressively shrinking upper layers of the working class, potentially leading to a major confrontation with the powerful and well-organized German proletariat. Additionally, by being complicit for decades in the fragmentation and intensified exploitation of large parts of the working class, social democracy and the unions have been undermining the source of their political influence. This has already led to a gradual decline in electoral successes of the SPD and Linkspartei. It also leaves large sectors of the working class unorganized and highly exploited. This could prove a volatile and explosive situation in the context of a renewed capitalist offensive. Another factor of political instability is the grinding down of the petty bourgeoisie and the lumpenization of whole swaths of the country. This process has been longstanding and has now been accelerated by the pandemic and inflation. This will bring oil to the fire of right-wing populism. The AfD is in the best position to benefit from this, given that it has been the only real opposition to the liberal status quo.

On the international level, Germany will have to squeeze the rest of Europe to compensate for its own hardships. As the euro crisis already showed, this will undoubtedly provoke resistance from the oppressed countries of Europe as well as

from the other imperialist powers, centrally France. However, Germany can do this only so much before the EU starts to shatter. If economic blackmail does not work, Germany will be confronted with the choice of either suffering economic and political blows or using military means to ensure its interests.

Before the looming tidal wave of economic chaos, class conflict, war and famine, the reformist left is running toward the shore hoping to convince the wave to recede peacefully. Their hope is that with a bit of economic struggle and pacifist and anti-racist demonstrations they can convince the German bourgeoisie to remember its commitment to liberalism and class collaboration. With every blow to the liberal status quo, the left has responded by holding on ever more frantically to the coattails of the supposedly progressive bourgeoisie, proposing adjustments that could make capitalism a little better. The SpAD has been complicit in promoting such reformist illusions,

responding to the growing political turbulence and reaction by advocating for a more militant, anti-EU social democracy and trade-union bureaucracy.

In direct opposition to this course, the task of revolutionaries is to use the increasingly obvious bankruptcy of liberalism to bring about the demise of the capitalist system. Contrary to what is pushed by the left, the fundamental lesson of the '30s is *not* that all must unite against fascism. Rather, it is that German imperialism needed war and fascism to break through the pressures coming from its powerful proletariat on the one side and from its second-tier place in the imperialist hierarchy on the other. As the pressure on Germany increases once more, the alternative faced in the past will loom ever closer. Again, the question facing the proletariat is going to be: Will it seize power and put an end to German imperialism or will barbarism once more be the answer?

The objective situation will push the working class toward revolution. However, this movement alone will not suffice. What history shows is that to fulfill its role as gravedigger of capitalism, the working class needs to liberate itself from the ideological hold of liberalism and break politically with social democracy. Just as it was necessary in 1914, the working class must throw out its pro-imperialist leadership and forge a new revolutionary party. The workers vanguard must be consciously led toward this struggle, organized around a revolutionary program. Breaking with its past practices, the SpAD's duty is to elaborate the key planks of this program. It must make use of the convulsions in society and in the left to organize a revolutionary pole in *opposition* to social democracy. The sooner such a pole can be established, and the deeper its political foundations, the bigger its impact will be on the outcome of the upcoming struggles in Germany and internationally. ■



Berlin-Treptow Park, 30 December 1989: Protest against desecration of Soviet memorial. Spartacists exposed SPD as spearhead for counterrevolution, warned against betrayal by Stalinist rulers. Fight for revolutionary leadership is decisive!

Left...

(continued from page 6)

That said, the IG's polemic against Fain's history of collaboration with the capitalist state, while plenty orthodox, avoids political combat on the main issue: Fain's economism. Union-suing is the outgrowth of this reformist viewpoint. No matter how militant, any union leader who does not aspire to workers rule will get sucked into trying to enlist the repressive state apparatus to their advantage.

Tellingly, the IG does not at any point polemicize against or outline a revolutionary alternative to the trade-union reformism of the labor bureaucracy and its left hangers-on. This is glaring when the IG addresses black oppression. Fain & Co. avoid the fight against racial oppression in the context of the strike mobilization because it is supposedly divisive to the working class. From within the narrow bounds of economism—which seeks to gain only a few crumbs from the capitalist table—advancing the cause of black people must necessarily come at the expense of

white workers. This leads to not confronting racial divisions, allowing them to fester and grow and giving the bosses a mighty weapon to cut down the strike. But when the conflict is approached from the standpoint of a clash with U.S. capitalism itself, it becomes not only possible but necessary

to tie the cause of working-class emancipation to the fight for black equality.

In contrast, all the IG offers is a call to link these two struggles that is entirely compatible with Fain's strike strategy: "To win against the giant auto/truck corporations will require a struggle in which the

almost 150,000 UAW auto workers, with a class-struggle leadership, connect this fight with that of all the oppressed sectors in this rotting capitalist system, and with our sisters and brothers internationally." But you don't need a class-struggle leadership to "connect" the UAW and oppressed more generally or issue platitudes of solidarity. The day before the strike, Fain himself declared: "We fight for the good of the entire working class and the poor." Absent a program to break down the walls of segregation as decisive to the strike, the IG is not planting a revolutionary pole against Fain. Rather, it is giving a left cover to the union bureaucracy.

The UAW strike has the potential to be a turning point for the black and working masses in this country—the kickoff to a labor counteroffensive against a ruling class that has been relentlessly hammering at them. It is urgently necessary for socialists to build a real opposition to the trade-union bureaucracy within the UAW. In the current explosive situation, a class-struggle leadership in auto could be the foundation on which a revolutionary party in the U.S. is built. ■



Josh Lipnick

Spartacists intervene into UAW strike rally in Detroit, September 15.

Por el derecho a la autodefensa

Lo siguiente es una reimpresión de un suplemento del 19 de agosto de El Antiimperialista, periódico de nuestros camaradas del Grupo Espartaquista de México.

La situación de la mujer en México es simplemente horrible: violencia doméstica, violaciones, desapariciones forzadas, asesinatos. Tal es el caso de Milagros Monserrat, que fue apuñalada y se desangró hasta morir en las calles de León, Guanajuato, a plena luz del día el pasado 10 de agosto. Es claro que el llamado urgente de las mujeres es por acabar con esto. Pero, ¿cómo? Nosotros llamamos por *¡pistolas para las mujeres!* como una demanda inmediata para protegerse de la violencia cotidiana brutal. Que las mujeres estén armadas tendría un impacto directo en el número de ataques al hacer que los potenciales agresores lo piensen dos veces antes de actuar. Como dicen: Dios creó al hombre y la mujer, y Samuel Colt los hizo iguales.

Con este llamado desafiamos directamente al paternalismo machista que considera que las mujeres tienen que depender de los hombres y del estado burgués para su defensa. A su vez se contraponen a los esquemas fallidos impulsados por las feministas y los populistas: llamados por más seguridad (lo cual significa más policía en las calles), separación de hombres y mujeres en el transporte y en las marchas, rogarle al gobierno que implemente reformas mínimas. El llamado por armar a las mujeres reta el monopolio de la violencia por parte del estado capitalista mexicano —la policía, las cárceles, el ejército



y los tribunales— que sirve para mantener el dominio y las ganancias de la clase explotadora. Su interés no está en luchar por la liberación de la mujer, sino en perpetuar la opresión.

El armar a las mujeres daría una respuesta inmediata a la epidemia de ataques violentos contra ellas, pero no resuelve la cuestión. La abrumadora mayoría de los casos de violencia contra las mujeres viene del abuso doméstico, por

parte de parejas y de la misma familia. Una pistola ayudaría en algunos casos, pero estas situaciones son complicadas y abordarlas no se reduce a la defensa física contra la violencia. Las condiciones brutales de las mujeres en México son un producto directo del atraso social del país causado por el sometimiento imperialista de toda la nación, que se ve más claramente en el atraso extremo en el campo y las condiciones miserables del

¡Por una lucha comunista para la liberación de la mujer!

campesinado y los indígenas, pero que también abarca las grandes ciudades y su gran desigualdad social. Para resolver no sólo la cuestión de la violencia contra la mujer, sino su opresión en general, es necesario elevar el nivel de desarrollo social del país y eso significa arrebatar de manos de los imperialistas los recursos e infraestructura para hacerlo. Combatir la opresión de la mujer requiere una mejora masiva de servicios públicos: atención médica gratuita y de calidad, educación para todos, guarderías, comedores públicos. Todo esto contribuiría a eliminar la esclavitud doméstica a la cual están condenadas las mujeres.

Separar la lucha por la liberación de la mujer de la lucha por la emancipación social y nacional la condena al fracaso. El programa feminista promueve exactamente esto; divide a la sociedad sobre líneas de género, no de clase. Es un *obstáculo* a la liberación de la mujer porque fragmenta la unidad de clase. Es sólo a través de una lucha en contra del imperialismo y el capitalismo que se puede verdaderamente mejorar la situación de la mujer. Si se entiende que las luchas por la emancipación social, nacional y de la mujer son inseparables, es patente que los trabajadores hombres son esenciales para la causa de la mujer. También queda claro que tiene que ir en ambas direcciones, que hay que ganar a los hombres a la perspectiva de la *emancipación social plena* de la mujer para poder lograr la emancipación social y nacional de los trabajadores mismos. La lucha por la liberación de la mujer tendrá éxito sólo bajo una bandera comunista. ■

La atrocidad en Mississippi es sólo la punta del iceberg

¡Abrir todos los archivos policiales!

Lo siguiente es una traducción de la declaración del 28 de agosto (ver página 16) de la Spartacist League/U.S.

Por el antiguo “crimen” en el racista Estados Unidos capitalista de que un hombre negro se acerque demasiado a una mujer blanca, seis policías de Mississippi, autodenominados “Goon Squad” (escuadrón de matones), infligieron horas de perversas y racistas agresiones sexuales y tortura a dos hombres negros, una reminiscencia del “*tarring and feathering*” [cubrir con alquitrán caliente y plumas a una persona] de las turbas de linchamiento del KKK que aterrorizaron a las comunidades negras del Sur hace un siglo. En un intento de encubrir sus grotescos crímenes, estos policías hicieron lo que normalmente hace la policía: plantaron drogas en sus víctimas. A principios de este mes, en lo que a la mayoría le parece una anomalía, los seis policías blancos se declararon culpables de agredir a Michael Jenkins y Eddie Parker.

No nos equivoquemos, no se trata de unas cuantas manzanas podridas, de policías racistas que actúan a espaldas de sus mandos, o de casos aislados limitados a los “estados republicanos” del Sur. El estado capitalista en su conjunto es el escuadrón de matones de los racistas gobernantes capitalistas y comete crímenes como éste con regularidad. Recordemos que fueron cinco policías negros los que torturaron y asesinaron a Tyre Nichols en Memphis. Hace dos semanas, policías de diversos orígenes fueron arrestados en Antioch y Pittsburg, California, por lanzar perros y cazar a negros y otras personas por “diversión”. La misma cárcel del condado de Fulton, en Georgia, donde se

tomó la foto de Trump, es famosa por las muchas muertes horripilantes de presos, en su mayoría negros. Estos y otros innumerables ejemplos demuestran que lo que se reveló en Mississippi es sólo la punta del iceberg: *¡Basta! ¡Los verdaderos crímenes del estado capitalista deben ser expuestos ante todos!*

Todo el mundo puede ver que la lucha contra la brutalidad policial está estancada. Hace tres años, hubo una enorme oleada de ira, millones de personas protesta-

Una propuesta para reconstruir el movimiento

ban contra los asesinatos racistas por parte de policías. Sin embargo, hoy en día, no existe una verdadera contraofensiva. ¿Qué ha ocurrido? El movimiento BLM se organizó sobre la base de una consigna que expresaba un sentimiento vano que podía ser respaldada por cualquiera sin absolutamente ninguna consecuencia. Todo el mundo podía decir que las vidas de los negros importan, mantener la calma y seguir adelante. Desde Bezos hasta Biden, pasando por los bancos estadounidenses, todos enarbolan la bandera de BLM mientras siguen explotando a los negros, la clase obrera y los oprimidos aquí y en todo el mundo. Durante décadas, todos los movimientos contra las innumerables atrocidades policiales han fracasado; todos han impulsado esquemas para poner más negros en cargos municipales o en control de la policía, trabajando para

el mismo gobierno capitalista que impone la segregación racial y la represión. Su estrategia se basa en crear coaliciones con políticos progresistas que te mienten a la cara mientras te apuñalan por la espalda.

Lo que hace falta es una lucha que una a las fuerzas más amplias posibles para hacer avanzar la lucha por defender a los negros contra el terror policial *ahora* y *desenmascarar* a los farsantes cuya palabrería vacía mantiene al movimiento en el suelo. Para empezar, nuestra propuesta

es reconstruir el movimiento en torno a estas exigencias: *¡Abrir todos los archivos policiales! ¡Los cien casos más atroces de brutalidad policial en cada ciudad deben estar abiertos al escrutinio público!*

Los negros y los obreros tienen derecho a saber lo que hay en los archivos policiales: ¡es un acto elemental de autodefensa hacer públicos los sucios actos de la policía! Éstas son reivindicaciones que puede apoyar cualquiera que quiera luchar contra el terror policial racista. Presenta mociones, llévalas a tus sindicatos, tus organizaciones comunitarias, tus organizaciones políticas y los funcionarios políticos que dicen representarte. Tenemos que movilizarnos para presionar a todos los políticos liberales y progresistas que dicen defender a los obreros y los derechos de los negros. Pongámoslos en un aprieto: o apoyas esta reivindicación en defensa de

los negros o apoyas el derecho de la policía a reprimir a la gente en secreto.

Muchos activistas señalan que los negros fueron vendidos a los demócratas por BLM y en respuesta plantean que lo que hace falta para revitalizar el movimiento es una demanda más militante como “abolir la policía”. De acuerdo, es cierto que para lograr la igualdad de los negros hay que abolir el estado capitalista. Pero, ¿cómo se va a llegar hasta ahí? Tiene que haber un puente que nos lleve del estado actual de las cosas a “abolir la policía”. No se puede movilizar a la gente en torno a una reivindicación que parece imposible de conseguir. Abrir los archivos policiales es factible y, de hecho, puede hacerlo cualquier político en funciones que esté realmente del lado de la gente negra.

A medida que avanza la lucha, será cada vez más claro que el primer paso para “abolir la policía” y liberar a los negros es romper la alianza entre los radicales negros y los liberales. El camino a seguir no es con demócratas progresistas como Sanders, el Partido Verde o políticos negros con retórica izquierdista que tienen la misma estrategia liberal aunque por fuera del Partido Demócrata. Las luchas por la liberación de los negros y por la emancipación de los obreros están completamente entrelazadas y sólo pueden avanzar *juntas* en *oposición* a su enemigo común y a todas las alianzas con ellos, que no son sino callejones sin salida.

¡Proponemos crear un frente unido con base en la exigencia de abrir todos los archivos policiales! Para trabajar con nosotros y organizarlo, ponte en contacto con el local de la SL/U.S. más cercano a ti. ■

For the Right of Self-Defense

Printed below is a translation of an August 19 supplement of El Antiimperialista, publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, the ICL's Mexican section.

The situation of women in Mexico is simply horrible: domestic violence, rapes, forced disappearances, murders. Such is the case of Milagros Monserrat, who was stabbed and bled to death in broad daylight in the streets of León, Guanajuato last August 10. It is clear women are urgently calling for an end to this. But how? We call for *guns for women* as an immediate demand for women to protect themselves from brutal daily violence. Women being armed would have a direct impact on the number of attacks by making potential aggressors think twice before acting. As they say: God created man and woman, and Samuel Colt made them equal.

With this call, we directly challenge the macho paternalism that presents women as having to depend on men and the bourgeois state for their defense. At the same time, our call is counterposed to the bankrupt schemes pushed by feminists and populists: calls for more security (which means more police in the streets), separation of men and women on transportation and at marches, minimal reforms that they beg the government to implement. The call to arm women challenges the monopoly of violence of the Mexican capitalist state—the police, prisons, army and courts—which serves to maintain the rule and profits of the

exploiting class. The state's interest is not in fighting for women's liberation, but in perpetuating oppression.

Arming women would provide an immediate response to the epidemic of violent attacks against them, but it does not resolve the issue. The overwhelming majority of violence against women comes from domestic abuse by partners and the family itself. A gun would help in some

cases. But these situations are complicated, and addressing them is not simply a question of physical defense against violence.

The brutal conditions of women in Mexico are a direct product of the country's social backwardness, which is caused by imperialist subjugation of the entire nation. This can be seen most clearly in the extreme backwardness of the countryside and the miserable conditions of

the peasantry and indigenous people, but also in the big cities with their great social inequality. To resolve the question not only of violence against women, but also of their oppression in general, it is necessary to raise the level of the country's social development. To do so, the resources and infrastructure must be wrested from the imperialists' hands. Combating the oppression of women requires a massive improvement in public services: free, quality health care, education for all, day care centers, public dining halls. All this would contribute to eliminating the domestic slavery to which women are condemned.

Separating the struggle for women's liberation from the struggle for social and national emancipation condemns it to failure. This is exactly what the feminist program promotes; it divides society along gender lines, not class lines. Feminism is an *obstacle* to women's liberation because it breaks up class unity. The situation of women can truly be improved only through a struggle against imperialism and capitalism. If it is understood that the struggles for social, national and women's emancipation are inseparable, it is clear that male workers are essential to the cause of women. It is also clear that it has to go in both directions. Men must be won to the perspective of the *full social emancipation* of women in order to achieve the social and national emancipation of the workers themselves. The struggle for women's liberation will succeed only under a communist banner. ■

For a Communist Movement for Women's Liberation!

Drop All Charges Against Uhuru!

For backing Russia against U.S./NATO and protesting against black oppression, three members and supporters of the African People's Socialist Party (APSP) and the Uhuru Movement, APSP chairman Omali Yeshitela, Penny Joanne Hess and Jesse Nevel face five years in federal prison on spurious charges of conspiring to act as "agents" of a foreign power—Russia. They also face an additional five years for failing to register as "agents," which for 81-year-old Yeshitela and 77-year-old Hess would be a death sentence. This racist witchhunt is a dangerous attack on the rights of free speech and association and a threat to labor, black people, socialists and anyone who opposes U.S. imperialism. It must be stopped. We call on all workers, civil rights, civil liberties and left organizations to demand: **Drop all charges! Hands off Uhuru!**

The prosecution's "evidence" includes

Yeshitela's attendance, in 2015, at an international anti-globalization conference in Moscow; opposition to Russia's ban from the 2016 Rio Olympics; publication of a "Petition to the United Nations on the Crime of Genocide Against African People" in the U.S.; and receipt of financial support for a U.S. speaking tour on reparations for black people—all allegedly under the direction of a Russian agent. To the Biden regime, these activities served to "sow discord" in the U.S. and to interfere "illegally" in U.S. elections. The administration claims Uhuru is spreading "Russian propaganda and disinformation," which it acknowledges "does not refer to information that is necessarily false" but rather to facts that run counter to the interests of the U.S. ruling class.

Those are the interests of a dominant imperialist power in decline, conscious that it is sitting upon a volcano of discon-



The Burning Spear
San Diego, May 27: March protesting racist witchhunt against Uhuru/APSP. Three members and supporters face prison on trumped-up charges of conspiring to act as "agents" for Russia.

tent. No less than Trump and the Republicans, Biden & Co. are desperate to regiment the population behind U.S. designs abroad and quash class and social struggle at home. The Uhuru prosecution is part of the drive to resurrect long-dormant police-state measures from the McCarthy era and earlier to bolster the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

Upon taking office, Biden seized on the 6 January 2021 Capitol riot to revive prosecutions under the "seditious conspiracy" law. Although this law is wielded against the fascist Proud Boys and Oath Keepers today, its main targets always have been and will be workers and oppressed people engaged in struggle, e.g., striking government workers, trade unionists hot cargoing shipments of munitions to Ukraine and students occupying state university buildings. The rarely invoked Registration Act, under which Uhuru is being prosecuted, has its roots in the Espionage Act of 1917, which was used to send Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs to prison for speaking against the interimperialist First World War. Obama-Biden invoked this law more often than all prior administrations combined, including to punish those like Chelsea Manning who exposed the crimes of U.S. imperialism.

Since the FBI's early-morning raid on Yeshitela's home in St. Louis, Missouri,

in summer 2022, the APSP has received statements of support from black nationalist, socialist and community organizations. Despite our vast political differences with Uhuru, we recognize the vital importance of stopping this witchhunt dead in its tracks through mass protest by the labor movement and left. Organizations fighting for black freedom and against capitalist exploitation have long been victims of government repression and cop terror. This is all the more reason to fight to open all police archives. Our campaign (see back page) seeks to unite the broadest possible forces to advance the struggle to defend black people against cop terror now, while exposing liberal misleaders, who chain black and workers struggle to a section of the ruling class. Class-struggle defense of Uhuru and all those in the sights of the U.S. imperialist rulers requires independence from the capitalist class and all its political parties.

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the SL, has contributed \$1,000 to Uhuru's legal defense. We urge others to contribute as well. Send contributions to Hands off Uhuru! Hands off Africa! Defense Campaign at opencollective.com/handsoffuhuru/donate. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Mississippi Atrocity Only Tip of the Iceberg

Open All Police Archives!

A Proposal to Rebuild the Movement

We reprint below an August 28 statement issued by the Spartacist League/U.S.

For the longstanding “crime” in racist capitalist America of a black man getting too close to a white woman, six Mississippi cops, self-labelled the “Goon Squad,” inflicted on two black men hours of perverse racist sexual assault and torture reminiscent of the KKK lynch mob “tarring and feathering” that terrorized black communities in the South a century ago. In an attempt to cover for their grotesque crimes, these cops did what cops normally do: they planted drugs on their victims. Earlier this month, in what seems like an anomaly to most, the six white cops pled guilty to assaulting Michael Jenkins and Eddie Parker.

Make no mistake, it’s not a matter of a few bad apples, rogue racist cops or isolated instances confined to the “red states” of the South. The entire capitalist state is the goon squad for the racist capitalist rulers and commits crimes like this on a regular basis. Recall that it was five black cops that tortured and murdered Tyre Nichols in Memphis. Two weeks ago, cops of various backgrounds were busted in Antioch and Pittsburg, California, for hunting down and siccing dogs on black people and others for “fun.” The same Fulton County Jail in Georgia where Trump’s mugshot was taken is notorious for the many gruesome deaths of mainly black prisoners. These and countless other examples show that what was exposed in Mississippi is only the tip of the iceberg: **Enough! The true crimes of the capitalist state must be exposed to all!**



Michael Jenkins, victim of Mississippi cop torture. Biggs/AP

Everyone can see that the struggle against police brutality is at a standstill. Three years ago, there was an enormous swell of anger, with millions protesting against racist cop killings. Yet today, there is no real fightback. So, what happened? The BLM movement was organized on the basis of a slogan that was an empty sentiment that could be endorsed by anyone with absolutely no consequences. Everybody could say Black Lives Matter, keep calm and carry on. From Bezos to Biden to U.S. banks, all fly the BLM banner while they continue to exploit black people, the working class and the oppressed here and across the world. For decades, every movement against innumerable police atrocities has fallen flat on its face—they have all pushed schemes to put more black faces in city office or in control of the police, working for the same capitalist government that enforces racial segregation and repression. Their strategy is based on building coalitions with progressive politicians who lie to your face while stabbing you in the back.

What’s necessary is a fight that will unite the broadest possible forces to advance the struggle to defend black people against police terror *now* and *expose* the fakers whose empty talk keeps the movement down. To start, our proposal is to rebuild the movement around the demands to: **Open all police archives! The top hundred most heinous cases of cop brutality in every city must be open to public scrutiny!**

Black people and workers have the right to know what is in the police archives—it is an elementary act of self-defense to make public the dirty deeds of the police! These are demands that anyone who wants to fight against racist police terror can support. Raise motions, take them to your unions, your community organizations, your political organizations and your political officials who claim to represent you. We need to mobilize to bring pressure down on all the liberal and progressive politicians who claim to stand for workers and for black rights. Let’s put them on the spot—either you support this demand in defense of black people or you support the right of the police to repress people in secret.

Many activists point out that BLM sold black people to the Democrats and in response pose that what’s necessary to revitalize the movement is a more militant demand like “abolish the police.” OK, it is true that to achieve black equality, the capitalist state needs to be abolished. But how

are you going to get there? There needs to be a bridge that gets us from the current state of things to “abolishing the police.” You can’t mobilize people on a demand that seems impossible to achieve. Opening the police archives is doable and, in fact, can be done by any politician in office that is really on the side of black people.

As the struggle advances, it will be ever clearer that the first step to “abolish the police” and to liberate black people is to break the alliance between black radicals

and liberals. The road forward is not with progressive Democrats like Sanders, the Green

Party or left-talking black politicians who have the same liberal strategy but from outside the Democratic Party. The fights for black liberation and for workers emancipation are completely intertwined and can only move forward *together* in *opposition* to their common enemy and all dead-end alliances with them.

We propose to create a united front based on the demand to open all police archives! To work with us and organize this, contact the SL/U.S. branch nearest you. ■

Hands Off Cop City Protesters!



Orr/Reuters
Atlanta police attack protest against cop killing of Manuel “Tortuguita” Terán (inset), January 21.

On September 5, the State of Georgia announced the indictment of 61 activists on racketeering (RICO) charges for participating in protests against the building of a cop training center in a forest in Atlanta. The prosecutors are using these charges to smear the “Defend the Atlanta Forest” movement as a criminal enterprise, and anyone who supports it a “conspirator.” The charges, carrying a possible 20-year sentence, are an escalation of a months-long campaign of state repression and intimidation. Last January, cops attacking a protest encampment gunned down 26-year-old activist Manuel “Tortuguita” Terán in a hail of over 57 bullets. Protesters have repeatedly been charged with “domestic

terrorism,” and in May the cops raided the residence of solidarity defense fund organizers, arresting them for “money laundering.” We demand: **Drop all the charges!**

The Partisan Defense Committee has donated \$1,000 to the Atlanta protesters’ legal defense and encourages others to donate at: actionnetwork.org/fundraising/contribute-to-the-atlanta-solidarity-fund.