

what road to socialism?

**a workers world
anthology**

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What Road to Socialism: An Anthology of Workers World Articles

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Table of Contents

Article	Page
Socialist Demands for the Covid-19 Crisis	1
Section 1	
COVID-19 and the Deepening Crisis of Capitalism	
Pandemic Has Hastened Capitalism's End Stage; the Rest is Up to Us! By Larry Holmes (May 12, 2020)	3
Covid-19 and Basic Facts of Marxist Economics By Deirdre Griswold (April 24, 2020)	11
Cartoon By Tony Murphy	13
Growing Signs of Deepening Global Capitalist Crisis By Ben Carroll (July 9, 2019)	14
How Profits Drive the Capitalist Crisis By Deirdre Griswold (March 22, 2020)	19
Section 2	
Reform or Revolution?	
What Road to Revolution? By Larry Holmes (January 31, 2020)	22
What Road to Socialism? By Scott Williams (January 31, 2020)	27
What Kind of Socialism? WWP Editorial (February 19, 2020)	32
'The Socialist Manifesto' and The Rise of Social Democracy By Scott Williams (September 10, 2019)	34
A Revolutionary View of The Sanders Campaign By Scott Williams (February 22, 2020)	40
Which Road to Socialism: Bernie Sanders and Voting in a Pandemic By Teresa Gutierrez (April 16, 2020)	46

Section 3

The State & Building for a Revolution

Mass Organizing to Win Revolutionary Socialism	51
By Makasi Motema (March 12, 2020)	
Lenin's April Theses	55
By Deirdre Griswold (April 26, 2020)	
Return to Leninism: Centennial Anniversary of the Comintern	60
By Larry Holmes (April 26, 2020)	
Why We Say Free Them All!	69
By Monica Moorehead (April 14, 2020)	
Organizing Against the State	71
By John Catalinotto (2017)	

Section 4

Centrality of Fighting Racism

Racism, Covid-19 and Black People - WW Commentary	75
By Monica Moorehead (April 6, 2020)	
A Revolutionary Understanding of The National Question	78
By Monica Moorehead (August 14, 2019)	
The Lies About Racism Are the Same at Home and Abroad	83
By Makasi Motema (December 27, 2019)	
Refugee Humanitarian Crisis	88
By Teresa Gutierrez (July 5, 2016)	

Section 5

The Working Class Will Make History

Marx's View of The Working Class Includes All Struggles	93
By Larry Holmes (June 8, 2018)	
A New Generation of Socialists is Coming	96
By Makasi Motema (March 16, 2019)	
The Coming Decade of Revolution	98
By Makasi Motema and Vincent Tacceta (January 11, 2020)	
A Road to Revolution	102
By Loan Tran (January 31, 2020)	
Working-Class Youth Want Socialism!	107
WWP Editorial (May 9, 2020)	

Cartoon	109
By Tony Murphy	
Section 6	
Fighting Oppression! Gender, Sexuality, Disability & Age	
Task of a Party: Building Class Solidarity	111
By Monica Moorehead (November 24, 2009)	
Trans Lives, Revolutionary Lives	114
WWP Editorial (April 2, 2019)	
Zero Tolerance! Abusers Out!	116
WWP Editorial (February 7, 2020)	
Transgender Warrior Leslie Feinberg United All Struggles for Liberation	118
By Minnie Bruce Pratt (April 1, 2015)	
Together in Solidarity and Towards Socialism	122
By Kathy Durkin (January 16, 2020)	
Disability Rights: A Rich Theater of the Class Struggle	125
By Brian Shea (July 12, 2014)	
Covid-19 and the Crisis of the Elderly	128
By Teresa Gutierrez (April 22, 2020)	
Cartoon	131
By Tony Murphy	
Section 7	
International Solidarity: Defending our Global Class	
Organizing Workers to Fight for Solidarity	133
By Larry Holmes (June 14, 2018)	
Coronavirus Highlights Gap Between Socialist and Capitalist Responses	136
By Joshua Hanks (March 22, 2020)	
China's Socialist Planning and Covid-19	139
By Sara Flounders (April 4, 2020)	
Lesson from Cuba: Disaster Capitalism and Socialist Planning	144
By Nathaniel Chase	
U.S. Uses 'Drug' Lies to Menace Venezuela	149
By Raymond Tyler (April 28, 2020)	
Why the U.S. Threatens China—as a New Superpower	151
By Sara Flounders (December 27, 2019)	

Cartoon	156
By Tony Murphy	
Cuba, Reforestation and the Climate Crisis	157
By Stephanie Hedgecock (February 23, 2020)	
Section 8	
What Is Socialism?	
What is Socialism? Part 1: Denmark, Imperialism and Social Democracy	165
By Deirdre Griswold (August 22, 2018)	
What is Socialism? Part 2: Lessons of an Early Socialist Experiment	168
By Deirdre Griswold (September 7, 2018)	
What is Socialism? Part 3: Lessons of the Paris and Shanghai Communes	173
By Deirdre Griswold (October 16, 2018)	
 Sources	 178
Subscribe	181
Apply to Join	182

Socialist Demands for the Covid-19 Crisis

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to spread, the government's response to the crisis has been criminally negligent, while capitalists would rather risk workers' health than stop production for profit.

As the ruling class shows itself to be incapable of addressing the crisis, how can we, as working class and oppressed people, organize to meet our needs? What demands can we put forward in response?

Workers World Party proposes the following 10 demands – which are a work in progress based on the fluidity of the crisis – as an initial socialist response to Covid-19:

- Free healthcare for all
- Nationalize the healthcare system under community control. Build emergency hospitals
- Full pay, benefits and guaranteed income for all
- Food, housing, medical supplies, and utilities including internet for all
- Suspend rent, evictions, mortgages, utility shutoffs and ALL debt
- Prioritize resources for communities of color, migrants, LGBTQ2+ people, seniors, youth, people with disabilities
- Empty prisons and detention centers. Shut down ICE. End racist attacks
- Community control. No cops. No military
- \$2 Trillion to the workers, not the banks
- End U.S. wars, sanctions, and environmental destruction ♦

Section 1

COVID-19 and the Deepening Crisis of Capitalism

Pandemic Has Hastened Capitalism's End Stage; the Rest is Up to Us!

By Larry Holmes (May 12, 2020)

Last week workers celebrated International Workers' Day 2020. There has been no other time in our lives when the message of May Day — global workers' solidarity in the struggle against capitalism — has been more urgent. We have entered a decisive period.

The scope of the world class struggle heading toward us will require more than solidarity from the working-class movement. It will require a level of coordination among organizations and movements around the world in the struggle against capitalism that didn't even exist in the early years of the Third International under the leadership of V.I. Lenin. Conditions and technology have made what was not possible, possible. But first, those of us in the United States, the center of world imperialism, have our work cut out for us.

The world capitalist economy, led by the U.S., is tumbling very quickly into a depression. It is likely to be more severe than any previous depression in the history of capitalism, because what is occurring now is the implosion of a system at its end stage. As staggering as the Covid-19 pandemic is on its own, in truth it has catalyzed a colossal world capitalist crisis that has been in the making for a long time. After being revived 75 years ago by World War II, U.S capitalism has for the last half century been sliding into its end stage. Globalization and the development of generations of technology, combined with a relentless assault on the living standards of the working class, have failed to stop the system's decline.

Capitalism has never recovered from the 2008 crash of the financial markets. Since then, financial markets have been on life support because central banks have pumped trillions of dollars into them. When U.S stocks nearly collapsed two months ago, the Federal Reserve did something extraordinary. Within a matter of days, it funneled about \$5 trillion into U.S. financial markets — about one-quarter of the U.S. annual gross domestic product. Wall Street is now on what amounts to a financial respirator. Before the pandemic, the global economy had been stagnant in the U.S. and contracting elsewhere. Now, everywhere the economy is contracting at a rate faster than during the Great Depression.

Those of us who have been anxiously awaiting the collapse of capitalism should restrain any inclination to rejoice. The Covid-19 pandemic and its

impact on the capitalist economy have unleashed a living hell on the workers and oppressed everywhere. Workers are dying from the pandemic, and they are losing their jobs at the same time. The rate of suicides is growing — and will continue to grow in direct correlation to the rising rate of joblessness, evictions, hunger, in addition to more sickness and death.

The real number of workers who have just lost their jobs in the U.S. is not 30 million, but closer to 50 million, when all the workers who do not qualify for unemployment benefits are added in — like many migrant workers, gig workers and the large number of laid-off workers who could not access their state unemployment websites because they were either too busy or had crashed. That means that almost one-third of the U.S. workforce has just become jobless.

The capitalists' need to force workers — those who still have a job — back to work could make it impossible to contain the pandemic because opening the economy is what is helping the stock market recover.

When the pandemic is no longer the main problem, most of the jobs that have been lost will not come back. One of the things that fuels a capitalist depression is that the system depends on workers to purchase goods and services. Depression-level unemployment means that workers will not be able to buy the things that capitalist overproduction must dump on the market to sell.

Naturally, it will be Black and Brown workers — those who struggle to survive under normal conditions — who will suffer the most. We should prepare ourselves for the unimaginable devastation that the pandemic and economic crisis are going to wreak on the peoples of the global South. But workers who live in the major imperialist countries, those who used to think of themselves as doing well, especially before the 2008 recession, will also be hit very hard by this storm.

Everyone, except the rich, will demand the end of capitalism

This is the moment of reckoning. To any rational mind, it is utterly incomprehensible that in the richest country in the world, which has the benefit of the highest level of scientific and technological development in history — and virtually inexhaustible resources — is somehow incapable of protecting society from a deadly pandemic. It's not just Trump's incompetence. Presidents and politicians from both the Democratic and Republican parties faithfully supported the measures that eviscerated the quality of health care available to the workers and the poor.

It is for this reason that there were not enough hospital beds, protective equipment, respirators and health care workers to respond to the pandemic. The measures that rendered hospitals completely unprepared to protect the people were the consequence of an austerity campaign that capitalists

embarked on in the hopes that it would rescue their floundering system. Whether or not capitalists are evil is beside the point.

The fundamental problem is that capitalists cannot do what's best for society because it's not in their interest to do so. Their interests are in accumulating all the wealth they can, maximizing profits, exploiting labor and maintaining their power over society. If the interests of the people were primary, workers would be able to stay at home safely without any fear of losing their jobs, if that is what is necessary to stop a pandemic.

It is not the economy that needs to be shut down — it's capitalism. Capitalism cannot protect us from pandemics, or from climate change, or from all the dangers that we face. Because of this world-changing crisis, more people are going to realize that capitalism is incompatible with the immediate needs of society — and that its continuation is an existential threat to all life on the planet. Until we end capitalism, we will all be at the mercy of a small — and shrinking — class of super-rich parasites.

From now on, system change must be the goal of the working class

We have reached the point where it is no longer helpful to merely expose capitalism, or not to have a goal beyond reforming it. It cannot be reformed. It has to go. Even if capitalism falls apart and is unable to recover for a long period of time, and if it is not ended, given enough time, capitalism will reconstitute itself. Supporting the struggle for the immediate needs of the workers is absolutely essential. There is no chance for a struggle for power without a struggle for the basic needs of the masses of people.

The fight for socialism must not be seen as separate from the struggle for everyone's right to a job or income, universal health care, an increase in the minimum wage, stopping evictions — and most importantly, the right and need for the working class to organize itself like never before.

Marx and Engels offered a revolutionary perspective regarding this in the “Communist Manifesto”: “Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lie not in the immediate results, but in the ever-expanding union of workers.”

How to effectively combine the struggle to end capitalism and establish socialism with the day-to-day struggles of the workers will become the central challenge for all revolutionary forces. Rising to this challenge will require drawing lessons from history and determining how past lessons are applicable to today's conditions. This will not be easy. It will be a process involving mistakes and setbacks, as well as victories.

But we have no other choice than to embark on the road that leads ultimately to revolution. Capitalism will not just go away. It must be ended. We cannot

predict with certainty the precise moment when a real revolutionary situation will be at hand in the U.S. That will depend on many things, including the readiness of the working class, the only class big and powerful enough to end capitalism. But we can say that today's events are opening roads to the revolution that did not exist just a short time ago.

Dialectical materialism and revolution

Much of the discussions online regarding the best road to socialism in the wake of the new popularity of socialism, which has spurred the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America and the Bernie Sanders campaign, tend to have one important flaw. The discussions generally seem to assume that because conditions unfavorable to the radicalization of the working class have endured for a long time, they are static and forever unchangeable. As such, the conclusions are that the period of Leninism and revolution are long gone and that the working class in the U.S. will never see any route to change other than capitalist elections, as they are tied to the traditions, institutions and influence of the U.S. bourgeoisie.

The problem with this thinking is that it leaves out an essential element without which all change — especially revolution — would be unthinkable. That element is dialectical materialism. Material conditions, which are constantly changing, ultimately compel social change, regardless of how long that change takes or whether or not we see it coming. The working class can be politically dormant for many decades, and then drastic changes in material conditions can propel workers to a new level of political consciousness, even revolutionary consciousness, within a relatively short period of time.

At this very moment, material conditions are in the process of creating the political conditions for revolutionary change. We must not minimize what is at stake here! If the forces which believe that reform and only reform is possible are the only forces influencing the working class, it will be impossible for the working class to break free of the ruling class and its political parties. That, in turn, will undermine the independence and revolutionary potential of the working class and will help capitalism survive a near-death experience.

The last time the possibility of revolution was a real threat to the U.S. ruling class was at the height of the working class' rebellious strength in the 1930s. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt wisely pressured the U.S. bourgeoisie to acquiesce to New Deal concessions to the working class because he was worried about the prospects of a replay of the Russian Revolution at home. Those were important concessions. But they also helped U.S. imperialism survive the Great Depression, enabling it to become the undisputed leader of the capitalist world through the second world war.

Marxists have been accused of prematurely predicting the end of capitalism since the first edition of the “Communist Manifesto” was published in 1848 in London. Suffice it to say, no prediction is valid until it is affirmed by events. However, eventually crying wolf will not be just another false alarm. We must take the possibilities seriously. For one thing, the U.S. ruling class does not look as invincible as it used to.

If one looks behind the curtain of the all powerful Oz, one finds a ruling class that has never been more unsure of itself. Most members of the ruling class love Trump because he’s been willing to do everything possible to make them richer, not later, but right now.

Still, the mere fact that an embarrassingly unstable and incompetent demagogue and charlatan is the leader of U.S. imperialism speaks volumes about the state of the U.S. ruling class. In reality, the most powerful imperialist ruling class in history is now very weak and demoralized and has little political credibility. Moreover, its response to the Covid-19 pandemic is going to weaken it even further. At the moment of the greatest world crisis ever, the choice for the next president is between Trump and Joe Biden, a profoundly unconvincing politician, who, like Trump, is also a sexual assailant.

Of course, U.S. imperialism is still very dangerous, maybe even more dangerous now because it is fighting for its life. U.S. imperialism still has the largest economy among the imperialist countries, the most nuclear weapons, and the largest, most technologically lethal military. With an economic depression dragging down his reelection prospects, Trump might try something radical and violent to divert the crisis elsewhere.

What will the ruling class do? What will the working class do?

No one can say for certain how the economic and political crises that are gaining momentum will unfold. The ruling class has been forced, at least for the moment, to put aside the austerity playbook which has governed its decisions for several decades. The government has acted more drastically and much faster than in any previous crisis and has pumped trillions of dollars into the economy. It’s true that most of those funds have gone to the big corporations.

Most of the people who need the little relief money that is supposed to go to workers have either not received it yet or are not eligible for it. Still, the government has never even pretended to provide emergency relief funds on this scale before. And they’ve never done anything like this in such a short time without a big mass struggle forcing them to do it.

That the capitalists have done this is a sign of how drastic and unusual this crisis is. Some of the big capitalists are complaining that the government is undermining capitalism and is adding trillions of dollars to the debt that

will break their system. What will the ruling class do when the stunning scope of joblessness becomes undeniable and irreversible? If the forces in the ruling class can manage to reach agreement among themselves to continue providing historically massive amounts of emergency support to the economy indefinitely, perhaps they will be able to forestall a social rebellion, as they try to find some way out of the crisis. That scenario seems unlikely.

It is more likely that the capitalists and their politicians will not agree to keep spending. The capitalist economy could slide into a free fall. The political apparatus of the system at the national level and at every level below that could become paralyzed and start to fall apart. The police, upon whom the system relies as its first line of defense against the workers, may become demoralized and ineffective. Members of the military could split on a class basis.

Imagine under these circumstances if the working-class movement was growing and emboldened, highly organized and prepared for a struggle for power. This scenario sounds too good to be true. What actually unfolds will be much more complex and protracted than this. However, we will never make a revolution unless we are able to imagine the possibility of one.

A new fascist danger?

Nothing illustrates the dangers for the working-class movement more than the threats of war and fascism. The imperialist powers utilized both of these weapons to divert the capitalist crisis of the 1930s. A catastrophic economic collapse, a weakened ruling class and a large section of the petty bourgeoisie losing their businesses are the classical conditions that could push a section of the ruling class to turn to fascism in order to save their system. Trump has helped pave the way for such a contingency.

We have to take this danger extremely seriously. However, it's not inevitable that a fascist movement will become strong enough to take over the government and the state apparatus. The decisive factor will not be any particular election or whether Democratic Party leaders hold more elected offices than the Republicans. The main goal of billionaires funding a fascist movement at a time of dire crisis is to crush the working-class movement. However, ultimately it will not only be the size and level of organization of the working-class movement, but the sense of its own strength and power, as well as its revolutionary orientation, that will determine which force crushes the other.

Mass organization of the working class: an absolute political necessity

In spite of everything that the working class is being subjected to, it is rising up and fighting back. When conditions are once again safe for the workers to take to the streets en masse — and we cannot know when that will

be — the mass anger and mass rebellion are likely to be something that we've never seen before. Even under extremely difficult conditions, workers at jobs where they don't have the benefit of belonging to a labor union, like Amazon, Whole Foods, Instacart, Target and elsewhere, organized walkouts and strikes on May Day to demand safe working conditions and paid sick leave.

From health care workers to migrant farmworkers, to grocery store workers and prisoners, workers everywhere are fighting for the very right to stay alive. Progressive and revolutionary forces need to support these workers. That support must be shown in more than words. It must be shown in concrete acts of solidarity. The millions of jobless workers are going to forge into a movement. We must help these workers with their organizational needs — and in every other way that's helpful and possible.

Many labor unions are losing members. That means they will be losing resources, which is going to make surviving more difficult. On the other hand, the biggest and most militant period of worker organizing may be opening up now. And it will be rank-and-file organizing from the bottom up and not from the top down. The mass organization of the working class will include all workers, including incarcerated workers, migrant workers, the undocumented, the unemployed, gig workers, sex workers, street vendors, independent contractors, and every other worker the system wants to marginalize. This includes plant workers, office workers, low-wage workers and city, state and federal workers.

The organization of the working class is more than a strategy. It is an absolute political necessity — without which we cannot maximize class solidarity and prevail in the widening class struggle. The labor unions that are ready to be helpful in this task will make the biggest difference. But if such labor unions are not involved, we cannot allow that to hold worker organizing back.

It will be up to workers, with all the help and solidarity we can provide, to form workers' assemblies or workers' councils at every level, from the workplace to the city and region. The advantage of workers' assemblies is that they are open to all workers and unemployed people regardless of circumstances. They should be open to students and youth, retirees and anyone else who can help. If they are open, it will make the workers' movement potentially enormous, inclusive and not held back by ties to the Democratic Party or any narrow, limiting ideas and conceptions that are unfortunately all too common among the organized labor movement's current leadership.

Also, while workplace, industry and geography remain central to organizing workers, changes and new conditions make the necessity of organizing workers beyond their workplace, and despite other circumstances, both possible and necessary. As many struggles develop into bigger struggles — and then

political struggles and later into struggles for power — minimizing everything that creates barriers and boundaries in the organization of the working class will be a strategic necessity.

Let's get ready for what lies ahead!

For those activists who are demoralized by the end of the Bernie Sanders campaign and are burned out after devoting so much energy to difficult struggles that did not turn out well — those who believed that a better world is possible, but have lately questioned that belief, or who are traumatized and feeling powerless by what has happened in recent months or even before — take heed.

The difference between the world of a few months ago and the world today is incalculable. Everything has changed. All that many of us feel now is suffering, fear and uncertainty. But out of such birth pangs, revolutions are born.

Whether capitalism can be ended sooner rather than later does not depend on the will of revolutionaries alone. Other conditions beyond our control must also be present. However, our will and readiness could become decisive. If we are not willing and ready, are we then willing to push the task of ending capitalism onto another generation and allow the system to continue to torture and endanger the planet and all life on it?

Let's all work to restore ourselves and restore each other so that we might be able to make history. The workers and oppressed peoples of this planet need dedicated revolutionaries who are willing to sacrifice everything in order to pave the way for a new world free of all oppression. They do not need revolutionaries to substitute themselves for the masses. They need everyone to give to the struggle whatever they can give, and they need those who are able to make the struggle their life's work do so.

Covid-19 and Basic Facts of Marxist Economics

By Deirdre Griswold (April 24, 2020)

The stock market crashed in March but partly recovered after the Federal Reserve Bank lowered the interest rate for borrowing. Then it crashed again. Companies are going bankrupt. The price of oil has dropped to its lowest level in decades.

All are signs of drastically decreased economic activity right now.

But what does that really mean?

It isn't just that people aren't buying as much stuff when they're forced to stay home in this pandemic. Much more importantly, it means that far fewer workers are producing new value.

And that's the key to what is happening to the capitalist economy now. When workers aren't working, no new value is being created. The way the capitalist markets work, however, is that they anticipate more and more growth as workers go to work every day and create new value while being exploited by the bosses. When that's not happening, there's a big crisis.

Marxist economics is crucial to understanding what is behind the economic catastrophe accompanying the Covid-19 crisis. So here's a very brief summary of some of the basics of Marxism.

Everything that is exchanged (usually for money), which we can't just get for free, like plucking a dandelion, has to have two kinds of value. One is use value. The other is exchange value.

Use value vs. exchange value

The water we drink is probably one of the most valuable things we consume every day. Without it we would die. So the use value of water is enormous.

But it is also very cheap, meaning it has a very low exchange value. As vital as water is for life, it will never cost as much as champagne, for example — which is nice, but we can survive without it!

So why is water cheap?

In simplified terms, its price is low in relation to other things we buy (called commodities) because little labor is involved in making it available. That's why it has a low exchange value.

Way back when the reservoirs in this country were first built, along with the aqueducts leading from them, quite a bit of labor went into providing water. But now oceans of water are flowing to cities and towns in many sections of the country with little human labor expended in the process. So water, in most areas, is a minor expense.

What's not so cheap, of course, are the bottles of specialty waters from Fiji or some other distant source that are sold in stores all over. This water costs money, not because it might be better, but because of the labor it takes to locate sources, transport the water, bottle and market it.

You can probably think of lots of other commodities that have a high use value but a low exchange value. Flour, for example, the main ingredient in bread — called the staff of life. Pencils. Writing paper.

Other commodities may have limited use value, like binoculars you keep in your closet and barely use, but a much higher exchange value. They're very costly compared to water.

So what is exchange value and how is it measured?

Human labor is the key

Exchange value is how much a commodity costs in relation to other commodities. And that is the key to measuring it: The exchange value of a commodity comes from how much human labor is incorporated into it. Let's say it again: It is human labor — workers working — that creates all exchange value.

This is basic to Marxism, but is either ignored or downplayed by most bourgeois economists.

The more labor it takes to produce something, the more exchange value it will have. Exchange value isn't the only factor determining price, of course. Prices can fluctuate according to supply and demand. But they fluctuate around a basic ingredient: how much labor it took to produce the commodity. No matter how much the market may be glutted with cars, for example, even an old, battered car will never sell for the same price as a loaf of bread.

Unemployment and the economic crisis

So, to come back to the current and growing economic crisis, Fortune magazine wrote on April 16: "Another 5.2 million Americans filed initial unemployment claims in the week ending April 11. That brings the total unemployment claims over the past four weeks to 22 million."

These millions of workers have either lost their jobs or are housebound because of the virus — and therefore are not creating new value.

It's the obvious explanation for the growing crisis of the economy — but not one you're likely to read about in the newspapers or hear about on radio and

television. The corporate media will report on unemployment as the result of the economic crisis, not the cause. But that is putting the cart before the horse.

To repeat, human labor — workers working — is the creator of all exchange value.

And right now, tens of millions of workers are quarantined or staying home under shelter-in-place orders. They are “essential workers” needed for the creation of new values, but are unable to do their jobs.

As a result, the capitalist economy is going into crisis mode.

ESSENTIAL



HEALTHCARE
WORKERS



FARMWORKERS



GROCERY STORE
WORKERS



DELIVERY
WORKERS



FULFILLMENT
CENTER
WORKERS

NON-ESSENTIAL



LANDLORD



BANKER



BEZOS



BOSS



TRUMP

MURPHY
WORKER
WORLD
PARTY

Growing Signs of Deepening Global Capitalist Crisis

By Ben Carroll (July 9, 2019)

The capitalist media have recently been filled with competing headlines — some issuing stark warnings of an impending economic slowdown, others dismissing this prediction outright. But a look past the blaring headlines reveals growing signs that a worldwide contraction of the capitalist economy could soon tip the U.S. and other major economies into recession.

This is in spite of the fact that the super-casino for the rich known as the stock market has once again reached record highs. The time since the last major financial collapse is nearing the longest in recent history. These two things, of course, do not reflect the reality of the lives of the vast majority of society — the workers and the oppressed.

A survey released June 14 by Bankrate.com found that nearly a quarter of U.S. workers reported they were worse off since the 2007 economic crash. Surely, this tells only part of the story of the profound ways in which the lives of many workers across the globe were impacted by the capitalist financial crisis of 2007, which wiped out workers' savings and pensions, led to a massive wave of foreclosures and layoffs, introduced punishing austerity, invigorated attacks on workers' ability to organize and fight and gave rise to the gig economy and greater insecurity for wider sections of the working class.

The same survey found that the median family income in 2016 was nearly the same as in 2000. The price of a gallon of gas, a carton of milk, a college degree, a visit to the doctor and nearly every other good or service has risen substantially since that time, leading many to take on increasing amounts of debt. Many workers, particularly the most oppressed, live paycheck to paycheck.

Signs point to impending downturn

The bankers' bank — the U.S. Federal Reserve — has pumped trillions upon trillions of dollars into the economy to keep it afloat, from direct handovers to the banks during the bailouts in 2008, to interest rate cuts that make it easier for bankers and other large capitalist corporations to borrow money. The central banks of many of the major capitalist powers across the world have taken similar interventions to prevent their economies from contracting and entering a recession. This is on top of the massive handout to the super-rich via Trump's tax cuts in 2017.

The effectiveness of this strategy to resuscitate the capitalist economy by the cabal of central bankers who exercise a considerable amount of control over the global economy appears to be reaching its conclusion.

On June 13, Morgan Stanley reported that its Business Conditions Index, which reflects sentiment about economic conditions, fell by 32 points — a record decline month to month — reaching its lowest level since December 2008.

The May report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that the U.S. economy added only 75,000 jobs that month, far below expectations. Unemployment claims in May also spiked. Although the official U.S. employment rate remains below 4 percent, the unemployment rate for Black and Latinx workers, as well as women workers, is nearly double that — by official counts. These official statistics artificially conceal the reality for many U.S. workers, who have to take on two or three low-wage, part-time or “gig” jobs or work in informal sectors of the economy just to make ends meet, or have given up looking for work altogether.

The first quarter of the 2019 gross domestic product was officially reported as having grown by 3.2 percent. However, a deeper look reveals that the core metrics of the economy — spending and investment — grew only 1.1 percent. (Forbes, April 30)

Several indicators viewed as benchmarks showing the direction that the economy is heading also revealed an impending financial crisis. The Cass Freight Index, which measures the volume of movement of commodities, showed negative growth year over year for the past five months. This echoes similar statistics showing that air freight at many of the global capitalist economies’ most important ports — from London to Singapore, Memphis to Frankfurt — were all flat or in negative territory compared with this time in 2018, some by significant margins. Orders for new aircraft also declined.

A topic of much discussion in the capitalist media has been the inverted yield curve on government bonds, or debt. This refers to the fact that interest rates paid on government short-term bonds are now greater than those on longer-term bonds. This has happened before, when there was pessimism about the longer-term prospects for the economy. And it has preceded every U.S. economic crisis. Banks and major corporations are the primary purchasers of U.S. Treasury bonds. The curve inverted briefly in March, and has once again been inverted since late May.

Newly released data also show that consumer debt in the U.S. — on things like student loans, credit cards, car loans, etc. — has ballooned to over \$14 trillion, surpassing levels that preceded the 2008 financial collapse. Student debt alone has risen to nearly \$1.5 trillion, compared to \$611 billion in 2008.

Manufacturing data in the U.S. have shown a steep decline in recent months. The Empire State Manufacturing Index in June registered its largest one-month decline in its 18-year history. A similar index measured by the Philadelphia Federal Reserve also reflected a steep decline. Meanwhile, as jobs are being cut and production slows in manufacturing, the trucking industry is reporting a pronounced slowdown, and there have also been a series of bankruptcies of shipping companies.

We have no crystal ball, but these are just a few of the many signs that point to an impending contraction of the capitalist economy, not just in the U.S., but on a worldwide basis.

Role of global developments

The aggressive posture of U.S. imperialism in decline, coupled with the fracturing of long-standing imperialist alliances, is contributing to the concerns among ruling circles of an impending economic contraction and revealing divisions among them.

In an effort to contain and undermine China, the U.S. has opened an expanding trade war, with tariffs targeting key sectors of the world's second-largest economy.

U.S. imperialism's desperate attempts to recapture markets and regain an advantage over China are revealing emerging divisions within the ruling class here. They focus on Trump's imposition of tariffs on Chinese products and his continued threats to raise them even higher. These efforts are causing fear among some sections of the ruling class that a prolonged trade war may end up negatively impacting their capitalist plunder of the world.

This is on top of the brutal and racist war Trump is waging on migrant workers, which has been accompanied by the threat of tariffs of up to 25 percent on imports from Mexico.

The threat of U.S. war on Iran looms as the U.S. seeks to expand its export of oil and natural gas. Nearly a third of the world's tanker-carried oil and petroleum passes close to Iran through the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. Energy Information Center describes the Strait as "the most important chokepoint for the world's oil industry."

Tendency of rate of profit to fall and capitalist overproduction

An article in the June 11 New York Times pointed out: "Corporate profits may be particularly vulnerable right now. Revenue overall is growing faster than earnings. In the first quarter, sales rose about 5 percent from a year earlier, while profits declined 0.4 percent ... [and] that dynamic is expected to persist over the next two quarters ... suggest[ing] companies have little ability to increase their bottom lines by expanding profit margins."

One of Karl Marx's key discoveries about the capitalist system was a contradiction that leads to crises of overproduction and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

This system is driven by competition among the owners of capital to carve out wider markets for their commodities and expand production. If they do not, they will be gobbled up and taken over by other capitalists who succeed in doing so. This leads the capitalist class to invest more and more capital into the process of production itself, including more efficient machinery for the production of commodities while reducing the amount of labor needed.

But profits are derived from the value that workers produce above and beyond what they are paid.

At first, the capitalists using the more efficient technology get a competitive edge. But eventually the new technology, requiring fewer workers, becomes the industry standard.

Marx called the capital invested in plant and machinery "constant capital." Its cost is pretty much the same for all capitalists in the same industry and is incorporated into the value of the commodities produced.

What the bosses pay out for the human labor consumed in production, however, is called "variable capital" because it varies depending on how much the bosses can squeeze out of the workers by speeding up production and reducing wages.

The more the bosses spend on machinery, etc., in order to replace workers, the greater the ratio of constant capital to variable capital. But profits come from variable capital, the exploitation of labor. So spending more on machines and less on labor eventually causes the rate of profit to fall. This is a key contradiction of the capitalist system.

While the quote from the New York Times does not in and of itself indicate this phenomenon, it is an interesting revelation when taken as a whole. Based on official historical data compiled through 2017, the rate of profit in the U.S. has declined substantially over the last few decades. After the capitalist economic crisis in 2007-08, as jobs were slashed and the means of production destroyed, the rate of profit recovered somewhat and peaked in 2014. It has been on a relative decline ever since.

This contradiction leads to the crisis of overproduction — which is where the capitalist system on a worldwide basis is currently heading. The anarchic nature of production under capitalism and the need to expand in order to increase profit leads to the overproduction of commodities — not more than what people need, but more than can be sold — which in turn causes the system to eventually fall into depression. Workers and the oppressed know all too well what this means: mass layoffs, cutbacks, austerity and a wholesale attack on our class, particularly the most oppressed.

It can also be a time of explosive and dynamic struggles of the working class as the depravity and inhumanity of the capitalist system are on stark display in these crises. Elevating global solidarity on a class basis, which rejects and confronts the many ways the ruling class attempts to divide workers with racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry and other walls of oppression, will be key.

It's up to communists and revolutionary forces to lay the foundation to raise revolutionary class consciousness and organization to intervene in these crises and help point the way forward for struggle that can resolve the contradictions of the capitalist system by prosecuting the class struggle and socialist revolution.

Capitalism at a dead end: Struggle orientation needed

There is widespread speculation that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates at least once, and perhaps several times, before the end of the year. 2020 is a presidential election year, and Trump will do all he can to prevent an economic crisis before then, which would certainly vanquish his chances of re-election.

Trump plans to hold the Republican National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. — the city with the second-largest concentration of finance capital in the U.S., also known as the “Wall Street of the South.”

Despite the fact that sections of the ruling class may be forced to reluctantly admonish Trump for his more odious comments and policies, he has brought them lavish profits and most will likely be happy to oblige him to undertake any measures to safeguard his re-election and their profitability.

What will Trump do, however, if a contraction occurs before the election? The dangers are very real of war, increased attacks on the most oppressed, including migrants, LGBTQ2S+ people, women and people of color, or other drastic measures to distract from an economic crisis.

The capitalist system is on life support, and has relied upon intervention from the central banks to keep it afloat. A new crisis of the system is not a question of if, but when.

The impending capitalist crisis threatens to be violent and devastating for workers and oppressed in the U.S. and around the world, who already face a battery of attacks every day.

As in every previous crisis, Wall Street will do all it can to place the burden of the crisis onto the backs of workers. The 2020 elections will be (and already are) used to demobilize the struggle. We must be prepared to mobilize on a global basis in our class interests to direct the fury of the workers and the oppressed against the capitalist system itself.

How Profits Drive the Capitalist Crisis

By Deirdre Griswold (March 22, 2020)

This disease is very serious, it's now worldwide, and it will impact on everyone in one way or another. It's being reported that testing for the coronavirus in this country has been delayed for lack of equipment, money and personnel. This means there are already probably a lot more sick people than are being reported.

Comrades should pay attention to what medical experts are saying and make every effort to stay safe and look out for one another. We need to take this serious situation into account in relation to all our activities, whether in our offices or in the streets.

This pandemic is going to affect hundreds of millions of workers, especially those whose jobs put them in contact with many other people. And it's not only that they risk illness. Thousands of workers are already being laid off here in the U.S. because the epidemic is shutting down parts of the economy, beginning with West Coast dockworkers.

At the same time, Wall Street continues to tank. The Federal Reserve Bank pumped \$500 billion into the market earlier this week. It didn't work. So the Fed announced just March 12 that it was pumping ONE AND A HALF TRILLION more dollars into the markets over the next two days.

So what happened after that announcement? Did the market recover? No way. After a brief rise, the Dow Jones lost 10 percent of its value, the biggest drop since 1987.

It's a clear signal that the capitalist economy is ready to collapse. As for politics, Trump is playing the angry leader whose good work is being destroyed by all his bad underlings. His latest attack is on Jerome Powell, the chair of the Federal Reserve Bank.

This is just the kind of political drama that ruling-class politicians resort to when the system is in crisis. Trump is also blaming the virus for pulling down the capitalist economy.

Human needs, not profits!

But there was a big drop in oil prices way before the virus spread here. And the demand for oil is closely linked to overall capitalist production. The steep drop in the price of oil is a symptom of declining world production. The

virus is making the crash much sharper and deeper, but it's not the cause of the crisis unfolding in the capitalist economy.

For example, look at China. It had the first big outbreak of Covid-19, and that definitely hit the Chinese economy hard. But the Chinese economy is NOT in a tailspin. And China is now starting to dismantle the emergency hospitals it erected so quickly in Wuhan. The number of new cases in China today was only three, while the number of new cases in the capitalist U.S. today was 349 and rising. In capitalist Italy there were 2,651 new cases of the virus today.

But the crisis in China is over, because the Chinese economy is not driven by profits the way the U.S. economy is. Profits do play a role in China because the government has allowed some capitalist activity, but profits don't dominate. The Chinese Communist Party was able to quickly mobilize the resources needed to contain the virus, keeping people home while vital services continued. And they made sure no one starved or lost their life savings or their homes.

This crisis is making it clearer than ever that the superior social system developing in the world today is socialism — even though socialism is still struggling to survive faced with the monstrous destructive military power of capitalism.

What this election year shows is that socialism is already popular among the U.S. masses, but also that the Democratic Party leaders will pull out all stops to make sure that a true-blue capitalist like Biden gets their nomination.

Let's get out there with our revolutionary message. As this crisis grows, people are really going to start to listen.

Talk by Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World, Mundo Obrero newspaper, phoned in to New York branch meeting of Workers World Party, March 12.

Section 2

Reform or Revolution?

What Road to Revolution?

By Larry Holmes (January 31, 2020)

Why do we even pose the question: “What road to socialism?” Because hundreds of millions of people on this planet are turning to socialism, to some idea of it. As we all know there are different ideas of what socialism is.

Tens of millions of those people are here in the U.S. They’re not exclusively young people, but a lot are. And thousands, probably tens of thousands, are activists. They’re doing campaign work for Bernie Sanders or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or worker organizing, or support for migrants, or climate struggle work, and some are in the anti-racist movement.

There are also some who are influenced by the Democratic Socialists of America, the big umbrella with a leadership that is social democratic and reformist. Some of the leadership wants to save the Democratic Party; some of the leadership wants to save capitalism by reform.

But don’t confuse the leadership with the large numbers of people coming into the organization. Some of them no doubt may not evolve beyond reformism and social democratic politics. But some of them are open to a turn to a revolutionary orientation as far as their embracing socialism is concerned.

Our job is to win some of them over to a communist cadre organization — to a revolutionary orientation. We are optimistic that if we study and do our work in a patient way and learn from our mistakes, we can do this.

Winning revolutionaries

How? It won’t be one way. This is a long-term political struggle particularly inside the new sections of the working-class movement, as well as older sections. Will it involve an ideological struggle? Of course. Will it involve the necessity to demonstrate, once again, that capitalism can’t be reformed? To talk about [Vladimir] Lenin and the state? To talk about imperialism? To talk about our obligation to the most oppressed sectors of our class? Yes.

But also, it involves our approach to struggle — our entire approach to the struggle that will also be part of the struggle we are waging to win over as many as we can.

We’re not opposed to participating in bourgeois elections, on either a local or a national level. What we are opposed to is legitimating those elections. If we participate, that is, for the most part, to expose elections as being a dead end for the workers and the oppressed.

We're for things like Medicare for All and cancelling student debt and free tuition and some of the other progressive demands.

But here is the big difference between the reformists and the revolutionaries. We may march for some issues with reformists — the political people who have tied themselves to the Democratic Party. But it is not in the interest of the social democrats, for the most part, to actually try to bring the workers and the oppressed into the struggle, to empower them, to shut shit down so that they begin to feel their weight.

What happens when workers and the oppressed take over the struggle? They break with the notion that things are determined in courtrooms and legislatures and so on.

Revolutionaries know we've got power, especially when we are out in the streets in large numbers. The reformists have the opposite orientation. Keep the masses proscribed, keep them down, make it all about the candidates.

Imagine if some of these so-called progressive social democrats were asking all the young people to 'shut it down' in order to win Medicare for All or to cancel student loans. But that's not their orientation.

The school of struggle

The struggle itself — whether it directly involves workers — is always a class struggle. Like fighting racist police terror is part of the class struggle.

What all the great revolutionary leaders and theoreticians have taught us is that a struggle is a school.

The struggle is a school where the workers and oppressed learn how they can empower themselves, separate themselves from the status quo, challenge capitalism, and learn more and more with each struggle and ultimately become more revolutionary — until they feel that they no longer need the system or any kind of pretense, and they can take it all the way.

And it's important for us to ponder that, because to a large extent, I think it's in the course of the struggle that we will have the contest with the reformists and the social democrats. The next one to three years, I'm guessing, will be critical for revolutionary forces in the working-class movement, at least in the U.S.

Why? Because that is enough time for the next global capitalist crisis to develop, whether provoked by something in the financial markets or something else. Though you must consider sometimes things don't turn around in terms of the struggle right away. Sometimes there's choking demoralization among the masses, as was the case during the Great Depression and the stock market crash of 1929. It took a while before the working class got on its feet and started fighting back.

When the capitalist economic crisis comes

We haven't talked a lot about the looming economic crisis. The International Monetary Fund held its annual meeting in October in Washington, D.C. Didn't hear much about it; had to read the financial papers. This was a heavy meeting. Some of the bankers and heads of banks in the U.S. are pretending that the U.S. is different in relation to the financial markets. It's not. The U.S. economy's a little stronger, but that ain't gonna last.

Christine Lagarde was not too long ago the head of the International Monetary Fund and recently she became the head of the European Central Bank. She said, "The financial markets, particularly in the U.S., have completely lost touch with the global economy, which is sinking. Sooner or later, a moment of truth is going to arrive."

Mervyn King, a highly respected banker, spoke; he was the head of the Bank of England during the 2008 crisis. He said, "The world is on the edge of the repeat of another financial Armageddon. There are a lot of articles circulating about how what's going on in the U.S. in terms of the Wall Street traders and coupon clippers is delusional."

What's coming? We can't say when, all we know is that an economic crisis is coming. It's going to have a big impact. Let's remember the social and political impact of the 2008 crisis when the capitalist financial system collapsed worldwide and almost died.

I won't go into all the things that the bankers did to revive it — they're still doing it, with low interest rates and so forth — but a lot of things also happened in terms of how it affected the working class. Go to any towns that had factories and workers and unions, and now what they have is substance abuse. That's from the deindustrialization of the 1980s to the 2008 crisis, and now it got worse.

The crisis really hit young people around the world. It took away the promise, the hope that all you had to do was get a degree, pay off your loans, and most likely there would be a comfortable place for you, either in the upper-middle class or in the bourgeoisie.

That hope is over, and that was one of the reasons for Occupy Wall Street and the Occupy movement. I would say the Black Lives Matter movement was also a result.

Radicalization to deepen

The next crisis is going to push the radicalization that happened over the last 10 years even further, into deeper and more vast sections of the working class. The question won't just be about reforming capitalism — that already is the question!

The question is: Will it be sharper? Is capitalism viable? Or in order to save ourselves, do we have to get rid of it?

And this is what we have to prepare for as revolutionaries. This will be when we battle the reformists, because it's in these times that the true nature of the reformists come out. And the true nature and strengths of revolutionaries come out.

We will be in the school of struggle, and each struggle is a lesson that gets us closer to revolutionary barricades.

The new face of the working class

Let me conclude by posing a number of questions as we prepare for what is coming. Forget about my timeline, I can't promise that it's one to three years — that seems like a good time frame, but I could be off.

Some questions as we prepare are: How do we rebuild our party so that, when the struggle demands us, we'll be in shape to meet that responsibility, when our role could be decisive? How do we deepen our roots in important sections of the working class? Every sector of the working class is important, including the older members trying to hold on to their pensions.

I don't think we should limit ourselves to any particular sector, but I do see two that we should focus on. The first is migrant workers. They are the most oppressed, they are growing, they are militant, and this is why there's a war against them. The bourgeoisie is trying to break them as a potential weapon that would push the entire working class forward. If we deepen our influence in the migrant working class, that's a big step in really making WWP a workers' party.

Second, the youth. There was a time, certainly when I was young, when we as organizers sort of considered youth, they're good because they're marching against the [Vietnam] war, they're shutting down shit the best they can. But our question was always: What will happen to them? Maybe they'll have their couple of semesters of struggle, and then they'll get their degrees and their comfortable life.

From a socioeconomic, political perspective, you could say that was true for 1969 or 1972. But that's not true anymore. Young people are the working class. That's not understood in some places; even the labor movement hasn't grasped it. In this gig economy, it doesn't matter how many degrees they've got, they're not able to keep jobs or earn a living wage. This is the new face of the global working class, and in many ways the youth are the most dynamic, the newest sector.

If we are doing what we need to garner influence among young workers, even those who do not realize that they're workers, that's a big thing. By

young people, obviously we mean LGBTQ2+ people and women, and all the industries and areas they work in.

The road to revolution

How do we strengthen working-class internationalism? How do we help our class on a global scale, to act as a class, to be conscious and supportive of workers and the oppressed everywhere, regardless of language and geography? That's rough, but we have to tackle it if we're on the revolutionary road.

And how do we struggle against the unnecessary, unhelpful and sometimes demoralizing fragmentation in the left movement? The workers and oppressed are involved in many struggles, most often local struggles. How does each get its due? How can we connect the dots between struggles? How do we get people to look beyond their region and look beyond the issues that define their struggle?

Of course, there are a lot of differences in the political movement among those who call themselves communists and socialists and Marxists, and some of those are big issues. Some of them are so big that they can't be reconciled, like oil and water. But having said that, a lot of activists who consider themselves revolutionaries should be working together on a global basis. And the reasons why they don't: Some of those seem sectarian, some seem very short-sighted, some reasons seem based on the past and some seem just being stuck in the way they did things 10, 20, 25 years ago.

There'll be no big revolutionary breakthrough unless some of this fragmentation is broken down. Those of us who have been around long enough to be part of that fragmentation — and I hope people consider WWP to be a very small part of it — how can we fight that fragmentation? If we don't do it, there'll come a time when young people, new forces, will just push everyone who's been around for a while aside, for better or worse.

The road to revolution. What road to revolution? We want to make sure that our party, which is far from perfect, but utterly revolutionary, is not stuck in the past, but aimed toward the future.

What Road to Socialism?

By Scott Williams (January 31, 2020)

The question of “What road to socialism?” can be posed as “What road to survival for the human species and for the rest of life on the planet?” But it is also an immediate and practical question which impacts all our everyday work.

Workers World Party takes inspiration from the massive upsurges in Haiti, Lebanon, Chile, Colombia, the resistance to the fascist coup in Bolivia and the steadfast struggle of the Bolivarian revolution. The people of the world are in the streets demonstrating against capitalism, imperialism and oppression.

While these massive uprisings are tremendous, the impacts of imperialism and neoliberal capitalism will not end without the growth of the world communist movement. As we have seen throughout history, massive resistance to capitalism and oppression, led by revolutionary communist organizations with deep connections in the masses, is the route to socialism.

We are starting to see signs of a rejuvenated workers movement in the U.S. Chicago teachers struck against racism and inequality. Education workers, low-wage workers, women, people of color — and more of the working class — are flexing the strike muscle. We saw the longest General Motors strike in decades. Unionizing campaigns across the U.S. continue to win. The left is rising.

Support for socialism is also on the rise. According to recent polls, 70 percent of millennials, people 23 to 38 years old, would vote for a socialist. One-third of millennials view communism favorably compared to capitalism. Communism’s popularity is growing quickly.

Millennials’ support for communism has increased by 8 percent in the last year, and 35 percent of millennials view Marxism favorably. Twenty percent of millennials believe the world would be better off if private property were abolished. The tide is turning toward us.

These are the youth of Black Lives Matter, the Occupy movement and the global climate strike movement. These youth face a declining life expectancy and deteriorating living standards in a crumbling, racist, genocidal empire.

While socialism is growing more popular, so are right-wing terrorism and white-supremacist fascism, organized by the president himself. The call for solutions is everywhere. We have to show that we have the answers. Through our ideological efforts and our work in the struggle, we need to prevail.

Social democracy's dead-end road to socialism

We are not the only group that has a proposed road to socialism. One of the most popular programs of social democracy today is the recently publicized Labour Party Manifesto 2019, put out by the British Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn. In the lead-up to the Dec. 12 parliamentary elections, Corbyn dropped what he called “the most radical” Labour platform ever. While the document looks radical during this period of neoliberal capitalism, in many ways it is a classic example of a social democratic program in an imperialist country.

Corbyn's program is bound to be popular among working-class people in Britain. It promises a Green New Deal to tackle the climate crisis — nationalizing the energy industry, creating 1 million unionized green jobs, expanding the National Health Service, increasing funding for education, creating a minimum wage equivalent of \$13 an hour, improving workers' rights and ending precarity at work. Interestingly, Corbyn could win with this program. This would be a step forward. But will the Labour Party lead workers toward socialism?

British social democracy has many serious problems. Labour's support for imperialism, the police and the border patrol should shock a revolutionary reader. Isn't Corbyn the notorious anti-imperialist? Some may remember him as the politician who flew to the Washington, D.C., demonstration against war in Iraq in 2003 — called by Answer and supported by WWP. He has been seen as an anti-imperialist because of his defense of basic Palestinian rights and his opposition to war. Yet the Labour Party's program does not oppose war and empire.

In the final section of the Manifesto, Labour outlines its foreign policy approach in a piece entitled “New Internationalism.” It includes proposals such as the following: “Conduct an audit of the impact of Britain's colonial legacy to understand our contribution to the dynamics of violence and insecurity across regions previously under British colonial rule.”

In talking about the British Empire that killed millions of people across the world, the word “reparations” doesn't appear once. An audit alone will not begin to solve the crisis of “Britain's colonial legacy”! In reality, the Labour program seeks to maintain the Empire. It reads: “We have a duty to stand up for the security and sovereignty of our overseas territories, including the Falklands.” This statement couldn't be a clearer call to defend the Empire. The Malvinas Islands (called the Falklands by Britain) belong to Argentina, not the British. [The Malvinas are 288 miles east of Argentina.]

Some of the proposals in this section appear progressive, such as suspending the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia and calling for an end to the Israeli blockade, occupation and settlements in Palestine. In the same sentence that defends Palestine's right to exist, the program violates the Palestinian

people's right to self-defense, calling for "an end to rocket and terror attacks" by the Palestinians.

Labour Party's stance on war exposed

This "New Internationalism" is as treacherous as the Second International's encouragement of World War I. It reads: "Labour will increase funding for UN peacekeeping operations to £100 million" (\$131 million), meaning more funding for troops like those in Port-au-Prince which repressed the movement in Haiti. And there's this: "Labour supports the renewal of the Trident nuclear deterrent."

So much for stopping war. Corbyn and the Labour Party want to keep nuclear missiles pointed at Russia. In other proposals, Labour promises to expand the military-industrial complex.

Labour proposes to increase the number of police by 2,000 and blames the Conservative Party for underfunding the police and causing crime. Their program calls for "closer counter-terrorism co-ordination between the police and the security services" and calls for more border patrols.

Unfortunately, the global working class doesn't seem to exist for the Labour Party. Rather, the Empire should be reformed to provide better services for its working-class citizens. For socialists in the U.S., the question of international solidarity is even more critical. Jacobin, a leading socialist publication in the U.S., covers the Labour Manifesto very positively, with no mention of its support for the police, border patrol or military forces.

The Labour Manifesto is not a road to socialism, but a dead end toward defending and modernizing empire. In reality, socialism will not be attained through elections. It will develop as part of a massive upsurge of working-class action. Where are the strikes and demonstrations promoting Labour's program? Without a mass movement, this parliamentary socialist program is destined to disappoint.

Impeachment and the 2020 election

Perhaps no one is more responsible for the growth in popularity of socialism than Sen. Bernie Sanders. His program has connected to these young radicals and given a voice to progressive politics in a way that few politicians have.

Yet in the unlikely event that Sanders wins the presidential election, he would need the working class mobilized to win the basic elements of Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, College for All, taxes on the rich and other parts of his program.

Meanwhile, the U.S. ruling class is in decline. It is not likely to make compromises. It is more likely to be repressive, smash working-class unity and get increasingly violent abroad to defend its increasingly fraught system.

The impeachment proceedings have been a hidden attack on the Sanders movement. This is an attempt to take people off the streets and focus their attention on boring legal proceedings in Congress. The message is clear: Nancy Pelosi and the corporate Democrats will provide “resistance” to Trump. In reality, the dubious, irrelevant charges against the racist, sexist, imperialist Trump may mobilize the right wing and effectively enable him to win a second term.

Another term for Trump is good for business. As the next economic crisis looms, the ruling class will demand austerity, more privatizations, more blood and more fascistic violence. They don’t want worker militancy or a President Sanders who will join workers on a picket line.

In the case that Sanders wins, his presidency would be met with capital strikes, stock market crashes and capitalist sabotage, paired with fascistic mobilizations to threaten any chance of a progressive presidency.

A proposed beginning to a route toward socialism

How do we defeat the rise of fascism in a country built on genocide, white supremacy, slavery, patriarchy and anti-communism? How do we support struggles against capitalism, racism, sexism and all forms of oppression and turn them into a movement for a revolutionary socialist future? This overly simplified proposal includes three parts: a renewed ideological campaign, continued mobilizations and a turn toward deeper organizing.

First of all, we need an ideological initiative in which we clarify and highlight our program. We did this to an extent in 2016 with the Workers World Party presidential campaign. Our candidates, Monica Moorehead and Lamont Lilly, raised demands such as abolishing the police and Immigration Customs and Enforcement, and dismantling the Pentagon. We called for global reparations for the crimes of the U.S. empire. We addressed the Black Lives Matter movement in a way that no other campaign did.

We have to support the struggles for reforms while explaining the need for revolutionary change. In the future, we need to explain why Medicare for All, an important reform, doesn’t go far enough as long as the capitalists own all the hospitals, medicines and, increasingly, more medical practices.

We need to clarify that by abolishing capitalism, we mean the establishment of workers’ control over every major industry — energy, education, finance, transportation and more — and that this is possible and necessary. We need to get this program out further than ever before.

A revolutionary program is not enough. We know publishing our ideas will not stop the U.S. empire from killing Indigenous peoples and destroying human life — and all life — on the planet. We know that the real power is in the streets.

Our party has successfully mobilized around several key struggles in the past year. Building solidarity with im/migrants, connecting to the upsurge in workers' struggles and fighting U.S. imperialism's attempts to conquer Venezuela and Bolivia have been significant developments. We have continued to build solidarity against racism and mass incarceration. And we apply the party's unique perspective on the centrality of fighting national oppression and racism as key to the success for revolution in the U.S.

We need to be bolder. We need to keep organizing major mobilizations which come at key points for our class, recognizing that it is multinational, multigenerational and multigender, and includes our im/migrant sisters and brothers. These need to be openly anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and pro-im/migrant campaigns and coalitions which build global working-class solidarity.

Think about these demonstrations as a global strike against capitalism and imperialism. Every time there is a crisis and the Democrats won't call a protest action, we need to plan to shut down the system with our allies, including those on the left.

Mobilizations are not enough. For our party to succeed, we need to sink our roots deeper into the working class. The comrades we win through our mobilizations and ideological initiatives need to become trusted fighters for our class. We need to be seen as the best community organizers, the most principled union fighters and the clearest thinkers.

We need a strategy in which people will dedicate their lives to building the working-class organizations which will carry out the revolution here. Those include unions, workers' and people's assemblies, community organizations and study groups. Deep organizing, the work of building relationships with the leaders of our class, is our only weapon.

Finally, we need to continue to be the loudest voice for Marxist-Leninist unity. We must keep on being a principled, nonsectarian party which attempts to build broader Marxist-Leninist unity and solidarity among fellow communist organizations. Our comrades in Bolivia and throughout Latin America deserve no less.

We need real, practical unity. The crises of this period require a greater level of communication, deliberation and unity among the most advanced forces in the left.

Finally, let's not give up hope. Demoralization can be the gravest of illnesses for a communist party. I believe that we will win, and I hope you do as well. Build a Workers World! Socialism or death!

What Kind of Socialism?

WWP Editorial (February 19, 2020)

A sea change has been taking place in the United States. At last, the polls show that socialism is no longer the “dirty word” it was once, when even to say publicly that you were a socialist — and especially a communist — could mean being ostracized, attacked, fired from your job, even jailed.

Not since the days of labor leader Eugene Debs (1855-1926) has a socialist fared well in U.S. presidential elections. Yet candidate Bernie Sanders, who identifies himself as a “democratic socialist,” is growing in popularity.

Let us suppose that Sanders could win the presidency. His chances are certainly slim, given the lineup of both parties’ richest backers against him, but nothing is impossible. Many social democrats like Sanders have been elected to high office in Europe. They have extracted some concessions from the ruling classes.

But that is not socialism.

Nor is Sanders running for the nomination of a party that professes socialism. The Democratic Party has certainly never endorsed it. On the contrary, it has coexisted with the Republican Party as two ruling-class parties solidly in the camp of capitalism.

The Democratic Party has also been successful in selling imperialist war to the people, getting them to fight and die not for “democracy” but for corporate domination of the world’s resources.

For decades, the Democratic Party also was the party of Southern segregation. But in the North, especially with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration, the party became associated with government programs to alleviate poverty.

What has changed is not the leadership of the two capitalist parties or their commitment to the profit system, but the sentiment of the voters. Many, especially the youth, have come to realize that capitalism is responsible for the mind-boggling wealth gap in this country. They want change.

Sanders stands for the kind of change carried out by social democratic parties elsewhere that have brought welcome reforms, but that have coexisted with capitalist ownership and control of the means of production.

It is this ownership and control that gives the capitalists their power, not only over the economic life but also the politics of the country.

What is socialism?

Which raises the question, what is real socialism based on? First and foremost, a basic overhaul of the economy to bring about socialism can only begin when the working class flexes its power and takes over the means of production and uses that to solve the problems of poverty and inequality.

There is no reason for poverty in this country — or in the world. The level of productivity capable of meeting peoples' needs is now astounding. A true workers' government could immediately eliminate poverty by expropriating the property of the rich and planning economic development based on human need, not profit.

Why shouldn't the global working class as a whole own and control the means of production? It is all built by workers in the first place.

Why shouldn't the homeless be sheltered in all the empty mansions and condos that are deserted most of the time, while their wealthy owners jet around the world?

Why shouldn't the overabundance of food produced in this country be used to end world hunger, once and for all?

Why shouldn't every young person be guaranteed an income and health coverage while studying how to move society forward in a sustainable way?

Yet — at a time when the planet itself is engulfed in a crisis created by unbridled capitalism — the old political institutions put in place by billionaires' money still dictate policy. This cannot last.

Workers World is committed to building a revolutionary movement for socialism. Elections may be a barometer of shifting opinion, but the movement doesn't end on election day. It grows with every struggle for social justice — with every strike, every protest, every sit-in. The movement builds working-class solidarity against white supremacy, misogyny, the oppression of LGBTQ2+ people and the scapegoating of im/migrants.

Building a truly revolutionary movement holds the key to the future. If you want to fight for real social change, join us!

‘The Socialist Manifesto’ and The Rise of Social Democracy

By Scott Williams (September 10, 2019)

Writers across the range of socialist and communist groups are openly grappling with strategies to achieve socialism. Every viable socialist organization needs an analysis of the past in order to look toward the future. With the growth of social-democratic organizations, how should revolutionaries view the path toward socialism?

Bhaskar Sunkara, the founder of Jacobin magazine as well as a former vice chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, is one of the most influential leaders in the growing U.S. socialist movement. Jacobin, with over 40,000 subscribers and millions of online views a month, is a major venue for ideological and practical debate. With 60,000 members, DSA has become the largest organization publicly identified with socialism. Sunkara’s book, “The Socialist Manifesto, The Case for Radical Politics in an Era of Extreme Inequality,” reviews the history of various trends within the socialist movement from a social-democratic viewpoint.

Originally titled “Socialism in Our Time,” “The Socialist Manifesto” is part historical analysis of workers’ states and capitalist social democracies, part hypothetical social-democratic future, and eventually a 15-point call to action which synthesizes Sunkara’s interpretation of the past and compels the development of “class struggle social democracy.”

Electoral road to ‘democratic socialism’

Sunkara has never argued for a socialist revolution similar to those led by the Bolsheviks, the Chinese Communist Party or the July 26th Movement in Cuba. Throughout his book, Sunkara goes to great lengths to reiterate numerous popular talking points on what he considers the limitations of these revolutions. One could find these in any bourgeois newspaper.

Sunkara acknowledges some failures of social-democratic parties to build socialism. He acknowledges the shortfalls of the Social Democratic Party in Germany which enabled World War I, the rise of Hitler and the annihilation of German communists.

Seeking a hopeful example of successful social democracy leading in the direction of socialism, Sunkara looks fondly at the five decades of social democracy in Sweden — or in his words, “the most humane social system ever

constructed” (p. 14). Sunkara laments the lost potential for 1970s Sweden to transition from social democracy to democratic socialism. The main components of the capitalist economy — the banks, major industries and the state — still remained under the control of a few Swedish families. Unsurprisingly, the 15 families who owned the vast majority of the economy blocked legislation to create wage-earners’ funds which would allow workers eventually to collectively own these industries.

There is no mention of Sweden’s supplying the Nazis with iron ore, its pillaging of African nations, its sending of over 6,000 troops to Congo in 1960 in an effort that led to the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, or of Sweden taking control of Congo’s copper mines. Swedish imperialism’s junior partnership with other leading empires is omitted, much in the same way that the Marxist-Leninist concept of imperialism is ignored.

Sunkara sees the transition from social democracy to democratic socialism in hypothetical thought exercises like this one about the U.S. in 2036: “With more decisions in the hands of ordinary people, civil life is full of political debate and new ideas. Even distributional questions are still not settled: a center-right party advocates for more market incentives and a reduction in the basic income; a center-left party questions traditional metrics of growth, proposing a happiness index instead; an internationalist left calls for more vigorous support for the workers’ movement abroad and more extensive democratic planning at home. And yes, there is a Right calling for the restoration of capitalism, but its support diminishes over time, much like monarchism slowly lost supporters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (pp. 27-28).

Further elaborating, at the end of the book, Sunkara writes: “Our task is formidable. Democratic socialists must secure decisive majorities in legislatures while winning hegemony in the unions. Then our organizations must be willing to flex our social power in the form of mass mobilizations and political strikes to counter the structural power of capital and ensure that our leaders choose confrontation over accommodation with elites. This is the sole way we’ll not only make our reforms durable but break with capitalism entirely and bring about a world that values people over profit.”

‘Denial of class dictatorship’

This conception of a multiparty U.S. Congress striving toward democratic socialism denies the reality of the class dictatorship in which we currently live. This democratic transition to socialism ignores the control by the corporations and ruling billionaires of the state apparatus — the FBI, COINTELPRO, the Pentagon, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc. — and the impact of bourgeois control over education, the media, and religious and

cultural institutions. This state enforces all forms of racist, ableist, misogynist, patriarchal, class oppression.

While it may be attractive to imagine a peaceful transition to socialism, this exercise denies that the history of the U.S. is one of occupation, economic sanctions, police and military violence, and genocidal attacks on every country that has attempted to break free from Wall Street domination. The question of which class will control the state — the billionaires or the working class — is not resolved by Sunkara's imagined scenarios. His gradualistic hypothesis at best mediates class conflict, but it cannot lead to the establishment of a bona fide workers' state.

V.I. Lenin's classic "The State and Revolution," based on lived, revolutionary experience, reads like a direct response to "The Socialist Manifesto" as it answers such utopian visions of socialist transformation. Lenin writes in the first chapter: "If the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing above society and 'alienating' itself more and more from it; it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this 'alienation.'" Lenin goes to lengths to challenge writers of his day who, like Sunkara, advocated for reform of capitalist governing structures.

Imperialism, national liberation and opportunism

Leninists have always pointed to how national liberation and socialism have been vitally connected over the past 100 years of socialist revolutions. Sam Marcy, the founding chairperson of Workers World Party, explained this significance in 1983, writing: "Of all the great domestic political problems facing the working class and the oppressed people, none surpasses in importance the relationship of national oppression to the class struggle. Indeed, one may say that it is at the heart of the basic social problem in the United States. It touches every form of social existence, and no sector of society is free from it."

Sunkara says the left should be "universalist" and that a "democratic class politics is the best way to unite people against our common opponent and win the type of change that will help the most marginalized" (p. 236). This represents a dominant view within the DSA, which has downplayed the relevance of special oppressions like racism, sexism, ableism and anti-LGBTQ2S+ oppression ("identity politics") in favor of a purportedly class-focused approach.

Sunkara rarely mentions fighting racism or other forms of oppression as a key component of fighting for socialism. Throughout his chapter on the history of

socialism in the U.S., the vast majority of his discussion focuses on Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and later Michael Harrington and DSA. There is no mention of the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, the Young Lords or any other national liberation struggles inside the U.S. which combined the struggle against racism and the struggle for socialism.

In the era of imperialism, supporting national liberation and fighting racism are fundamental to an international socialist strategy. Sunkara discounts the efforts of China, Angola, Vietnam, Korea and beyond, calling them using socialism to command a type of authoritarian capitalist development. Cuba, covered in a scant, disparaging four paragraphs, is considered a “revolution from above” whose future is in the “hands of a new generation of state bureaucrats and reemerging business interests” (p. 155). This analysis is shocking to those who have seen Cuba’s radical democracy firsthand and admire the leaders’ ability to mobilize and unite with the people to defend their revolution.

Venezuela, perhaps the greatest example in recent history of how mass socialist parties can use existing electoral processes to win major gains and expand true democracy and human rights for the most oppressed, is not mentioned once. Yet the challenges currently facing Venezuela demonstrate exactly the need for a socialist revolution to disarm and dismantle the oligarchy and the imperialists, who bear responsibility for Venezuela’s problems today.

Sunkara holds the view that socialism can only be built in “developed” imperialist countries. This, like his elevation of Swedish social democracies over the victories of billions of people from countries oppressed by imperialism, and the way he and others in DSA promote class over identity politics, reeks of chauvinism.

At the same time, Sunkara’s “class-based,” social-democratic gradualism represents a negation of the foundation of scientific Marxism: the irreconcilability of class antagonisms between labor and capital. To argue that socialism can be achieved peacefully via the bourgeois electoral process is to mislead and disorient the working class and the oppressed. History — consider the bloody 1973 CIA coup in Chile — has proven the opposite.

Ultimately, Sunkara’s brand of socialism seeks to be respectable to bourgeois, anti-communist intellectuals as well as the more privileged sectors of the working class, who see no future beyond imperialism and thus seek an opportunist compromise on essential socialist values.

Opposing U.S. imperialism at every turn; supporting the abolition of the capitalist police, military and state structures; fighting racism and all forms of oppression; and defending countries that are building socialism from imperialist attacks are key principles of a revolutionary strategy.

Turning back the clock on imperialism's decay

“Social democracy was always predicated on economic expansion” (p. 123). Sunkara is correct in that social democracy has made gains in periods of imperialist expansion.

Unfortunately for social democracy, the owners of capital face a systemic crisis. The growth of high-tech capitalist production — originally designed to maximize profits by minimizing the number of workers — has become so capital-intensive that it leads to what Marx explained was “the falling rate of profit.” In fact, this is the terminal period of imperialism, a decadent system which has plundered the earth so thoroughly that all life is threatened.

As Marx explained, the capitalists must “expand or die,” and at this time they are struggling to open new markets and grow their profits. Precisely because the system is so productive, capitalism has entered a period of permanent overproduction. There is little room for the “economic expansion” that is the material basis of social democracy.

For the past two decades of “jobless recoveries,” workers have continued to be thrown out of the labor market while capitalists invest stolen wages in the financial sector rather than the productive economy.

The global labor market has doubled in the past 30 years, meaning the capitalists have at their disposal a larger “reserve army of labor,” as Marxists put it. They no longer need as many comparatively privileged workers in the imperialist countries. White supremacist terror, permanent austerity, low wages, shorter life expectancies and the expansion of mass incarceration are symptoms of the crisis of imperialism.

Given this context, Sunkara has absurdly sought to turn back time to an idealized compromise between the capitalists and the workers.

Rebuild the communist movement

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote “The Communist Manifesto” in the revolutionary period of 1848. “The Communist Manifesto” represented a leap forward in the science of revolution which has inspired billions of people to this day. “The Socialist Manifesto,” written in a time when the international socialist movement has suffered serious losses, reflects the weakness of the left and the inability to see beyond capitalism.

Meanwhile, the earth is on fire because of the policies of the Pentagon, U.S. banks and corporations. We don’t have time to compromise with these capitalists. To defend the future of humanity, we must fight for working-class control to defeat the very banks and corporations that threaten life.

Revolutionary socialist, Leninist and communist parties have seen growth in recent years, although, for now, nothing as dramatic as DSA. These

organizations, like Workers World Party, tie their politics to the experiences of successful revolutions across the world that have occurred since the Bolshevik Revolution, including their analysis of capitalism; imperialism; racism; gender, sexuality and ableist oppressions; defense of socialist countries; and solidarity with the most oppressed. We must dedicate ourselves to popularizing these principles of Leninism and continue fighting for socialist revolution.

A Revolutionary View of The Sanders Campaign

By Scott Williams (February 22, 2020)

The competition for the Democratic presidential nomination has become a focus of political life in the United States. For revolutionaries debating how to view this campaign, we must answer the following questions: What is the class character of the Sanders' movement? What is the potential impact of the Sanders' movement on the world wide interests of the working class and the oppressed? How can this development lead to a broader revolutionary upsurge in the heart of the U.S. empire? From there we must chart a plan of action.

Character and context of Sanders' movement

The rejuvenation of social democracy and liberal reformism, most notably in the rise of the left in the Democratic Party, comes as a response to the decline of the U.S. empire and the inability of the U.S. capitalist economy to provide decent, well-paying jobs to a majority of the working class.

On one hand, the People's Republic of China has risen as a clear economic and geopolitical challenge to U.S. imperialist world domination. On the other, the U.S. remains plagued by endless imperialist war, mass incarceration, low wages, enormous debt, underemployment, sexual and gender-based violence, and outbursts of racist, fascist terror. A major financial collapse looms, threatening to finally reveal the weaknesses of the real economy and then unleash a deeper ruling-class assault on workers' quality of life.

In struggle against neoliberal economic terrorism by U.S. banks and corporations and their client states, our class has taken to the streets across the world. Tens of millions have fought against austerity and the capitalist ruling class in Chile, Ecuador, Haiti, France, Colombia and elsewhere; hundreds of millions if India is included. The desperate attempts of the U.S. empire to maintain its stranglehold on the world economy have caused anti-imperialist reactions in Iraq, Iran, Venezuela and Palestine.

The unifying issue of this global struggle is the declining prospects for working-class youth who live in capitalist societies. A multinational youth movement has identified neoliberal capitalism as its primary enemy. In some ways, the second presidential campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders gets its popular energy from and provides a voice for part of the U.S. wing of this working-class youth movement.

The viability of any reformist movement like the Sanders' campaign, in the face of a weakening global capitalist system, can be debated. Can social democracy and progressive reformism be revived? Insecure about maintaining its profits in a capitalist economy that is declining relative to other world powers, the U.S. ruling class has increased its exploitation of the working class, taking an ever larger proportion of the wealth the workers produce.

Without the material basis provided by the expansion of U.S. imperialism and its reaping of super profits, any rebirth of social democracy would find it difficult to deliver meaningful benefits to the workers, even should it win an election. What is needed instead is a movement that seeks nothing short of the end of capitalism.

Ruling class attacks Sanders

Earlier this month, Sanders said: "In many respects, we are a socialist society today. ... Donald Trump, before he was president, as a private businessperson, he received \$800 million in tax breaks and subsidies to build luxury housing in New York. ... The difference between my socialism and Trump's socialism is I believe the government should help working families, not billionaires." (Axios, Feb. 9)

As communists, we are well aware that Sanders holds political positions we can't support: his lack of solidarity with international anti-imperialist struggles, his lack of support for reparations for slavery along with Black Lives Matter, his vitriolic attack on pro-socialist leaders like Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, his support for laws criminalizing sex workers and much more.

Sanders' program is more like Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" in the mid-1960s or Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. Sanders' social democracy is only seen as a "radical socialist" project because the U.S. ruling class has imposed such right-wing, pro-capitalist ideology and programs on the population.

The U.S. ruling class may own finance capital, oil, pharmaceutical giants and the "health" profit industry, be landlords or real estate investors, own big data, agriculture and/or other sectors. Their slightly different specific interests are reflected by the two parties, the Democrats and the Republicans.

Most big capitalists, however, are overjoyed with Trump's transfer of wealth to their pockets. Others may see Trump as a loose cannon and consider Joe Biden, Michael Bloomberg or another politician as more competent to protect and expand their interests. Yet they all unite against Sanders, not just because of the potential impact on their profits, but because they fear a greater social movement could develop that will call into question the elites' plunder and profit.

Thus, we can expect anti-communist attacks against Sanders to continue to escalate if his campaign continues to gain steam. This red-baiting must be met with an active campaign to popularize real socialism, one that goes beyond Sanders' deflection (in the Axios quote) about how "socialism" already exists for the rich.

Our movement must unequivocally defend the necessity of socialism and the obvious, documented superiority of workers' ownership of the means of production, paired with planning that prioritizes human needs and the life of the Earth over profits.

Internationalism is a necessity, not an inconvenience

Along with the red-baiting, the attacks on Sanders from pro-Israeli forces — similar to the outrageous attacks on former Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn by the British media — will continue. This is even though Sanders limits his statements on Palestine to support for basic human rights.

Sanders himself is Jewish. Yet this will not stop the attacks on him for alleged anti-Semitism — simply because he doesn't give full backing to Israel's murderous campaign to annihilate the Palestinian people. These attacks must be met by a strong, anti-racist movement in defense of the Palestinian people's right to exist, from the river to the sea.

Sanders claims to be against U.S. wars in Iraq and beyond, yet his voting record doesn't reflect that. Sanders' support for U.S. imperialism must be fought by those who wish to see his domestic program be successful. The domestic and foreign policies of the empire are directly connected. Both policies are about the balance of power between the oppressed and the oppressor.

While liberal politicians may fear taking anti-war positions, socialists must expose the foreign policy of the empire as directed by the needs of capitalism. Ruthless sanctions and murder must be contested in the name of international solidarity and the survival of the more than 7.5 billion people in the world threatened by the most violent ruling elite ever, based in Wall Street and Washington.

Our struggle, that of the working class in the U.S., is primarily against the U.S. billionaires, not against other countries. The strategy of revolutionary defeatism — to defeat our own ruling class — as expressed by V.I. Lenin during World War I, should be elementary for revolutionaries and must be learned by a resurgent left that, for too long, has been infected by bourgeois pro-war propaganda.

We must also learn how to resist the imperialist attacks on China, Venezuela, Iran, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and

beyond. Working-class internationalism and solidarity with the oppressed are central to our long-term goal of socialist revolution.

Allies of the U.S. working class abroad may view the election of Sanders as a victory against the empire. A Sanders' victory could open serious struggles over the need to dismantle the U.S. empire in order to save the planet, to rebuild the global economy and to pay reparations to those dispossessed by the U.S.

To the extent, however, that Sanders gives public support for closed borders, sanctions, U.S. air strikes and other measures, this would alienate his popular base — a base he would have to rely upon to beat back the inevitable attacks from the right. This contradiction could give rise to a greater level of struggle.

Elections: A barometer or an organizing tool?

As revolutionaries, we know that socialist transformation is necessary for humanity and to sustain life on Earth, and we know this transformation cannot come about by using the “master’s tools” described in the U.S. Constitution. Rather, we view capitalist elections as a limited survey of the attitudes of the multinational working class and the other classes in U.S. society. Every four years, about 55 percent of the voting-age population — with a greater proportion of voters from the less oppressed and older sectors of the working class — choose a president from either of the two major parties, both of which are owned and operated by the capitalists.

Sanders' campaign has attempted to use the Democratic Party to raise issues in the interests of the working class. Many Democratic Socialists of America members view the Sanders' campaign, and electoral politics more generally, as the primary channel to engage and radicalize the working class. This is unlike the period from the 1930s to the 1970s when the left looked toward the labor movement or other social movements as the centers of politicization and class identity development.

The argument of DSA and other left groups that have worked alongside the Sanders' campaign is that the campaign a shortcut to building mass consciousness. Many young activists have hit the streets in the name of the Sanders' campaign to promote classwide solidarity against the billionaire ruling class and to try to win supporters to their socialist organization.

Ruling-class ideology insists that the primary arena of politics is bourgeois elections, particularly national elections for president. Thus, when the left plans a political strategy, the question of whether to run in elections is a question of what is the most effective type of mass organizing that can build revolutionary socialist consciousness.

The Sanders' campaign has prioritized the central tenet of the Occupy movement from the last decade: the struggle of the 99% versus the 1%. Sanders

has put forth stronger positions on racial justice, migrant rights and many other policies that reflect the hard work of organizers in people's movements.

Sanders' 2016 primary campaign took on the right-wing establishment Democratic Party and had a major impact in winning thousands of new people to socialist organizations. The DSA and others have joined this year's campaign with the goal of recruiting new members and pushing the campaign to the left, riding the wave and seeing where they will end up.

What happens when or if the DNC steals the nomination from Sanders? Will organizations to the left of the Democratic Party still insist on voting "Blue no matter who"? Will there be a political fracture in which the Sanders' movement, even despite the refusal of Sanders himself, decides to make a "dirty break" from the Democratic Party and form a new socialist electoral third party?

What if Sanders were to get the nomination and then win the election against Trump? Who will defend him from the wrath of the capitalists and a stock market that could be in free fall? Will a mass movement emerge and move in a more radical direction, emboldened by the results?

Will the mirage of capitalist democracy be revealed as a fraud? Will that demoralize the masses or radicalize them?

While the fate of the Sanders' movement is yet to unfold, the most pressing question for revolutionary socialists may be: What is the most effective way to agitate, educate and organize this Sanders' movement into an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, revolutionary movement?

Which road to socialism?

Workers World Party believes that the goal of revolutionary parties when entering capitalist electoral politics should be to advance a revolutionary program in order to shatter illusions of capitalist democracy and win broad working-class support. The Democratic Party in the past has been the graveyard of social movements. Still, bourgeois political campaigns can reflect and show the significance of people's movements.

The question of critical support for or independence from the Sanders' movement is one we plan to answer through action. We will attend Sanders' campaign rallies in order to meet this movement and push for revolutionary socialism. We will be in the streets with this movement, raising demands that speak to young people looking for revolutionary change. We look at this development with revolutionary optimism and we will study it closely.

WWP is still considering how to intervene in the 2020 presidential campaign. We will definitely run a major ideological campaign, entitled "Which road to socialism?" With this effort, we will put forth our revolutionary socialist perspective in a wide variety of ways. We will organize regular discussion

groups in our branches across the country to engage these questions, all the while reaching out to the Sanders' movement and those to its left to discuss the contradictions of social democracy and attempt to win people to fight for revolutionary socialism.

We will challenge the weaknesses of Sanders' movement and push it in a revolutionary direction, not by being sectarian or opportunist, but by waging an honest ideological and mass struggle that speaks to the needs of the working class and the oppressed to go further.

Even moderate social reforms can take place only under the pressure of mass movements in the streets and in our workplaces. Real revolutionary socialism, including the seizure and liberation of private property in the means of production, cannot occur by amending the U.S. Constitution. It must be the result of a worldwide mass movement that uses various tactics and strategies to defeat capitalist rule.

With this in mind, we will launch a series of mobilizations to fight the racist, anti-worker policies of the Trump administration. That the Democratic Party has enabled these policies — for example, the U.S. sanctions that have terrorized hundreds of millions of people on the planet — will expose the imperialist character of both parties.

Currently we are working with hundreds of organizations to launch an international campaign against U.S. sanctions, entitled Sanctions Kill. Campaigns like this allow us to connect with those directly impacted by U.S. sanctions passed by Democrats and Republicans. We will mobilize on May Day to unite the movements against capitalism, imperialism, racism and all the crimes of this system with a show of solidarity on this socialist-inspired, international day of struggle.

We will continue to mobilize against U.S. imperialism in all its manifestations, as part of our devotion to our worldwide class. We will continue to organize for the most oppressed of our class — for incarcerated workers, for political prisoners, for low-wage workers, for people with disabilities, for the homeless, for those oppressed because of gender or gender expression or national origin, and for migrants and refugees — all with the goal of building a broadly popular communist party steeled in combat and the day-to-day struggles of our class.

Finally, we will use this election to push for real democracy. While this election may be seen as a referendum on Trump's social and economic policies, we will push to make this election a referendum on the crimes of capitalism. Imagine, a people's referendum in which we vote with our feet, by withholding our labor and by fighting for a real future, a socialist society.

Which Road to Socialism: Bernie Sanders and Voting in a Pandemic

By Teresa Gutierrez (April 16, 2020)

This article is for the thousands of young people who supported Bernie Sanders and for the social organizations that came out for Sanders, some endorsing a presidential candidate for the first time. It is for the thousands of nurses leading the way in the fight for Medicare for All and for all those seeking a more progressive agenda for this country.

On April 8, presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders withdrew from the 2020 election. For thousands among his base, it must have been a painful day. Activists who identify as democratic socialists like Sanders must have been disheartened.

For young Sanders supporters facing one existential crisis after another, a loss of hope in the political arena that is the bourgeois elections is probably no small thing.

Among the revolutionary left, it is another matter

There are no uniform views among communists in the U.S. toward the candidacy of Bernie Sanders. There are communists who historically and consistently vote Democratic, while others in the left consider this a class betrayal.

The Democratic Party is seen by revolutionary socialists as the party of the bosses, one that defends the interests of the capitalists just as the Republicans do. At times it may have a more liberal program and a more diverse social base, but historically the Democratic Party functions more as a brake on the struggle than as a defender of the interests of the people.

The danger is that the Democrats are closer to the masses than the racist, reactionary, super-rich Republicans.

For example, when the vicious police beating of Rodney King led to a righteous rebellion in Los Angeles in 1992, it was the Democratic Party leaders and allies who came out in sympathy for King, yet criticized the rebellion. The left cheered the expropriation of goods as a righteous act of justified reparations and supported the rebellion. The Democrats called it “looting” and “riots.”

Not everyone on the left agrees that voting for a Democrat is the “lesser of two evils.” Evil is still evil even if it might look like you and smile at you. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that, despite some differences, both parties unite to defend the capitalist system and not the workers and oppressed.

Countless imperialist wars prove their allegiance to the capitalist class. Just ask the Iraqis if a Democrat in office made a difference.

Capitalism at a dead end: A democratic socialist arises

In both 2016 and 2020, running as a democratic socialist, Sanders got attention and rose not only in popularity but in fact got airtime. Though never as much as Trump did in 2016 when CNN covered Trump rally after rally.

Sanders gained momentum without having to tap into corporate money, a monumental feat considering the millions spent to buy the elections. It was understandable that democratic socialists by the thousand-fold, as well as others, supported or gave critical support to his campaign.

Why did Bernie rise? More than any other reason, it was the material conditions of capitalism that propelled him to come forward. The economic crisis — which is in an acute freefall today — meant more unemployment and underemployment, no affordable education, foreclosures and skyrocketing health care costs.

The war on migrants took one ominous turn after another as racism toward Black and Brown people continued unabated. In fact, racism intensified, and white supremacy acquired a supreme place in society as the Trump administration right-wing zealots enveloped the White House.

These conditions gave room for a democratic socialist to become popular. Excitingly, socialism became more accepted than capitalism, especially among younger people.

So why did the most progressive candidate — the one calling for Medicare for All, for cancelling student debt, and the one who believes in climate change — get defeated?

The answer lies in the Democratic Party itself — and in Wall Street.

On April 9, USA Today wrote: “stocks rose Wednesday after ... Sanders dropped out of the Presidential race. Many investors feared a Sanders nomination ... because of his policy proposals on health care and the economy, which analysts warned could crimp profits at insurers and other companies.”

Young people hung their heads, Wall Street cheered.

Wisconsin: 'A day that will live in infamy'

"It's not going to be a safe election. People are going to get sick from this," said Brook Soltvedt, a 60-year-old in charge of running a polling place in the April 7 primary in Madison, Wis. (Portside, April 7)

Wisconsin has been ground zero for many reactionary policies, including union busting and so-called welfare reform. But it was also the scene of a heroic battle in 2011 when people occupied the State Capitol for several days. Even as progressive forces mobilized for the April 7 election and even though public health officials called for a postponement because of the pandemic, the right-wing State Supreme Court ordered that the election proceed.

The Portside article stated: "The U.S. Supreme Court added insult to injury ... overturning a lower court ruling that extended the deadline for absentee voting."

Absentee ballots had to be postmarked Tuesday or returned by 8 p.m.

On April 9, the Wisconsin State Journal reported: "[A] postal worker had discovered 'three large tubs' of absentee ballots ... that never reached voters."

Wisconsin is another sign that the reactionary right wing of the bourgeoisie, manifested currently through the Republican Party, has moved more and more to position itself to deny even the most basic rights to the masses. The movement must be on guard: The chicanery in Wisconsin may foreshadow events in November. Trump is openly stating he opposes mail-in voting because it benefits his opponents.

Black people and women fought like hell for the right to vote. Black people in particular died for that basic democratic right. History has shown that it is mass struggle that creates real change, not elections. But every basic right that workers have won must be defended.

Rights are being hammered, from the right to vote in a pandemic to the right to an abortion, education, a home, a job — and especially the right to live, as Covid-19 destroys communities, particularly communities of color.

And now Sanders, at a high level in the government, with a social movement behind him that could have helped to delay these attacks, has withdrawn.

Class struggle: Ballots or bullets?

On April 12, 1964, exactly 56 years ago in Detroit, Malcolm X gave one of his most inspiring speeches ever: "The Ballot or the Bullet." He asserted that liberation cannot be won through the ballot box; it can only be won through our struggle.

A lot has happened since then, including Malcolm's assassination. What has not happened is revolutionary fundamental change that makes the ballot box as irrelevant as an 8-track cassette player.

But what has happened is anti-capitalist sentiment has become more mainstream, something the Democratic Party machine is completely threatened by.

This wing of the Democrats sold out the Sanders' movement. Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and all those comfortable, wealthy fat-cats were determined to undermine the Sanders' campaign — and Sanders ultimately allowed it. This is what is so tragic about the Sanders' movement and momentum.

At the very moment that the Trump administration criminally mishandles the Covid-19 crisis to the detriment of the masses, the Democrats prefer to put forward a pathetic candidate. Joe Biden's record on racism, sexism and imperialist wars is despicable. The line of least resistance — Biden's electability — was preferred over the life-and-death issues that the Sanders' movement was fighting for.

The Democratic Party is incapable and unwilling to fight the fight.

Fighting for socialism

Which way then towards socialism? In the context of what could be an economic crisis worse than the Great Depression, socialism must be desperately fought for if humanity is to survive.

The only way to defeat white supremacy, Covid-19 and all the reactionary rest is to remember Malcolm's words and put them into today's context: people power, mass resistance, general strikes, occupations, door-to-door organizing when that is safe — these are what make real change. When the workers are struggling and developing class consciousness, this is what will stop the zealots in the White House and the fat-cats on Wall Street.

In 2016, a Chicana actor took the stage during the Democratic Party Convention and said, "We did not cross the border, the border crossed us." This year at a Sanders event in San Antonio, Texas, a Black actor closed his speech with the Assata chant spoken at many Black Lives Matter and other revolutionary events. While deeply moving, it is tiring to have these slogans — developed in the streets — co-opted by the very party machine that is not only complicit in, but completely loyal to the capitalist system.

The revolutionary socialist movement should embrace the young people and others who wanted to see "Tio Bernie" win. We should hold them close because, together, we can create a new future: Real socialism will be just around the corner.

Section 3

The State & Building for a Revolution

Mass Organizing to Win Revolutionary Socialism

By Makasi Motema (March 12, 2020)

Revolutionary change is coming. As the ravenous capitalist class continues their ruthless plundering of labor value from working people, societal contradictions race toward a breaking point.

The younger generation in particular is being driven into intolerable economic insecurity. People of color, always a target of ruling class oppression, are increasingly terrorized and brutalized by law enforcement at the border and in the inner cities. Those who have struggled against gender violence, including trans violence, have endured a withering backlash from reactionaries waging legal battles against bodily autonomy in the courts.

But all oppression breeds resistance. Over the last decade, political mobilizations have surged in a way not seen in generations. The working class is determined to fight. Nothing less than the fate of the biosphere hangs in the balance of our current class struggle. The oppressed masses of this country and the world have made clear that should defeat be their fate, they will not endure it quietly. Ours is a fight for survival, and we shall not back down.

Given the pivotal nature of the current period, what is the role of a Marxist-Leninist party? Has the time finally come for a political vanguard to step forward and lead the masses into struggle against our capitalist masters? If the time is not now, then when?

For a communist party, correctly diagnosing the current political conditions and the changing character of those conditions is of the utmost importance. The political consciousness of the masses has accelerated dramatically in the past ten years, and such an acceleration calls for an equally dramatic adaptation in strategy.

From the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, to the start of the Occupy movement in 2011, socialism in all its various incarnations was in decline. The expansion of communist parties and the political organization of the masses were stifled by a Western anticommunist consensus. The neoliberal elite gloated that we had reached “the end of history,” insinuating in Marxist terms that the class struggle had finally come to an end — with capitalists the victor.

Those communist and left-wing organizations of the period that were prudent understood the importance of survival. In such a hostile political

environment, what was of utmost importance was maintaining ideological integrity and continuing a tradition of principled political agitation. To take the offensive when you are weak and your opponent is strong is to court disaster. But there is a vital corollary to that rule: If you fail to seize an opportunity once it materializes, you plant the seeds of your own destruction.

The explosion of social movements in the last decade presents a tremendous opportunity. The ruling class has shown its weaknesses and the working class is growing in strength. The time for strategic defense has come to a close. The working-class masses, and those who would seek to organize them, must take up the offense. That is the role of the vanguard party.

The state

The belief that capitalism is irredeemable and socialism is our only solution is spreading widely.

But the means by which the capitalist ruling class should be hurled from power is hotly debated. In a period of ideological disharmony, the voice of Marxist-Leninists should ring out as clearly as a bell when it denounces and rejects right-wing opportunism.

The current farcical election process is all the evidence we need to support our analysis of the state. Bernie Sanders, the democratic-socialist (who sounds so eerily like a social-democrat), in his attempt to secure modest- though-life-saving reforms to our health care industry, has triggered an all-out effort on the part of the Democratic National Committee to stop his nomination. The Wall Street paymasters who deliver the DNC's marching orders have demanded that the party rally around a more pliant servant of the ruling class.

Socialism can never be achieved through a political process which is funded and controlled by the capitalist ruling class. To imagine any outcome but the resounding defeat of the working class in such a tightly controlled process is to engage in an exercise in self-delusion. The management of our society by the ruling class, which capitalists mockingly call a "democracy," is nothing more and nothing less than a means of legitimizing the dictatorship of the wealthy. We need not help the ruling class gild their bloody crown.

Our energy is better spent elsewhere. The road to socialism lies through the masses. It is only through the organization of the masses into a political base that a socialist revolution can be won. This organizational process requires a vanguard party to set it in motion and maintain its momentum.

The development of the masses into a well-structured political body which increases in power until it is strong enough to challenge the capitalist state is the engine which has driven every successful socialist revolution. It is how Lenin defined "dual power"—two competing power structures—one controlled by

the capitalists, the other driven by the masses competing for legitimacy and hegemony. This inherently unstable situation must result in revolutionary struggle and the decisive defeat of one party over the other. A failure to commit to this process is a failure to commit to our obligation as revolutionaries.

During the period of socialist contraction (1991-2011), the political consciousness of the masses could not support the development and expansion of a mass base. But conditions have changed, and we must change with them. Protest action — political agitation to intervene in the political debate — is now, and always will be, a vital part of the communist struggle. But it is not enough. The soil of the masses has grown fertile, and we are obligated to dig our roots ever deeper.

Bolivia and the Bolsheviks

The history of socialist revolutions is the history of political base building. Prior to the October Revolution, it was the Bolsheviks who used workers' councils to drive the radicalization of the Russian proletariat in a largely peasant-populated country. In factories all over Petrograd, workers organized into political bodies to debate and determine their political and economic fate. This went beyond unionizing. Workers' councils, even without the sanction of the bourgeois government, decided matters of life and death, war and peace. They were a government and a state unto themselves — a workers' state that fought for the interests of their class.

This pattern held through the revolutions in China, Vietnam, Korea, Cuba and many other nations. The political bodies of the oppressed masses expanded to include peasant farmers, students and any other group exploited by capitalism. But the central principle — of the oppressed classes taking it upon themselves to build a state of and for the oppressed — remained unchanged.

Even today, as a right-wing coup d'état washes over Bolivia, there is massive resistance from the predominantly Indigenous supporters of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS). How is it that impoverished people can survive against the withering and brutal violence of a racist coup regime? It is a direct result of the political organization of the masses. Evo Morales and the MAS party have built a solid political base. In the Chapare region of Bolivia, every neighborhood is organized into a union that is part of a larger network building up to the regional level.

These unions plan infrastructure projects, resolve land disputes and develop political strategy. And when the coup swept through Bolivia, it was the neighborhood unions that surrounded police stations and routed the police, sending coup sympathizers into a headlong flight. The police have not returned, and union leaders say they may only return if they “get on their knees and ask for forgiveness.”

This is the power of a highly organized mass base. But this power can only be achieved if the long-term work of deep organizing is the fundamental objective. This type of base building is difficult and time consuming, but there is no other path to socialist revolution. To turn away from building a mass base is to concede victory to the ruling class.

Building our base

The project of building a mass political base in the U.S., where none currently exists, is daunting. But given the need and the rapidly accelerating class contradictions, the creation of such a mass movement is more likely than not. If Marxist-Leninists do not dive into this process, then our politics will not be represented. Our unique perspective — on the importance of anti-imperialism, the importance of connecting and supporting every struggle, the importance of international solidarity — is vital in combating the liberal strains in the left which seek to divide the working class or promote a chauvinist vision of socialism.

In order to challenge the capitalist class, we must unite workers in the most vital economic sectors with those workers who are most oppressed. We must do this both to threaten the functioning of the capitalist economy and to show solidarity with the workers who are often the most radicalized.

In their eagerness to exploit as many people as possible, the capitalists have given us an abundance of workers to unite with. Workers in shipping and transportation must be organized so that any general strike we launch will have teeth. To reach the bulk of workers, we must organize in the health care, education, retail, restaurant and manufacturing sectors. To target the largest sector of the economy, real estate development, tenants must be organized. And to reach the most oppressed, we must organize gig workers, migrant workers and sex workers.

Uniting the working class will not be easy. But when faced with a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, the revolutionary always steps forward, never backward. Our knees may buckle under the heavy burden of our struggle, but this is a burden we may not shrug off. We must press on. Revolutionary determination will give us strength and our love of the people will set our direction. The challenge of organizing for a decade of revolutionary struggle stands before us. We have no choice but to accept.

But this power can only be achieved if we commit to the long-term work of deep organizing.

On the 150th Anniversary of His Birth

Lenin's April Theses

By Deirdre Griswold (April 26, 2020)

April 22, 2020, marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution. In honor of this great proletarian leader and theoretician, WW is reprinting an abridged talk by Deirdre Griswold, a founding member of Workers World Party and Workers World editor, given at a WWP meeting on April 6, 2017, in New York. Other writings by founding WWP members, Sam Marcy and Vince Copeland, on Lenin's contributions can be read at workers.org/book/lenin-thinker-fighter, respectively.

There were two revolutions in Russia in 1917. The first was called the February Revolution and the second the October Revolution, although the date falls on Nov. 7 by our calendar.

Between February and October 1917 there was an extraordinary period in Russia, when the great masses of people were awakened to the possibility that they could fundamentally change the conditions of their lives.

The first revolution in February started with a huge demonstration of women textile workers who struck on International Women's Day. Within weeks, the people overthrew the czar and ushered in a period of democracy. Over the next eight months, millions became active in organizations that would shape the future of the country. They were called soviets, which is the Russian word for people's councils. We might call them people's assemblies. There were soviets of workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors.

The soviets were both an arena for political debate and a place where the people could express their will in democratic votes — and attempt to carry out what they voted for.

What drove the people to a passionate desire for change?

First were the terrible conditions of exploitation, in the workplaces and on the land. Then there was the brutal oppression by the czarist regime and its secret police.

But on top of all that, which had been going on for years, was a huge new factor: war.

The Russian ruling classes went into World War I for the same reasons as the other capitalist powers: to grab territory and riches for themselves. They expected to come out of the war immensely fattened by taking over resources

and land from the losing side. Their primary foe was Germany, whose rulers had the same objective.

But of course it wasn't the rulers who fought and died in the war. It was the workers and peasants, and they died by the millions.

There was a Socialist International in Europe at that time, made up of parties in all the different countries. Before the war started, these socialist parties had met several times and passed resolutions opposing the coming war.

Imperialist 'patriotism'

But when the war came, almost all these socialist parties capitulated to the pressure of "patriotism." Where they had elected deputies in the parliaments, particularly in Germany, Britain and France, these deputies voted for war credits — that is, they voted the immense funds for war that the governments requested, although the war did cause splits in some of these parties.

What followed was four years of the greatest slaughter Europe had ever seen, with 17 million dead and 20 million wounded, all for the benefit of the ruling classes.

But there was one small group of European socialists who in 1914 had refused to support this inter-imperialist war. The leading figure in it was Vladimir Lenin, head of the Social Democratic Party in Russia, known as the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks' opposition to the war meant jail or exile for many of the leaders. But as the war dragged on, deepening the misery of the people, the Bolshevik Party won respect for its principled stand.

By 1917, the people of Russia — and especially the soldiers — had become thoroughly anti-war. After democracy was proclaimed in the February revolution, the people hoped and expected that Russia would pull out of the bloody conflict still raging in Europe. But the government that took over, headed by Alexander Kerensky, was weak. It stayed in the war and became increasingly unpopular.

This was the situation when, in early April 1917, Lenin returned from exile in Switzerland. He was able to come back by negotiating with Germany, which allowed him to cross Germany in a sealed train so there was no chance of him agitating the population against the war.

As soon as he arrived in Russia, he immediately gave a speech to the All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on April 4. It was then published in the party newspaper, Pravda.

Lenin spelled out in detail exactly what the party should do:

'The April Theses'

"1) In our attitude towards the war, which under the new [provisional] government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government, not the slightest concession to 'revolutionary defensism' is permissible. ...

"In view of the undoubted honesty of those broad sections of the mass believers in revolutionary defensism who accept the war only as a necessity, and not as a means of conquest, in view of the fact that they are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary with particular thoroughness, persistence and patience to explain their error to them, to explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital it is impossible to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence. ...

"2) The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution — which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie — to its second stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.

"This transition is characterized, on the one hand, by a maximum of legally recognized rights (Russia is now the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world); on the other, by the absence of violence towards the masses, and, finally, by their unreasoning trust in the government of capitalists, those worst enemies of peace and socialism.

"This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the special conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.

"3) No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure in place of the impermissible, illusion-breeding 'demand' that this government, a government of capitalists, should cease to be an imperialist government.

"4) Recognition of the fact that in most of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies our Party is in a minority, so far a small minority, as against a bloc of all the petty-bourgeois opportunist elements ... who have yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie and spread that influence among the proletariat.

"The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies are the only possible form of revolutionary government, and that therefore our task is,

as long as this government yields to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of the errors of their tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses. ...

“5) Not a parliamentary republic — to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies would be a retrograde step — but a republic of Soviets of Workers,’ Agricultural Laborers’ and Peasants’ Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.

“Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy.

“The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker.

“6) The weight of emphasis in the agrarian program to be shifted to the Soviets of Agricultural Laborers’ Deputies.

“Confiscation of all landed estates.

“Nationalization of all lands in the country, the land to be disposed of by the local Soviets of Agricultural Laborers’ and Peasants’ Deputies. The organization of separate Soviets of Deputies of Poor Peasants. The setting up of a model farm on each of the large estates. ...

“7) The immediate union of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies.

“8) It is not our immediate task to ‘introduce’ socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies.

“Convene a new party congress and change the program to include the points above.

“Change of party’s name: Instead of ‘Social-Democracy,’ whose official leaders throughout the world have betrayed socialism and deserted to the bourgeoisie, we must call ourselves the Communist Party.”

Well... That is a program for a real revolution.

We study these points today not because they are a timeless blueprint for a revolutionary program. Not at all.

There is no such blueprint. Marxism above all recognizes that everything is in a process of change, of coming into being, and passing away. We must analyze what is the current reality and base our program on that.

Lenin himself constantly updated his analysis of what had to be done. When he delivered his speech on April 4, he stunned a lot of the leaders in his own party.

In fact, one of his points of difference with Leon Trotsky back in 1905 had been over what would be the various stages in the revolutionary process in Russia. At that time, Lenin had believed it necessary for Russia to go through a period of bourgeois, capitalist development before the working class and the poor peasants could think of taking power and reorganizing society on a socialist basis.

The war changed everything

But the war had changed everything. When Lenin introduced the “April Theses,” it was two months after the overthrow of the czar and the establishment of a democratic government — democratic in form, but still dominated by the capitalist bourgeoisie. In those two months, the bourgeois democrats had shown themselves incapable of getting Russia out of the war, incapable of breaking up the landed estates, incapable of reorganizing the economy and incapable of setting up a state apparatus strong enough to fight off attempts at a counterrevolution by the monarchists and aristocrats.

All this called for a new understanding of what had to be done.

Trotsky, since 1905, had argued that the workers must take the power in Russia in order to carry out even bourgeois democratic reforms. So now he and Lenin were in agreement.

But Trotsky also changed his views in early 1917. Earlier, he had differed with Lenin on the question of what kind of party was needed to carry out the revolution. He was won over to Lenin’s views on the need for a disciplined, combat party based on democratic centralism.

It was on the basis of the “April Theses” that Trotsky and his grouping joined the Bolshevik Party and played an important role preparing for the revolutionary seizure of power in October.

The masses of the people, seen especially in the constant shifts to the left in the Soviets, pushed ever harder for a revolutionary change that would take the power away from their oppressors.

At times the Bolshevik Party even had to hold back the workers in key cities like Petrograd, so that those elsewhere in the country who were slower to understand what was happening could catch up — and join the revolutionary movement, which they did.

In studying the past, we can gain a better understanding of what a revolution is, how it happens and, most important, how it can succeed.

Return to Leninism: Centennial Anniversary of the Comintern

By Larry Holmes (April 26, 2020)

V.I. Lenin, the principal leader of the Russian Revolution, opened the first meeting of the Third Communist International — which came to be known as the Comintern — 100 years ago this March 2 in Moscow. Fifty-one delegates were registered, representing 35 organizations from 22 countries. The modest numbers in attendance were in large part because imperialist countries had blockaded the Soviet Union, and it was hard to get to Moscow. Every imperialist power that could muster forces, warships and weapons to support the counterrevolutionary forces invaded the Soviet Union.

However, the delegates to the meeting did not consider their small numbers to be significant. Provoked by the terror and suffering unleashed on the masses by the first imperialist world war and inspired by the Russian Revolution, the working class in the industrially advanced centers of imperialism — as well as the oppressed peoples in the vast areas of the world colonized by imperialism — were in motion. There was a sense that more revolutions were possible, even imminent. Although attempts at repeating the Bolsheviks' success in central and eastern Europe proved unsuccessful, they were nonetheless taken very seriously by the capitalist ruling class.

'Revolutionary wave' of the working class

What was then called by some the “revolutionary wave” of the working class rolled across the oceans to U.S. shores. The great Seattle general strike of 1919 preceded the Moscow meeting by a few weeks.

Bearing in mind the main cause of the collapse of the Second International — the failure of some workers' parties to break with their ruling classes over the war — Lenin wanted to invite to the Moscow meeting only those who were dedicated to revolution and who would never repeat the mistakes that doomed the previous International. The Comintern resolved to “struggle by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie” and for its replacement by a world confederation of soviets based on socialism.

Even though the war had just ended, revolutionaries the world over could see the seeds of the next world war in the crises of capitalism. The Comintern was determined to do all it could to turn imperialist war into a civil war

between the workers and the imperialists — a war that would end with the victory of world socialism.

That the Soviet Union, as a matter of survival, would have no other choice than to adapt itself to the conditions of the world class struggle at any particular time is a given. However, Lenin understood that the fate of the Russian Revolution was ultimately dependent on more revolutions — in essence, on world revolution. As such, the Comintern's orientation was not to reduce internationalism to symbolic acts of solidarity — but rather to coordinate the actual world struggle for the victory of communism over capitalism at the earliest possible opportunity.

It was Lenin's view that no working-class party could base its analysis and goals on conditions in its own country alone, but rather on an accurate analysis of capitalist crises and the state of the global class struggle. The class struggle in any country is, in part, separate from the rest of the world and has its own features. But it is no less true that regardless of differences, the struggles are also interdependent. If this was true at the time of the Comintern's founding, then it is immeasurably more true today based on historical development.

Imperialist globalization fueled by new technology has to a large degree turned the notion of an economically independent nation state into an anachronism. Imperialism recognizes no borders. Neither should the working class.

The global class struggle

The next quarter of a century after 1919 encompassed the collapse of the world capitalist economy, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and the second imperialist world war. At the end of that period, the world situation and the state of the global class struggle had changed. On the plus side, the Soviet Union had survived and helped to liberate major parts of Europe from imperialist domination.

The victory of the great Chinese Revolution changed the world landscape in favor of the national liberation movements. On the other hand, the working-class movement in the imperialist centers emerged politically and ideologically weaker. The victory of fascism in Europe was a crushing defeat for the working class. Although sections of the U.S. working class had fought for and won historic concessions from the ruling class under the Roosevelt administration, it is often forgotten that the U.S. ruling class was forced to make these concessions in order to prevent a Soviet-type revolution at home — and to shore up the loyalty of the masses for the war that resulted in U.S. imperialism's domination of the capitalist world for 75 years.

That U.S. imperialism is now losing that domination is a factor that is integral to the terminal crisis of capitalism and the associated economic and political upheaval underway.

The leadership of the Soviet Union, which was in a nominal and short-lived wartime alliance with U.S. imperialism — influenced by the false illusion of peaceful coexistence with imperialism — dissolved the Comintern in 1943. Some elements in the working-class movement tried to organize a Fourth International, but, among other things, they never garnered the influence to transcend symbolism.

At this time when rallying worldwide defense for the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela against a U.S.-backed attempted coup and counterrevolution is critical, it is a good time to recall that 10 years ago, former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez sponsored a large meeting of socialist and communist forces in Caracas to propose the formation of a Fifth Socialist International. The political differences among the delegates to that meeting were such that the project was not viable. This much is clear: Chávez understood that a new international could play a role in defending Venezuela against imperialism.

Building a revolutionary movement

At the height of its strength, the Comintern — with all its weaknesses and contradictions — had considerable influence in determining the course of the global class struggle for socialism and communism. It would take far more time than we have here to go over the political turns and struggles within the communist movement which played a part in how things turned out.

The political and ideological struggle in the communist movement back then does not lend itself to either simple explanations or labels with respect to the different political forces or leaders in the movement. For a certain generation of veterans of the struggle, merely invoking the names of Stalin or Trotsky will prompt a strong response based on the deep divisions that existed.

In our party, we have always tried to objectively assess that period because only in this way can revolutionaries discern lessons from the events. We believe that the weaknesses in the working-class movement that are still part of the legacy of that period — weaknesses that endure today — are key to understanding why the Soviet Union collapsed.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Sam Marcy, the late chairperson and principal founder of Workers World Party, called on the most militant organizations and forces in the communist movement to put aside past differences and unite around some of the principal tenets of Leninism, such as adherence to revolution over reform, unflinching opposition to imperialism, the vanguard role of the party and a revolutionary position on the national question, etc. Marcy's advice was that while there may be value in dwelling on the past, the urgent need now is to rebuild the revolutionary movement.

In order to do that, revolutionaries had to be oriented toward the future — and to be free of anything from the past that would make it difficult to do

what had to be done in the interests of the working class. The time will come — and the sooner the better — when revolutionaries will once again rise to the challenge of constituting an international alliance for the purpose of organizing world revolution.

Lenin's thinking and the world now

In preparation for the next phase of the global class struggle, it's helpful to use the anniversary of the Comintern to study Lenin's thinking and consider how it would be applied to the present world situation. From an honest historical perspective, the time is ripe for the world struggle for socialism to take a leap forward by returning to the bold, revolutionary vision of Leninism as it was understood at the launching of the Third Communist International.

Why is this necessary? Because it's the only path to realizing the revolutionary potential that may be closer than many of us think.

After the second imperialist war, the working-class movement, especially in the West, including the labor unions and the workers' parties, changed their orientation. The prevailing view was that capitalism and imperialism had emerged stronger from the war — and as a consequence, the working class would have to get used to an extended future rule of the super-rich. The capitalists were able to perfect the illusion that their system was best and that it promised relative stability and advancement for everyone. Indeed, for sections of the working class the illusions and promises seemed real for a period of time.

The goals of revolution and internationalism seemed too lofty. The working-class movement tended to be more conservative, narrow, limited and local in its thinking and direction — and tied to the capitalist ruling class. None of what we are discussing is in any way meant to denigrate or dismiss the many heroic struggles of the working class over the better part of the past century. But in order to understand what we must do, it's necessary to be candid about the setbacks and weaknesses.

One example of the narrowness of the organized labor movement can be seen in the recent developments in France. The millions of Yellow Vest protesters, most of them from the working class, have rocked the French government and bourgeoisie. To some extent, they were compelled to rise up because they didn't feel the French labor movement was going to fight for them.

Under pressure from below and for the sake of its survival, the organized labor movement the world over is slowly beginning to change. However, the pace of the changes must speed up — and their political direction must be toward greater militancy, inclusiveness, anti-capitalism and internationalism. The initiative to revolutionize the labor movement will not come from the top but from below. This is one of the lessons of the education workers' revolt.

The final struggle to end a dying capitalist system

The global capitalist economy is slowing down. Claims by some that the U.S. economy is somehow immune from the downward direction of the world economy are being punctured by reality every day. Until a few months ago, capitalist bankers and politicians — especially in the U.S. — were able to deny, ignore or conceal the magnitude of the economic crisis. They can no longer do that.

The inevitability of another worldwide financial market crash looms over Wall Street and the whole system of finance capital. The global slowdown is not really a recession, although it will be called that. Traditionally, a recession is a cyclical phenomenon followed by a recovery and then an expansion of economic activity. What is under way reflects a crisis that is far more serious than a cyclical event. The economic storm that is gathering is the product of a permanent systemic crisis, one that is irreversible and foretells the dying of capitalism.

Actually, the 2008 “near-death” crash of the capitalist financial system was never fixed. Central banks, led by the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, desperately flooded the markets with trillions of dollars in free money, effectively putting the financial system on life support. Trump gave the U.S. markets another boost with huge tax breaks. But now central bankers are no longer able to sustain the support system for finance capital. How critical is this?

Finance capital has long since replaced industry as the dominant driver of the economy. That reality is a defining feature of a dying system. Of course, the capitalist system has also used its tried-and-true methods for dealing with these crises, such as imposing low wages and austerity, squeezing as much out of the working class as they can in order to support high-profit levels for the super-rich.

As significant as trade wars, Brexit, interest rate gyrations in the financial markets or the bursting of any of the enormous debt bubbles that finance capital has inflated, they are symptoms of the crisis — and catalysts for the crises to explode. The fundamental cause of the crisis is a state of permanent capitalist overproduction. By permanent, we mean that overproduction now exists on a scale never experienced in the history of capitalist development. Capitalism has been incompatible with society in many ways for most of its history. However, it has never been more incompatible with society than now.

The phenomenal growth of the productive forces in the capitalist economy, fueled by new technology, has essentially made capitalist overproduction — and a myriad of associated problems for the system like falling profits — much greater and much more resistant to capitalist remedies.

For the capitalists, as well as the workers and oppressed peoples of the world, there will be no more periods of normalcy, predictability and stability. Until capitalism is ended and replaced with socialism, the only certainty

will be a deterioration of living conditions for most of us, punctuated by increasingly violent economic, political and social shocks.

Add to these convulsions the prospect of even bigger, more destructive wars and the existential threat to the ecology of the Earth. Time is running out for the race to save the planet; the ecological threat is inextricably linked to capitalism.

Even though a terminally ill capitalist system will continue to ravage, paralyze and threaten our very existence, it will not completely die on its own. Capitalism will try to regenerate itself on whatever basis and at whatever cost it takes — if the workers and the oppressed of the world fail to deposit the system into its grave. We have no other choice as a movement but to radically rethink and shorten the time frame for ending capitalism.

The coming revolt of the working class — The revolt has already begun!

There is evidence of a marked upsurge of the working class, which includes major strikes on every continent. In the U.S., education workers, who opened up a new militant wave in West Virginia a year ago, are still in motion in West Virginia, Colorado, California and elsewhere.

There is no contradiction between the day-to-day struggle of the working class and the maximum program of socialist revolution. There is a tendency in the movement to view the struggle for higher wages, better working conditions and other basic labor demands as being at odds with the goal of preparing for revolution. Such is not the case.

Large sections of the working class will always respond first to the struggle for immediate demands. At the same time, the most radicalized sections of the working class — a section that is bound to grow as the crisis deepens — is not only ready to embrace a revolutionary program, they will insist on it. If our movement is not prepared to meet the expectations of the more radicalized sections of our class, we will lose influence with them. That would be a tragic mistake.

Revolutionaries must have a practical, short-term strategy for the working class. But they must also have a larger view of the global class struggle and the crisis of the system. This does not mean being driven out of frustration and impatience to embrace ultra-left fantasies that can only produce failures and confusion. But it does mean envisioning the future, instead of being tied to the past.

We cannot base ourselves on any predictions that the workers' revolt will develop rapidly, as this is unknowable. On the other hand, we must not be overly influenced by the experiences of older generations who have survived

long periods of setbacks and defeats, and may therefore be of the opinion that no serious revolutionary development among the workers is possible in the near future.

The conditions that will govern the development of the future global class struggle will be in part similar to, but also wholly distinct from, those in all previous periods. Why? Because the level of the productive forces of capitalism is constantly changing. This is a fact that constantly changes or impacts the working class and everything else that governs the course of the class struggle.

A specter is haunting the capitalist ruling class

That specter is the worldwide revolt by youth. The capitalists are deeply demoralized. It is painfully apparent to them that they have lost the youth. The overwhelming majority of youth have turned against capitalism and more and more are rebelling against it. Socialism — whatever that might mean to people — has never been more popular.

Trump said in a recent speech, “This country will never be socialist.” It seems as though he has decided that running against socialism will be a major re-election theme. He may also be revealing a deep-seated fear that is widely felt among the rich. A global rebellion is underway against the super-rich. It is not going to go away. Indeed, it is really just getting started.

Young workers, many of whom once thought that capitalist society would provide a comfortable existence for them, provided they received the increasingly unaffordable requisite level of higher education, are redefining the working-class struggle. Young people have found that higher education is no protection against the ever more precarious conditions of work and life in the epoch of a dying capitalist system. The lesson they are learning is not the lesson that the rich hoped they would learn: They are learning to hate capitalism.

It is true that some of the youth bring into the struggle naive and petty-bourgeois radical ideas: ideas that are at odds with Marxism, the class struggle and the role of the working class. As more youth have come into our party, we have encountered these ideas and have had to struggle against them. We don’t fault the youth for having wrong ideas.

We view this as an entirely predictable, and reversible consequence of the weaknesses of the working-class movement. We can lecture youth about this until we are blue in the face. But until there is a working-class movement that is able to demonstrate that it is independent of the capitalist political system and its political parties — and that it embraces all the oppressed — then the ideas and leadership of other class forces will hold some sway with those who are being radicalized by the crises of the system.

Instead of fearing the ideas of young militants, we should work harder to win them over. Doing that will require us to own up to the reality that the political degeneration of the working-class movement over a long period of time is a factor in this problem. All too often, our movement appears to youth to be afraid to change, or that it's stuck in the past, or more closed than open — and that it's conservative, sectarian, cynical, didactic and ineffectual. It should come as no surprise that some might conclude that any ideas are superior to those that seem so unappealing. The more revolutionary our movement is, the more we will win the confidence of the youth and wider sections of the working class.

A return to true Leninism

A return to true Leninism will help to win the confidence of the most oppressed sections of the working class. When Lenin presented his proposal regarding the national and colonial questions to the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920, he understood that if the movement did not embrace the national liberation movements and the struggle of the oppressed for self-determination, the objective of a strong workers' international would be impossible. This is why the slogan "Workers of the World Unite" was changed to "Workers and Oppressed of the World Unite."

Lenin's position on the national question was not a departure from a class orientation. On the contrary, it was asserted to objectively strengthen the class orientation. Many in the movement still don't understand this. As a result, their positions on the national question have weakened, sometimes to the point of completely dismissing the national question.

Also, some in our movement mistakenly see the struggle against gender oppression as a departure from the class struggle. In our view, this reflects another example of a narrow, erroneous understanding of the class struggle — and a position that is influenced by patriarchal prejudice. Hopefully, there will be a reassessment of these questions in our movement so that all of us will finally be in sync with the lyrics of the International: "No more tradition's chains shall bind us."

How to fight the danger of fascism?

Trying to accurately label Trump politically or predict what he's going to do is less helpful than understanding that his erratic behavior and undisguised racism, misogyny and bombastic demagoguery are true reflections of the panic, chaos and political breakdown inside the U.S. ruling class. Trump is the U.S. ruling class unmasked in the face of a life-and-death crisis. He is proof that pretending to be civil, or upholding laws, or trying to maintain international alliances has not helped to extricate U.S. imperialism from its steady decline.

Beyond this, Trump exemplifies the lengths that the ruling class will go to in order to maintain the political loyalty of sections of the working class at a time when economic stability — and thus political stability — is cracking up. Trump’s obsession with building the wall and his war against immigrant workers — beyond appealing to the racism of his base — is also a desperate call to build walls between sections of the world’s working class in order to thwart global class consciousness. It is in effect a declaration of war against the prospect of proletarian internationalism. The time has come for revolutionary and genuinely progressive forces to declare — and make part of their mass appeals — that the workers’ struggle has no borders.

The Trump phenomenon is also a warning. If the unfolding of an uncontrollable crisis has the capitalist ruling class fearful about its very survival, sections of the ruling class are prepared to turn to fascism and war as a solution. History has shown that relying on other sections of the ruling class — which in the U.S. means turning to the Democratic Party — to “save democracy” is only likely to confuse and disarm the working class. The best — and actually the only real way of fighting the danger of fascism — is the radical, widespread upsurge of the working class for the purpose of waging the class struggle until revolution.

What is the role of the working class in the ‘belly of the beast’?

A hundred years ago, the thinking among communists everywhere was that in one way or another, the working-class forces at the centers of imperialism — and most especially in the U.S. — would play a decisive role in determining the fate of capitalism.

Sam Marcy predicted almost 70 years ago, in the early post-World War II years, that the revolutionary impetus in the East that propelled the Chinese Revolution and the heroic resistance of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea would in due time come to the U.S. Che Guevara’s view was that there would have to be a series of revolutions at the extremities of the imperialist empire before the masses at the heart of imperialism rose up to finish the job.

The world has changed in unimaginable ways since these predictions were made. What has not changed is the dire need to end the rule of capitalism.

We will not argue over the validity of prior predictions. We will instead affirm in no uncertain terms — and with resolute confidence — that the workers and oppressed peoples located in the belly of the beast have a special responsibility to the rest of the world to slay the beast. Whatever we must do tomorrow, it is not too early to commence preparations for the end game now!

Why We Say Free Them All!

By Monica Moorehead (April 14, 2020)

There were 27 progressive demands made by a united front of Black, Latinx and anti-racist white incarcerated men who carried out the historic Attica Prison rebellion in September 1971.

This was point 8: “We Demand that inmates be granted the right to join or form labour unions.” Point 7 read in part: “We Demand that industries be allowed to enter the institutions and employ inmates to work eight hours a day and fit into the category of workers for scale wages.” The prisoners also demanded adequate health care, such as any worker has as a human right, in or out of prison.

Many of these heroic prisoners were eventually slaughtered by the state troopers of Nelson Rockefeller, then New York’s billionaire governor. These demands could still be made today by the over 2 million prisoners languishing in local, state and federal jails and prisons in the U.S.

For aren’t these prisoners like other workers who are super-exploited for their labor? Are they not workers who come from poor and working-class communities, whether urban or rural? And aren’t these workers being deeply impacted by the coronavirus in hugely disproportionate numbers because they are Black, Brown and Indigenous?

As in so many instances, this pandemic is helping to shine a bright light on the class character of prisons under capitalism. And what is revealed is ugly injustice that has existed for over two centuries.

Prisons do not exist for rehabilitation of those convicted, whether innocent or not. Prisons are not set up to guide people to a productive life beyond antisocial behavior such as theft, robbery, domestic violence, drug possession or killings.

Capitalist laws and courts exist to punish people through extreme brutal force, and not to resolve the root cause of their behavior with knowledge, patience and compassion.

One’s being determines consciousness. If a person grows up in an environment of poverty, unemployment and police occupation, they will have near to little chance to make a better life for themselves.

That is a life under capitalism — that puts the profits of the super-rich before the needs of the people.

And even if there wasn't a pandemic of Covid-19 now, there should still be a demand to free all prisoners. Because no human being can be expected to survive in small cells under lock and key for 23 hours a day, given rotten food and no showers, sanitation, light or health care, assaulted by guards and more.

But now the pandemic has accelerated the prisons into a full-scale crisis. The inhumane conditions, especially cramped cell blocks where social distancing can never happen, have become a breeding ground for infections and deaths.

It is no wonder that prisoners are fighting for their voices to be heard through their own protests, which have led to the release of prisoners in Chicago, Atlanta and elsewhere.

And people ask, Well, where will these prisoners go once they are released? Isn't it too dangerous to release them? Aren't they a "threat" to society?

Released prisoners should be treated like the millions of other people being impacted by the pandemic. Their health should be cared for. Community groups should be funded by local and state governments to organize housing for prisoners in empty hotels and abandoned housing. Food should be distributed to them instead of sitting on grocery shelves and rotting. These prison workers should be eligible for unemployment benefits!

There are health care workers, many of whom have been laid off, who could provide vital counseling for prisoners who will need therapeutic treatment and even some social isolation — just not behind bars.

All of this and more could be done with organization on a mass scale even under capitalism. Where there is a will, there is a way.

If ruling-class criminals like those in the Trump administration can run free, don't we owe it to our class — the working class who control nothing, not even their own lives — to free these members of our human family from the death traps called prisons?

That's why we say: Don't wait a moment longer. Free them all NOW!

Organizing Against the State

By John Catalinotto (2017)

The following excerpts from the Introduction to Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions, by John Catalinotto, illustrate how Workers World Party challenged the state apparatus — the imperialist armed forces — during the Vietnam War, and the role this struggle played assisting the defeat of U.S. imperialism. Any road to revolution will have to remove the obstacle presented by the state apparatus.

This book's main goal is to reveal the relationship in a developed country between a rebellion inside the armed forces and a social revolution that changes which class rules society. Its central focus is how one small group of Marxists whose goal was socialist revolution tried to build a union of rank-and-file GIs during the U.S. war against Vietnam to break the chain of command.

At the time, we hoped a union of GIs would at least make the U.S. war against the Vietnamese people impossible. That all Vietnam would be independent was our hope and our dream. The broad movement of anti-war GIs, in which our organization played a role much bigger than our numbers and our resources might predict, did contribute to achieving that goal.

During the Vietnam War a tremendous mass movement developed among the drafted and enlisted U.S. troops in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. This movement impeded Washington's use of massive numbers of troops to invade and occupy other countries.

Our part of this GI movement was to found and build the American Servicemen's Union (ASU). This book covers, step by step, how this process developed in the context of the tumultuous social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The ASU was made up of low-ranking GIs — no officers and no career noncommissioned officers. Like any union, it demanded higher wages and more benefits. But it also fought against illegal wars like the war against Vietnam, it fought racism, and it challenged the chain of command. Though the Pentagon refused to recognize the ASU, it felt the thorn in its side.

The ASU also fought the deployment of U.S. Army and National Guard troops against the civilian population of the United States, as they were used against African-American rebellions in the 1960s.

The movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam was strong among all youth and influenced the troops. The Black Liberation Movement also had a tremendous impact, especially on African-American GIs.

Most people today know little to nothing about how many young, low-ranking GIs opposed the war by the late 1960s. The ruling class's enormous anti-history machine has scrubbed out the political ferment from portrayals of that period.

Left-wing political activists in the United States in the twenty-first century have quickly learned that whenever they are in motion, they become targets of a powerful state. In 2011, heavily armed police swept those in Occupy Wall Street from a New York City square and from similar occupations all across the country. These youths were not only up against the 0.01% super-rich, but their hired enforcers.

Black Lives Matter organizers protest the guns of the police that are shooting down Black and Brown people without pretext or punishment. They too have run up against a powerful state that rarely fires cops who have gunned down an unarmed person, let alone puts them on trial.

Indigenous peoples and their allies, gathered in North Dakota to defend sovereign lands against the Dakota Access Pipeline, face attacks from State Police, National Guard and company mercenaries.

Is it possible to overcome state power?

This book does not pretend to provide a blueprint for confronting that state. However, in it are descriptions of events during three wars that led to revolts in the armed forces, which were the first step in political or social revolutions.

These were the Franco-Prussian War leading to the Paris Commune of 1871 — the first revolution led by the working class in a European power. Its lessons served as a template educating revolutionary organizations in how to smash the state. World War I, which led to revolutionary upheavals in Russia and Germany. And in 1974, the army of the small European country of Portugal, worn down by liberation wars in its African colonies, revolted and brought down a forty-eight-year-old fascist regime.

This last revolt opened up a democratic space for eighteen important months and facilitated the liberation of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde in Africa.

In all these events the armed forces start out as a weapon in the hands of the ruling class. Through the troops' contact with rebellious workers or their wartime experience, their political consciousness changes. Military discipline shatters and part of the armed forces joins the revolution, opening a struggle for state power.

The Communist-led revolutions in China, Korea, Cuba and Vietnam in the twentieth century were based on guerrilla fighters in the countryside, with most fighters coming from and supported by the peasantry. These revolutionary armies combined a movement for national liberation with class struggle. They smashed the old landlord-capitalist-colonialist state by defeating its army in battle. Then they replaced that army with a people's army.

In the imperialist United States, Europe, Japan, Canada or Australia any revolutionary movement would undoubtedly follow a different path than the guerrilla pattern, which depends on organizing peasants against landlords and people against colonial rule.

No other country's military is as powerful today as the U.S. Armed Forces. The Pentagon is the self-appointed police power protecting the property and interests of those who own and exploit all over the world. It props up, defends and expands the property and privileges of a tiny part of humanity: those who own the banks, factories, power stations, mines, oil wells and technology. These few are the super-rich who own it all, including the land and seabed from which their workers extract resources.

The Pentagon played this same central role in the 1960s and 1970s, when the demonized enemy of global capitalists was communism. Even as today, the Pentagon was capable of enormous destruction. Few would have thought it was possible to stop the Pentagon by helping to change the consciousness of the human beings who hold the weapons.

Any phenomenon deserves attention if it has caused so much disruption in the most powerful military force the world has known. Those who want to change society inevitably run up against this monster problem: How do you battle the repressive state apparatus?

This state has changed little since Marxists first described it in the nineteenth century: Police, courts, prisons and "armed bodies of men" (now including women), an entrenched government bureaucracy — and in the twenty-first century — enormous standing armies, navies and air forces for international policing and the big corporate media for mind control.

Powerful? Yes. Omnipotent? Only if it's not challenged.

Section 4

Centrality of Fighting Racism

Racism, Covid-19 and Black People - WW Commentary

By Monica Moorehead (April 6, 2020)

April 4 marks the 52nd anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the great civil rights leader, who sacrificed his life to realize a dream for social equality.

He was gunned down in cold blood when he went to Memphis, Tenn., in 1968 to support Black sanitation workers on strike for dignity, safe working conditions and a living wage. This important struggle epitomized the merging of two sides of the class struggle for economic and political rights.

In a letter to his spouse, Coretta Scott King, in 1952, Dr. King wrote, “I imagine you already know that I am much more socialistic in my economic theory than capitalistic. ... [Capitalism] started out with a noble and high motive ... but like most human systems it fell victim to the very thing it was revolting against. So today capitalism has out-lived its usefulness.”

The last sentence of this quote is certainly just as relevant now as when it was written, especially considering the staggering crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on workers and oppressed peoples on a global scale.

The poorest are suffering

This global health care crisis has overtaken so many sectors of society in the rich, developed countries and the poor, developing countries. Even inside the United States, the most powerful imperialist country, there has been an uphill battle to secure enough testing kits, surgical masks, hand sanitizer, ventilators and other essential health care goods and services to make sure millions of people stay as healthy and as safe as possible in order to contain the spread of the virus.

In this crisis, the most marginalized and the poorest of the poor are suffering in disproportionate numbers. Capitalism — a system that puts profits before people’s needs — is the root cause of the current crisis for millions in the U.S., but some have been suffering more than others for decades and for centuries — especially people of color. Their numbers include both those who identify as African American and also immigrants from South and Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East — all suffering now from an upsurge in xenophobia.

In New York state and New York City — the epicenter of the Covid-19 virus in the U.S. — one out of four people testing positive are living in the borough of the Bronx. Half of the deaths so far from the virus have also occurred there, primarily due to high numbers of people with pre-existing conditions like asthma and diabetes. (thecity.nyc, April 3)

The Bronx is the poorest of all the New York City boroughs — and that is no accident. Of the overall population there, 35.64 percent are Black or African- American people, 48.38 percent are Latinx and 3.11 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander. And these numbers do not reflect undocumented people, with many families forced to live in close quarters with little or no access to public assistance. This is a population at severe risk and in need of adequate health care.

A pandemic within a pandemic

There is an old African-American saying that goes, “When white folks catch a cold, Black folks get pneumonia.” That statement could be taken figuratively and literally.

For African Americans, the pandemic health crisis has driven home the very hard reality that has existed for over two centuries, since the end of slavery: The U.S. has an antiquated health care system riddled with white supremacy.

Even before this current health crisis hit, African Americans have suffered the highest mortality rates from the cradle to the grave compared to white people. Alarming statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) give an indication of this reality: 54 percent of Black males suffer from high blood pressure and Black people suffer the highest death rate from heart attacks of all populations.

In the Deep South — the poorest U.S. region and home to the largest concentration of Black people — the states of Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and Texas all spend less than \$25 per person a year on public health, compared to \$84 per person in New York. (Mother Jones, April 2)

According to the 2015 National Medical Association Scientific Assembly, the risk of diabetes was 77 percent higher among Black people than for white people. Depending on where they live, Black women were two and a half times more likely to die giving birth in 2018 compared with white women. (National Center for Health Statistics, Jan. 30)

In light of the general poor health Black people suffer from, along with lack of health care in their communities — both urban and rural — there exists today a pandemic within a pandemic.

The toll of the coronavirus is becoming a genocidal-like crisis within Black communities.

Double, triple death rates in Black communities

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reported on April 2 that of the 11,000 confirmed cases in the state, 35 percent were Black people and 25 percent were white. The state's death toll from the coronavirus was 40 percent Black people, 26 percent white and 30 percent unknown.

But Black people make up just 12 percent of the state's population! A quarter of the deaths alone in Michigan have occurred in Detroit, which is 80 percent Black.

In Milwaukee, Wisc., where Black life expectancy is 14 years shorter than that of whites, half of Milwaukee County's 945 virus cases and 81 percent of its 27 deaths are Black people. The overall African-American state population is 26 percent.

Dr. Camara Jones, a family physician and epidemiologist at Harvard University, who spent 13 years at the CDC identifying, measuring and addressing racial bias within the medical system, stated: "Covid is just unmasking the deep disinvestment in our communities, the historical injustices and the impact of residential segregation. This is the time to name racism as the cause of all of those things. The overrepresentation of people of color in poverty and white people in wealth is not just a happenstance. ... It's because we're not valued." (propublica.org, April 3)

According to Dr. Ngozi Ezike, the director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, Black people make up 30 percent of all coronavirus cases reported in the state — more than double the state's Black population of 14.6 percent. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker commented on these numbers in the area of health care: "It's hard to make up for decades — frankly maybe centuries — of inequality." (CNN, April 5)

Workers World Party's socialist demand of "Free health care for all" raises an answer to the massive, life-threatening situation for all workers and their families. "Black Lives Matter" should also be a main focus of this overall demand, and affirmative action must be implemented in health care to help unmask and remedy this horrific injustice.

A Revolutionary Understanding of The National Question

By Monica Moorehead (August 14, 2019)

This article is based on a talk given at a July 25 Workers World Party meeting in New York City that addressed the theme “Fighting against Racism and for National Sovereignty.”

This talk will not give a blow-by-blow account of all the attacks that racist Trump has made against the four progressive congresswomen of color — Reps. Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib — known as “The Squad.”

But these four congresspeople symbolically represent the global working class, despite their political affiliation and loyalty to the Democratic Party. The fact that their respective nationalities — Somali, Puerto Rican, Black and Palestinian — represent millions of oppressed peoples globally is an inspiration to the movement for revolutionary change.

In the end, these racist attacks are not isolated from attacks on the global working class, which include workers and oppressed of all nationalities and gender expressions who are super-exploited and super-oppressed by the same bosses and bankers.

Whatever form the struggle against racism may take — in a bourgeois arena like electoral politics or outside that arena — as revolutionary socialists we must be prepared to take on the fight against racism whenever and however it rears its ugly head. This is because of the historical, theoretical and practical significance of the national question and its relationship to the class struggle.

Origins of national oppression in the U.S.

The expansion of U.S. imperialism was rooted in the theft of Indigenous lands, begun in the drive to colonization launched by Christopher Columbus’ claim of “discovery” in 1492. The crimes of the U.S. were marked by such actions as U.S. President Andrew Jackson’s infamous “Indian Removal Act” of 1830 and encompassed the U.S. theft of more than half of Mexico’s territory in the bloody war of 1848. And then there was slavery — where an estimated 4 million people of African descent were owned outright after

being kidnapped to provide the unpaid labor needed to farm and develop the stolen land.

That development led to a sharp economic clash between two opposing systems — slavery which served the interests of the Southern slaveowners and capitalism which served the interests of the Northern capitalists. The clash culminated in the U.S. Civil War — the opening of the ongoing struggle for Black Liberation in the U.S.

After the Emancipation and the end of that war, any hope of bringing about political equality for Black people on equal footing with white people was shattered into a million pieces with the overthrow of the 10-year period known as Radical or Black Reconstruction. The first of many broken promises — for what would have been reparations — was the failure to provide freed Black people with the self-sustaining 40 acres and a mule, along with education and political representation.

The quest for political equality was replaced by racist “Jim Crow” or legal segregation — codified by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1898. This was reinforced by penal codes, lynchings, police brutality and mass incarceration that classified Black people, no matter their social status or where they lived, as criminals and second-class citizens.

Based on these historical facts and Marxist ideology, Black people constitute not just a nation, but an oppressed nation — oppressed by an oppressor nation dominated by white supremacy, emanating from ruling-class ideas rooted in the capitalist economic system. The struggle against racism based upon a foundation of national oppression is not separate and apart from the class struggle — in fact, this principle is central to the prosecution of the class struggle.

National oppression as a theoretical, practical concept

National oppression is a Marxist-Leninist concept that Lenin expounded in “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.” He explained that nations of peoples — be they of African descent, Latinx, Indigenous, Arab, etc. — are super-exploited, along with the resources of their homelands, by the richest capitalist countries. This expands the wealth and territory of the small class of billionaires who own the banks and corporations. This is how the world is divided into oppressed nations and oppressor nations.

As a young Black woman raised in the apartheid South, I was radicalized by the struggle to smash white supremacy during the era of the Black Panther Party and the Attica prison rebellion (1966-71). However, it was the unwavering theoretical position of Workers World Party chairperson Sam Marcy regarding the defense of oppressed nations as central to class unity that won me to revolutionary Marxism.

Marcy wrote the article titled “The right of self-determination and the class struggle” in November 1983. I want to quote from this extensively because he said it best: “Of all the great domestic political problems facing the working class and the oppressed people, none surpasses in importance the relationship of national oppression to the class struggle. Indeed, one may say that it is at the heart of the basic social problem in the United States. It touches every form of social existence, and no sector of society is free from it.

“For Marxists in particular it is the acid test of the correctness of their general political program. It is also a test of the revolutionary integrity of the party, in particular as this is manifested in day to day practical application. Probably nowhere else is theory so severely tested by practice as in the field of the national question.”

Marcy went on to say: “To many in the progressive and working-class movement the relationship between national oppression and class conflict appears as a choice between two supposedly contradictory phenomena.

“To socialists of the pre-World War I generation and to many avowed Marxists of that period (and even of decades later), choosing or giving priority to the national question, or as some put it, ‘giving priority to the struggle against racism,’ meant the abandonment of the class struggle and a surrender to bourgeois nationalism.

“Needless to say, such a view of Marxism, in addition to being an error in principle and a violation of basic Marxist theory on the national question, was mostly propounded by whites, even those who saw themselves as adherents of socialism and even of Marxism. Upon the solution of the national question may very well depend the destiny of the working class in the struggle against capitalism as well as the future of socialism.”

National oppression and the class struggle

Marcy’s emphasis on socialists putting their theoretical understanding of the national question into practical application is critical, because to fail to do so does more harm to prosecuting the class struggle. Marcy timed the writing of the 1983 article to meet the acid test of the first presidential campaign of the Civil Rights leader, the Rev. Jesse Jackson. His campaign was challenging the racism of the Democratic Party leadership, the Democratic National Committee, notwithstanding that the mass base of that party has many Black and Brown people, then and now.

For Workers World Party, we viewed the significance of the Jackson campaign beyond its form within the Democratic Party organization. In its essence, the Jackson campaign was a catalyst for Black and other oppressed nationalities to complete the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution

by extending and winning full social rights for Black people and other disenfranchised sectors of our class.

Marcy stated in the same article: “The national question has for centuries been covered up by a plethora of lies and deceit. The intent is to convey the impression that it does not exist; or if it does exist, it is being solved; or at least its significance is diminishing due to the glory and virtues of the democratic processes of monopoly capitalism.”

Twenty years before the Jackson campaign, the Black Liberation movement was divided into two distinct wings — the Civil Rights Movement represented a liberal bourgeois sector led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., while the revolutionary Black nationalist militant wing was represented by Malcolm X.

While Workers World Party felt the closest political affinity with Malcolm X and the current he represented, even before he left the Nation of Islam, we never pitted these two wings of the Black movement against each other in our propaganda or in concrete solidarity.

That is due to our party’s belief in building class unity against a common oppressor. Our party was very sensitive to the besieged Black masses in the South who were at that time on the front lines against fascistic Jim Crow. The lesson then and now is that whenever the masses or a sector of our class is engaged in struggle against racism — as they were in the 1960s or in the 1980s — the form of that struggle against racism becomes secondary and must be given support even if that support is critical, while at the same time showing concrete solidarity.

The Squad and the struggle against national oppression

Compare the politics of the Squad to the Jackson campaign. While we all know that the Democratic Party is as much a party of big business, war and racism as the Republican Party, The Squad’s politics in general are to the left of the party they belong to.

These congresspeople defend the rights of migrants, including calling for abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement and closing down the detention centers, uplifting the rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, supporting Medicare for all, deploring Trump’s attempts to cut over 3 million more people off the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and more.

And while Bernie Sanders claims to be a “socialist,” he hasn’t specifically mentioned the attacks on The Squad or defended them, although he has come out in general against Trump’s racist and xenophobic language. This is the same Bernie Sanders who only mentioned Black Lives Matter during his

2016 bid for the presidency when Black protesters heckled him at one of his campaign rallies.

The burning question now is what is next in this ongoing struggle against racism — especially with the presidential elections about 16 months away?

The City Council of Charlotte, N.C. — where the Republican National Convention is to take place in August 2020 — voted 9-2 on July 23 to condemn Trump's racist remarks. This action was similar to the July 16 vote by the House of Representatives that condemned Trump as a racist. But these are symbolic, nonbinding votes.

Is the Charlotte City Council going to cancel the convention? Hell, no! It will bring in millions of dollars. And while Democrats like Nancy Pelosi may have called out Trump on his racism, they will not go so far as to mobilize the masses in solidarity with The Squad or demand the closing of those horrific detention centers. The Democrats could easily take that action because they have the resources and allegiance of a large sector of the masses, including the trade unions.

But the Democratic Party leadership fears a mass mobilization in the streets that would become more independent, move more and more to the left, and be driven to militancy.

We must continue to defend The Squad — or any other prominent figures, politicians or not, attacked by racists. We must also continue to distinguish that defense from any endorsement of the two major bourgeois parties, which will do and say anything to occupy the White House, Congress and other capitalist institutions that administer class rule.

We must continue to organize and unite to shut down the camps, to shut down mass incarceration, to shut down police brutality, to shut down all forms of white supremacy. This can all lead to a complete shutdown of capitalism — toward realizing a socialist future. Build international solidarity! Build a Workers World!

The Lies About Racism Are the Same at Home and Abroad

By Makasi Motema (December 27, 2019)

Racism perpetrated by the U.S. state, whether by police domestically or by the CIA, U.S. State Department and U.S. military in other countries, operates the same way. The foundation of racialized violence is to lie about the victim, and these lies always follow a similar pattern.

We are told that (1) the primary target of U.S. state violence is a violent thug, that (2) they come from a broken culture that produces criminality, and that (3) the use of violent force is a net benefit to the targeted community at large.

The road to socialism

Everyone in this room understands this. Many of you have written on this subject and documented the lies of the U.S. state in detail. What bears discussion is how this information is communicated to the masses at large. The road to socialism is through the people.

The road to socialism is through organizing the masses. Educating them about the political character of their oppression and identifying their class enemies. By collectivizing and educating the masses, we can then concentrate our forces against the capitalist ruling class and engage in revolutionary struggle.

But this requires that we explain to folks that their oppression is directly linked with the oppression faced by people living thousands of miles away. Further, we have to explain that this link goes beyond moral empathy. Someone living in New York City can easily understand why the lynching of Indigenous people in Bolivia is wrong. They do not need Marxists to explain the basics of morality.

But what may not be clear is how the overthrow of a democratic government in Bolivia is part of the same neoliberal program that brought 500 new cops to our subway platforms. And further, that a defeat of the forces of imperialism in Bolivia is a victory for oppressed people here. Our job is to provide that clarity.

The focus of my talk will be on the way that domestic and international state repression mirror each other. I have found that discussing the international struggle in this way resonates strongly with people who are new to the struggle.

Capitalism is racist

One of the most important things to communicate to people when organizing is that racism is motivated by the material interests of the ruling class. Liberals have been extremely effective at spreading the myth that racism is driven by individual hatred. Under the liberal model, in order to determine whether someone is perpetuating racism, we need to perform a heart exam.

That is, we need to find out if so and so is truly a racist “in their heart.” This false paradigm leads to confusing and unproductive discussions where people end up debating whether all cops are racist or if some are redeemable.

It’s important to refocus the discussion on the material dimension. Specifically, the extraction of wealth. The police in the U.S. exist to protect the ruling class and to extract wealth from the working class — especially the Black and Brown community. The current MTA [Manhattan Transit Authority] struggle serves as a clear example.

Wall Street desperately wants to continue collecting debt service from MTA fares. However, due to crumbling infrastructure and increasing poverty, the working class is less and less likely to tolerate a toll for public transportation.

The only way Wall Street can continue to extract wealth from the working class is through an injection of police officers on subway platforms who use violence to force Black and Brown people to pay for a service that barely works.

This process repeats itself in other countries. As the environmental crisis worsens, there is an incredible demand for non-fossil-fuel sources. These alternative energy sources rely on battery power storage, and one of the primary components of rechargeable batteries is lithium.

The people of Bolivia have the fortune — and the misfortune — of living on top of one of the world’s largest stores of lithium. [Former President] Evo Morales understood that national ownership of Bolivia’s lithium could provide his country with an increasing standard of living while helping the rest of the world convert to green energy.

But such an arrangement would deny U.S. and European companies’ profits from the mining of lithium, and therefore, this arrangement was intolerable. U.S. foreign economic policy demands that U.S./European companies have unfettered access to the resources of the Global South and the profits that result.

In order to extract those profits and wealth, the emerging picture seems to be that the U.S.-backed, right-wing military, police and militia in Bolivia forced Evo Morales out of office to make room for a Christo-fascist [evangelical] government that would ensure U.S./European economic control in Bolivia.

These coup forces have used anti-Indigenous racism as a rallying standard for their movement. In La Paz, Bolivia, as in New York City, racism serves the goal of capitalist wealth extraction.

Lies and criminalization: ‘thugs, dictators and thuggish dictators’

The U.S. does not present itself as an evil empire. In spite of its immense crimes against humanity, the U.S. claims to be the leading moral force in the world. Therefore, the murder of unarmed Black people in the U.S., or the overthrow of foreign governments, need to be justified somehow as moral acts. The way they do this is by lying and slandering the victims of U.S. aggression.

Black and Brown people immediately understand what you are talking about when you say the phrase, “He was no angel.” They understand the racialized nature of the term “thug.” They know that this is the way the police reinforce the stereotype of Black criminality.

They know that after an unarmed person of color is killed by the police, their personal records will be searched for any infraction — no matter how minor, no matter how unrelated — to smear their character.

This character assassination, following the physical assassination, is done to morally justify state violence and to make white people feel comfortable about the actions of the state. And oppressed nationalities understand this. So it’s important to explain that the U.S. follows the same pattern of violence and slander in other countries.

Countries that use their resources primarily for the benefit of their own people, rather than for the benefit of U.S. companies, do not have “democratically elected” presidents and prime ministers, at least according to U.S. media. The U.S. State Department, and its propaganda arm in the media, will only ever refer to these leaders as dictators, no matter how many votes they receive. These dictators are not the heads of governments or administrations; they are the leaders of “regimes.” Usually “brutal regimes.”

Black and Brown people know that the terms “thug” and “gang member” are racial codes that signal that the person being described is inferior and violent. As revolutionary organizers, we need to make the connection that terms like “dictator” and “regime” are always used in the exact same way. The parallels are so close that we often hear them cross over, and certain leaders are referred to as “thuggish dictators.”

Another dog whistle is the term “corruption.” Foreign governments, especially in Africa and Latin America, are said to be “plagued by corruption.” The use of the word “plague” implies an affliction. Something that becomes part of a person whom they cannot control.

What's really being said here is that Black and Latinx people are not capable of being in positions of responsibility without stealing whenever they get the chance. Oftentimes, allegations of corruption are completely manufactured. This is the same racist ideology that argues that Black and Brown people in the U.S. suffer from poverty, crime and a lack of education for "cultural reasons."

But Black and Brown people do not steal for cultural reasons, here or abroad. They are not poor for cultural reasons, in North America or South America. Black and Brown people in the U.S. and abroad are stolen from. They are made poor by the thievery of the ruling class and the U.S. state.

And perhaps the primary moral appeal is to invoke sympathy for innocent bystanders within a targeted community. During the height of the war on drugs, the incredible violence used against mostly Black men was justified as a means of protecting the larger Black community. The victims of police violence were skillfully divided from their own population through clever language.

The police told us that drug dealers were "poisoning their own community." The idea is that targeted individuals are not members of the community who are victimized by police violence; rather they are aberrant predators who are inflicting harm on other innocent people, whom we should pity.

This is how police violence against Black men becomes an act of mercy toward the Black community at large.

We have to explain that this language that says, "thugs and drug dealers are poisoning their own community" comes from the same template as the phrase, "dictators who gas their own people." It's the exact same concept.

The U.S. masks its racism by feigning pity for the innocent civilians of a targeted country, and they pretend that the political leaders of that country are a distinct and separate element which is harming the people of that country. But when they talk about poisoning communities, they will never talk about the Flint water crisis or depleted uranium in Iraq.

Us against them

What's necessary as we build toward socialist revolution is to explain to the masses who their class enemies are and who their allies are. We must organize the working class into political mass organizations that have the power to take control of the means of production. Class consciousness is higher today than it has been in decades. But there is a tremendous amount of political education that still needs to be done.

We can't effectively organize the working class if they don't understand that the people of Bolivia are part of the international working class. They

can't fight against the ruling class unless they understand that folks in the South Bronx are on the exact same side as the folks in La Paz and that the NYPD [New York Police Department] and the CIA are two sides of the same coin.

Making these connections is not just important for solidarity. It's important because it provides clarity in the struggle. It prevents future contradictions from emerging within the struggle, such as the contradiction between POC [People of Color] who are U.S. citizens and POC who are undocumented.

And it inoculates the working class from attempts at cooption and controlled opposition by nongovernmental organizations, Democrats and social democrats because those forces are totally incapable of standing against U.S. imperialism.

The road to socialism is through agitation, education and organization of the masses. An essential part of that is explaining that U.S. racism respects no borders.

These slightly edited remarks were made at a Nov. 23 Workers World Party forum titled, "What road to socialism?" Motema is an organizer with the People's Power Assemblies/NYC.

Brexit and the Migration

Refugee Humanitarian Crisis

By Teresa Gutierrez (July 5, 2016)

The recent Brexit vote in Europe was closely tied to the issue of migrants and refugees. Mirrored by the racist, demagogic campaign of Donald Trump here in the U.S., the campaign to “Leave” the European Union was carried out within an anti-immigrant context. With capitalism at a dead end, racist scapegoating has become a priority for the capitalists in order to divert attention from the economic crisis.

This is shameful and merits an immediate, worldwide, working-class response. Why? Because the crisis of the forced migration of workers is of epic proportions.

It is a massive humanitarian crisis. It is genocidal, a crisis that was created by the bloody hands of U.S. and British imperialism. This is not just an issue of migrants but of refugees and workers and should be treated accordingly.

This massive displacement, this gigantic wave of forced migration primarily from the Middle East, Africa and Asia to Europe and elsewhere, has resulted in the largest dislocation of humanity since World War II. That is a stunning fact.

This amounts to World War III. That the working-class and progressive movement in Britain could not stay the hand of this war is one thing; to be sucked into the ideology of the right wing is another.

This bodes ill for the working-class movement, not only in Europe but in the U.S. as well.

“Leave the EU” and “Build the Wall” are two sides of the same coin: divide and conquer the multinational working class with the issue of immigration.

War, sanctions and austerity caused the refugee crisis

How repulsive of our enemies to use the issue of forced migration as an answer to the ravishing effects of the austerity measures sweeping Europe. The very forces that are laying off workers in London, Detroit, Khartoum, Mexico City or Dhaka are the very forces that are driving workers to leave their homelands.

It is U.S. and British and NATO imperialist wars of regime change in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan and so on that are forcing workers to leave in the first place.

Those wars include starvation sanctions and planned destabilizations.

Take Libya. This country had once been a state where its resources, the very oil the corporations go to war for, had been nationalized and helped give Libya the highest standard of living in Africa.

It was months of bombing as well as the assassination of its leadership — Gaddafi in 2011 — that devastated Libya. Imperialism destroyed the entire infrastructure of this country in one fell swoop.

And now the European elite turns its back on the very people it bombed, after creating the very conditions that forced those people to leave.

We have all seen the pictures published by the capitalist media, the painful pictures of waves of migrants at sea, of drowned children, of boats capsized with people who never make it, whose families back home will never know what happened to them.

Rarely are these pictures accompanied by admissions of what caused this migration.

In reality, the vast majority of the people in the pictures are not migrants at all. They are refugees and should be accorded the rights of refugees, including, according to the United Nations, the number one right of safe asylum.

A few months ago, the world witnessed the horror of mass dislocation. Refugees' dire conditions worsened when the U.N. Food Program exhausted its funds and cut aid to hundreds of thousands that were living in miserable refugee camps in Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

The U.N. agency needed \$236 million to keep the program funded through November 2015. Yet, the U.S. has spent much more than that on wars in Syria and Afghanistan. According to nationalpriorities.org, U.S. taxpayers have paid, every hour since 2001, a whopping \$8.36 million for its wars!

That is why Syria today has the highest number of people displaced by war.

Syrians have been forced to leave in record numbers because the Pentagon and NATO targeted civilian infrastructure, irrigation, hospitals, schools, water purification and local industries.

U.S. and NATO sanctions have been imposed on Syria since 2010. And this was followed by the arming and financing of mercenary forces. This war has destroyed a formerly prosperous country where the population had modern infrastructure, free, quality health care, and free education.

Now, almost half of Syria's 23 million people have been displaced.

Furthermore, people from Western Africa are forced to leave after decades of International Monetary Fund structural adjustment policies. Even the IMF itself admitted that its schemes are "flawed, have increased inequality and [have] not ... delivered economic growth," all of which are, of course, utter euphemisms. (African independent June 24, 2016)

Hidden casualties of war

The crisis of forced mass migration has many victims. Articles have been published about the tens of thousands of migrant children that are “missing” in Europe, purported victims of criminal gangs, an unspeakable tragedy. And that is a woefully conservative figure. (Politico May 3 2016).

The Politico article stated: “The closure of European borders and lack of an effective strategy to cope with wave after wave of refugees ... often leave unaccompanied minors crossing into Europe with nowhere to turn. And that makes them easy prey for smugglers and traffickers.”

One can only imagine the unspeakable pain of a parent fearing that their child may have gotten caught up in the European sex trade.

On July 1, the International Migrant Alliance distributed a statement from the World Council of Churches dated June 28, 2016. As documentation of worldwide forced migration varies from source to source, and is conflictive, the WCC statement is important to publish.

The statement said, “The world is in the midst of a historic crisis of forced displacement — of people obliged to leave their homes, communities and countries to escape conflict, persecution, repression, natural and human-made disasters, ecological degradation, or other situations that endanger their lives, freedom or livelihood.

“During 2015 ... displacement ... surpassed all previous records, exceeding 65 million people — or one out of every 113 people on earth. Conflicts and insecurity in the Middle East — especially the tragically continuing war in Syria and in parts of Africa — have been major drivers of this exodus.

“In the same year, more than a million-people crossed the Mediterranean to Europe as refugees and migrants. More than 3,770 people perished during 2015 in the course of this hazardous crossing, and more than 2,850 more are thought to have been lost already so far this year.

“In Central America ... the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stated that the number of asylum seekers from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador increased from 20,900 in 2012 to 109,800 in 2015.

“These crises have demonstrated that, in today’s world, it is impossible to remain insulated in one’s own safety and comfort from the suffering experienced by such vast numbers of people seeking refuge. Closing one’s eyes and ears to the plight of the victims was never acceptable, and now it is no longer feasible. ...

“All too often, the response by governments and societies of countries in which suffering people have sought safe haven has been one of fear, rejection and exclusion. All too often, political actors have sought to galvanize public concern and to increase fear for political advantage. ...

“Longstanding and fundamental principles of international humanitarian law have been questioned and undermined, including the right of asylum — the fundamental principle that all people ... are entitled to seek international protection regardless of ... any criterion other than need.

“This principle ... is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. The Refugee Convention was a collective international response to the suffering of — mostly European — refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War. The principles and obligations defined ... are just as relevant and necessary in the context of the current global crisis as they were then in the post-World War II European refugee crisis.”

How to answer Brexit and Trump?

In light of this global humanitarian crisis, what should the working class and revolutionary movements consider in response?

Here is a suggestion. Build a global movement of solidarity that demands:

- U.S., NATO out of Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and everywhere!
- Reparations for Africa!
- Stop U.S. death funds in Central America and Mexico! U.S. out of Latin America! Cancel the debt of Puerto Rico!
- Demand refugee status for all the displaced from wars, climate change or economic violence!
- Build solidarity, not walls!
- Make December 18 “World Day of Migration” and June 20 “World Refugee Day,” global days of class solidarity!

This article is based on a June 30 talk. Gutierrez is Workers World Party’s presidential campaign manager and co-coordinator of the New York May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights.

Section 5

The Working Class Will Make History

Marx's View of The Working Class Includes All Struggles

By Larry Holmes (June 8, 2018)

Arguably, socialism has never been more popular. I'm not saying it's not debatable, but that's what some people think. And capitalism has never been more unpopular. This is good news for all of us who dream about and work toward socialist revolution.

But in order to realize the potential of this, we must confront some ideological problems. They're not problems you can blame on this or that leader or party, or even this or that event. They're more general than that.

Karl Marx didn't call for reform—he called for revolution. He believed capitalism could not be reformed. He believed capitalism was not only inherently oppressive, based on the exploitation of labor, that it pauperized the workers and even more the oppressed, but that the system was inherently unstable. It might go through periods when it seemed to be stable, especially for ordinary workers. Sooner or later that would come to an end, and instability would come back with a vengeance.

So what happened? I think we ought to sharpen our view of the development of revolutionary Marxism over the last three-quarters of a century, not only in this country but around the world. It's been problematic. It's reached some barriers, some walls, which it has not been able to overcome yet. But that's temporary. With our help, and that of millions of other revolutionaries, we'll get over those barriers.

After U.S. imperialism gained world dominance when it came out victorious in the second imperialist world war, it ran all sorts of global networks, institutions, projects and ways of thinking that are under attack now because of the crisis of capitalism. In the working-class movement, in a general way, there was a reassessment of the situation.

The general thinking of the working-class movement was that now U.S. imperialism is so dominant that capitalism is probably going to be around indefinitely. And probably we'd be dealing with a system that appeared to be stable. And so what we were fighting for would be affected by that.

It's not that everybody came together and decided this. It was more abstract and uneven than that. But it's nonetheless true, with some exceptions.

What happened was that the struggle for revolution abated, and the struggle for reforms became an end in itself. From a revolutionary point of view, the struggle for reforms is just a strategy toward the struggle for revolution. We're not against the struggle for reforms, for immediate demands — we're all for that. But that became predominant.

Then eventually, as we could have told anybody, it became clear that capitalism had sunk into a deeper crisis. Globalization, technology, austerity — some call it neoliberalism. That's actually just another word for saying a violent stage of unstable capitalism. And all the attacks that came with it: union busting, more racism, more sexism, more oppression.

When that happened, because of the orientation of a large section of the working class, including forces that considered themselves socialist and communist, they didn't know what to do. Their work and their perspective was based to a large degree on the stability of capitalism. But all of a sudden they didn't have that anymore.

We have to talk about this a lot more, but not just talk about it as if we're polemicizing with somebody. We have to try to do something to change this perspective.

Our struggle — and it's been our struggle for a long time — is to try to reset the working-class movement. However long it takes, and whatever needs to be done to accomplish this, we have to work hard as revolutionaries to reset what the main objective is.

Fighting for immediate demands is great. All of the tremendous struggles that have taken place — you can't take anything away from them. They've been valiant; they've been brave. But we've got to put revolution back into the equation, because that's what is necessary.

Our program cannot be limited to immediate economic demands. It has to be more revolutionary. It has to address political demands, like stopping imperialist war. Like supporting the struggle of the oppressed. Like supporting Black Lives Matter — that's a working-class issue. That's not some marginal issue. Supporting the struggle for women's liberation, the struggle for the liberation of LGBTQ people, the struggle of immigrants. These are not marginal struggles on the side. They are at the center of the working class.

There are some in our movement who say that these issues are diversions, that they're not really working-class issues. And even worse. Some say that that they're the reason Trump got elected. We must argue with them. We cannot tolerate this kind of thinking, because it's wrong and it's disuniting. These are working-class struggles.

Who is the working class?

Marx's view of the working class was for everyone to come in — all the issues, all the struggles. Not for some to be pushed to the side: This one is important, that one's not. That's not a revolutionary view, and it's not a Marxist view.

Marx's view was that the working class got bigger, not smaller. Not only because of the legions of oppressed people who joined it. You cannot say that Marxism is Eurocentric — today the working class is mostly the oppressed of the world, not only in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, but right here and in other imperialist centers, if you look at the demographics. Why do you think so many racists and the bourgeoisie are flipping out? Because the oppressed are taking over.

Capitalist crisis forces other social elements into the working class, not the other way around. People who thought they were going to be petty bourgeois or even bourgeois are forced into the working class.

A lot of the educated young people whom we run into, not only in our daily lives but in the political movement, might have had some big ideas about what they were going to do with their education. Now they can't pay their loans, and they're forced to work in the gig economy, to take all sorts of precarious jobs with no security, jobs that don't last. That's why people have to constantly be leaving and getting new apartments. And these are people with degrees — some of them with two or three degrees.

These are our comrades, or at least potentially our comrades, and very much a part of the working class. And we need to make something clear. Because I hear it anytime some of the young people who fit this description get together and they're becoming radicalized. They look at each other sometimes and they say, "We've got to get to the workers."

Yes, you need to get to other sectors of the working class who are more oppressed because they are in need of your solidarity. But you are workers. You are not some middle-class abstraction that no one has defined. So stop looking at each other and wondering what you are. You're the working class, and you know what? The revolution needs you. It needs what you know. And it's a big plus on the side of the working class that we have you.

A New Generation of Socialists is Coming

By Makasi Motema (March 16, 2019)

The crowd roared when the head of the imperialist/capitalist state proclaimed that “America will never be a socialist country.” Donald Trump made himself the standard-bearer of U.S. capitalism during his State of the Union address in February, and both parties lined up to follow.

But in spite of the thunderous response, the bipartisan cries of support for capitalism carried a hint of desperation. Why did Trump feel the need to rally Congress against the advance of socialism?

The reason is that young people are increasingly rejecting capitalism, and it frightens the ruling class. Young people have seen the harm caused by neoliberal capitalist regimes, and they are embracing socialism as the only viable alternative.

The lifetime of today’s youth has been marked by the dramatic stripping away of capitalism’s promises and the revelation of its cruel reality. Unlike their parents’ generation, today’s young people were told that they could not get a good job without a college degree. Under these terms, those who could saddled themselves with five- or six-figure student loan debts, only to be mauled by the post-2008 job market.

Entry-level jobs require not just a degree, but relevant experience. Gaining experience means shouldering the burden of an unpaid internship — giving away your labor power to a company for free while you find some other means to support yourself. With the pre-existing disadvantage of debilitating debt payments, the Millennial generation came of age in a world where even getting a job is unaffordable.

Those who do find work are not greeted with formerly stable employment and retirement plans of previous generations. Instead, their employment, and thus their survival, is tenuous at best. They are encouraged to get second jobs in the “gig economy.”

Piling one scam on top of another, the capitalists demand the working class submit not just to the bosses, but also to algorithms which exploit workers with computerized precision. With no job security, no retirement plans, no escape from debt and seemingly no future, the current generation understands that the only means of survival is dismantling the old system and replacing it

with something new. For today's young people, socialism isn't a fashionable new trend — it is a life raft in a sea of capitalist destitution.

A system that puts workers in control is the only rational option — the alternative is a life of economic instability. The capitalists have been given every chance to “reform” their system, and they have come up with nothing. “Hope and change” was nothing but hot air, and the current generation understands this. They know that capitalism can never, and will never, be fixed.

Capitalism is unsustainable. A dramatic transformation from a system based on theft to one based on meeting the needs of society is required. Capitalism brings with it imperialism, racism, patriarchy and environmental destruction. Today's youth want no part of that future. They have seen the damage done at home and abroad. They demand a morally justifiable economic policy.

Young people desire a system where medical care is not determined by one's ability to pay and where housing is a human right. They have growing solidarity which demands an end to wealth extracted from the many by the few — that can only be accomplished through socialism.

Young people are correct in identifying this solution. When we look at the pain caused by greed and economic exploitation, and the righteous anger of people rising up to resist it all over the world, it's clear that the victory of socialism over capitalism is inevitable. Systems of oppression cannot thrive forever.

We live in an increasingly interconnected world where class consciousness is on the rise. Unity among the masses is always a sign that the ruling class will soon lose its grip on power. The moral force of socialism cannot be stopped, and neither can the masses who have pushed it to the forefront of U.S. politics. Workers' strikes will only intensify. As these workers' movements continue to become more intersectional and join with anti-racist, anti-patriarchal and anti-imperialist movements, they will become uncontainable. Any attempt by the ruling class to suppress these movements will only hasten its own demise.

Today's youth have emerged from the ruins of the greatest economic disaster since the Great Depression. Their experience has taught them that capitalism is not an engine of economic growth, but of cannibalization and environmental catastrophe. Instead, they crave a system based on equity and economic justice. The ruling class is terrified that soon they will get it.

The Coming Decade of Revolution

By Makasi Motema and Vincent Tacceta (January 11, 2020)

In the last decade the working class — spurred into action by a destroyed economy, state violence, and national and gender oppression — rose up in a series of mass mobilizations, the scope of which had not been seen in two generations. From Occupy to Black Lives Matter to the Women’s Marches, the oppressed and struggling sectors of the working class vented their anger and challenged the capitalist order.

These mobilizations were uneven in political development. Many were spontaneous and unplanned. The state often used unrestrained violence to strike back. But the contradictions that produced the tumult of the last 10 years have not gone away. Rather, conditions have worsened. This can only lead to greater conflict.

If the most politically advanced segments of the working class are up to the challenge, we are likely to see a tremendous push to organize the proletariat. Over the next 10 years, we may see the development of revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

If the last decade was the decade of mass mobilization, of the enraged masses awakening and struggling to find their feet, this decade will be the decade of revolution.

Rent extraction and the gig economy

The newest generation of adults lives on the knife edge of economic insecurity. They are crushed under gargantuan student loan debt. In every major city in the U.S., rents have risen to unsustainable levels, squeezing more and more people out of their homes.

From 2015 to 2018, median rent rose 7.6 percent, while the consumer price index showed a 14 percent increase in the cost of basic necessities like food, energy, transportation and medical care.

For millennials in the U.S. there is no margin of error. They average a net worth of less than \$8,000 — less than any previous generation — and down 34 percent for adults ages 18 to 35. More than half of all millennials have less than \$5,000 in savings.

The rising cost of living has created a traumatic economic wound; the job market offers no means to stop the bleeding. With computerized precision,

Silicon Valley has accelerated the extraction of surplus value from the working class.

The so-called “gig-economy” is a thinly veiled assault on workers’ rights. Workers are hired as private contractors rather than full-time employees. This insulates business owners from costs like health insurance. The results are clear: Productivity has continued to rise, but wages have fallen. Inflation-adjusted salaries for millennials are 20 percent lower than they were for baby boomers at their age.

As Marx understood, the continued extraction of wealth creates a counterforce of popular resistance. The working class, under greater and greater stress, is forced to organize in order to survive. The resurgence of strikes, both in conventional sectors (West Virginia teachers) and in newer tech industries (Amazon and Google), is evidence of this. The extraction of surplus value from the working class is intensifying and becoming unsustainable. As contradictions sharpen, class consciousness and class struggle inevitably increase. In order to maintain control, the ruling class must increasingly rely on state violence.

The slow collapse of the state

Mao Zedong called all reactionaries “paper tigers” — “unable to withstand the wind and rain.” Looking at the U.S. state apparatus in 2020: Has this description ever been more fitting? The U.S. continually pumps more money into the security and surveillance state, but the true strength of its police and military is weaker than ever. It relies on external technological advantage while internal morale and physical capacity are collapsing.

During the Obama administration, major military innovation was the expansion of drone warfare and special operations raids. The imperialists referred to this as the “light footprint strategy.”

In truth, it was war by assassination. The means were remote-piloted drones which hovered over a population — keeping it in constant terror of the next “hellfire” missile attack and gangs of specially trained armed forces smashing down doors in the middle of the night to kill or abduct hapless inhabitants.

Why did they resort to such high-tech terrorism? Why abandon conventional warfare? Because no other means were available. The U.S. military is struggling to recruit soldiers. The Pentagon lacks the masses of troops necessary to maintain control over the populations of the numerous countries that have been attacked and occupied.

The only option, then, is to keep targeted countries in a permanent state of chaos by murdering any political or military leaders who attempt to resist U.S. imperialism. Such a strategy can never defeat the broader anti-imperialist movements behind these leaders, and the U.S. knows this.

But the ruling class has settled on destabilization as a means of resource extraction. The goal is to keep resisters off balance long enough for private companies to drain the natural resources (from the land) and surplus value (from the labor of the working class) of the targeted country. As the climate crisis also demonstrates, the ruling class will accrue as much wealth as it can for as long as it can until the entire system collapses.

And the cracks have already appeared. The death squads referred to as U.S. Special Forces are exhausted by the endless attacks they have conducted in Africa and West Asia. Even pilots who bomb civilians via remote-controlled planes are experiencing high levels of burnout.

With declining troop numbers but an increasing number of battlefields, how can the empire hope to go on? At this writing, the U.S. military is preparing to break itself against the impenetrable terrain and hardened soldiers of Iran. It seems that nothing can divert the state's self-destructive tendencies.

Domestic law enforcement is no better off. As with the Pentagon, exposure of racist tactics by both the police and the Border Patrol — and the resulting condemnation — has led to declining recruitment and plummeting morale. Numerous stories in recent years feature pigs (a term popularly used by the Black Panther Party to refer to killer cops) openly lamenting this “shocking” turn of events.

For any rational observer, this was an inevitable consequence of the public's newfound ability — driven by camera phones and the internet — to document and disseminate instances of racism and oppression by U.S. law enforcement.

This declining force will struggle, to greater and greater futility, to contain the growing mass mobilizations over the next 10 years.

Both at home and abroad, U.S. military and police are paper tigers. When faced with the winds of popular anger and the rain of organized resistance, they will wilt and crumble like wet pulp.

Building the revolutionary machine

The state is weak politically, economically and militarily. The people are getting stronger. Class consciousness is growing. A recent poll found that 70 percent of millennials planned on voting socialist, 36 percent viewed communism favorably, and 22 percent wanted to see the abolition of all private property! This portends a great deal of change in the coming years.

The U.S. has experienced revolutionary upsurges before. But this can only be seen as a cause for apprehension rather than optimism if one incorrectly sees the struggles of the past as distinct events. In truth, all revolutionary movements are part of a continuum of struggle.

The actions of previous generations of revolutionaries created material changes in the governance and culture of the U.S. Those changes in turn have a material effect on successive generations.

The repressive state apparatus reacts to the periodic rise of social movements, and it will take sustained struggle to create change. Capitalism, in its imperial core, will not be slain in one night. To put it succinctly, a tree cannot be chopped down with one blow of an axe.

What then is our task today? It can only be one thing: to organize for working-class power. To unite the multinational working class in opposition to the bourgeoisie. To build durable, long-term organizations that are capable of withstanding the fearsome rigors of revolutionary struggle.

The last decade showed the sparkling brilliance of spontaneous mobilization, as well as its flaws. A bright flame cannot light the way if it burns out too quickly. Only deep organizing — the creation of long-term political structures in the working class — can carry us through the challenges of the next 10 years. It is only through close ties to the masses that organs of dual power can be built to truly challenge and defeat the ruling class. If not, reactionary forces will dominate.

The contradictions our society faces are mounting. Events, reactions and counter reactions are unpredictable. We may have less time to prepare than we think. The time to organize for the decade of revolution is NOW!

A Road to Revolution

By Loan Tran (January 31, 2020)

Sarah Collins Rudolph refers to herself as the “fifth little girl” from the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., that killed four Black girls in 1963 — Carol Denise McNair, 11 years old; Carole Robertson, 14; Cynthia Wesley, 14; and Addie Mae Collins, 14. Sarah is captured in a famous photograph in a hospital bed with both eyes covered in gauze. Her sister and the three others were eulogized by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. while she remained in the hospital recovering.

In the past 56 years since the bombing, she has not received a single apology from the city of Birmingham. No therapy, no treatment for her trauma and, perhaps to add insult to injury, she is still paying for the medical bills related to treatment of her eyes — her left one, which she lost, and her right one, which still has glass in it. No restitution and no acknowledgment that she was there and survived. She calls herself the carrier of history. She has lived with that day every day, and today she is witnessing the vile racism of Trump and every KKK member and neo-Nazi whom this administration embodies and enables.

In 1973, four years after the historic Stonewall Rebellion, an arson attack killed 32 people at the Upstairs Lounge, a gay bar and haven in New Orleans — a city at the time where an estimated 60,000 to 100,000 people out of a population of 600,000 were gay and lesbian. Because being openly gay during that time was so dangerous and could get you killed, few family members stepped forward to claim the dead bodies. Those who survived were isolated and kept quiet because the fear they had was justified — identifying with the burn scars on their bodies meant losing their jobs and any semblance of security.

And as the homophobic and transphobic history of this country would have it, many of those survivors would later die during the AIDS epidemic under the horrendous anti-gay policies of the Reagan administration.

In 1994, Dr. John Britton and James Barrett, a clinic escort, were shot to death outside an abortion clinic in Pensacola. This same clinic was bombed before in 1984 and again in 2012.

The My Lai massacre took place in 1968, where over 300 Vietnamese people were brutally murdered by U.S. troops who were trying to eradicate the Viet Cong and the National Liberation Front. In 1982, ordered by the Israeli Defense Forces, the Phalanges killed anywhere between 460 and 3,500

Palestinians in an effort to clear out the Palestine Liberation Organization fighters from Sabra and Shatila. And in 2004, a year after the Iraq War began, 42 Iraqi civilians were killed by U.S. troops during a wedding.

Sara Collins Rudolph's story perfectly captures what we mean when we say capitalism is dying. History is the past, but it is also the present.

We do not have to reach backwards to tally deaths of our class given the ever-expanding empire. The killings in Palestine continue. The treachery of U.S. occupation continues. Just weeks ago three Black churches were set on fire in Louisiana. Now at least six Ferguson activists have been found dead. The Pulse shootings in 2016 earned the title of the worst hate crime against LGBTQ people in history, with a gunman who killed 49 queer people and left 53 others wounded on Latinx night in an Orlando club.

Capitalism at a dead end

These massacres and shootings, bombings and fires should indicate to even the most minimally politically conscious person that capitalism and its tendrils — white supremacy and patriarchy — are dying, and as it drowns, it seeks to take as many with it as possible. In the course of its death, who will be the carriers of history? And of which history? I imagine for every Palestinian child killed, there is a sister; for every lesbian murdered, there is a lover or family member; for every Iraqi, Venezuelan, Syrian, Yugoslavian, there is a friend, a teacher, a parent, a neighbor.

Faced with this painful reality for every oppressed person and worker here in the U.S. and abroad killed by police, by a boss, by a criminal billionaire like Jeff Bezos, a sexist lawmaker, a developer — there must be a communist, a revolutionary, an outside agitator holding a picket line, occupying an apartment building or an embassy under siege, defending the land, the water, the air.

It is a matter of human life, not in the idealistic or the moralistic sense — but in a socialist sense — that only socialism has any chance of putting the wealth of the world back into the hands of the billions who have paid for it with their lives and labor.

This is the gravity of the task ahead of us. And so much is beyond our control, as humans and as revolutionaries who only have our bodies and each other. Perhaps things have already tipped over the edge, perhaps at best our efforts are hospice care for the end, perhaps the aspiration to save humanity and change course is as impossible as stopping the Earth from revolving around the sun — but even then, we know we must try. And we must attempt this effort with great clarity.

It is simply not enough to scoff at the Democratic Party and its genius and evil process of absorbing our class into the electoral arena where millions can vote while millions more perish. It is not enough to simply criticize the left for its shortcomings on questions of class and national oppression. It is not enough or even right to simply dismiss the sectors of our class — many of whom are young and oppressed and who are deeply dismayed with capitalism — as being self-absorbed for saying who we are as queer people, as women and trans people, as disabled people.

As workers without work, we matter. We are up against this period of capitalism where we should understand a key characteristic to be the attempt of finance capital to stop, as much as possible, the very human development which could destroy it.

Unfortunately we do not have the favor of the revolutionary fervor of the 1960s. We have 2019, for whatever it's worth. And as it stands right now, I believe it's worth \$280 trillion, half of which is being held hostage by 1% of the world's population.

It is worth the 3.5 to 5 million women who formed a 385-mile wall around India's western coast as they raised the issue of women's oppression. It is worth the thousands of Uber and Lyft drivers worldwide who went on strike May 8. It is worth the more than a million students worldwide who walked out in March to protest climate change. It is worth the tens of thousands of teachers who went on strike in North Carolina, where striking is illegal, to demand funding for public education.

It is worth the thousands of migrants who have, since last October, come charging against the gates of the empire. It is worth the thousands of McDonald's workers on the picket lines in defiance of sexual harassment at the workplace. It is worth the millions from Haiti to France, Palestine to Venezuela and beyond who have taken to the streets demonstrating what proletarian democracy really means.

It is worth the tens of thousands of prisoners who last fall went on strike demanding an end to slavery in its newest form.

Preparing for the period ahead

Are we prepared to fight for the worth of the world, the worth of our class? We must fight; we must put forward a revolutionary program and strategy that is capable of tearing down every wall in the workers' struggle, jumping every barricade, and turning every corner where guns are pointed at us. And it cannot be stated enough, quite literally: Put the wealth of the world back into the hands of the world itself.

Just imagine what it would take and what it could do if every worker and oppressed person would hit the streets, the banks, the workplaces and the bourgeois condos and ask: Where is our money? Every worker has the right to make that ask. Are we prepared to receive the fervor and rage that this could unleash?

A revolutionary program for this period not only requires a sharp political analysis of the conditions facing our class, it requires a level of rigor that wrestles with some contradictions and challenges new to communist tradition. The challenges and benefits of technology — of a world that is incredibly well connected and simultaneously incredibly surveilled by social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter — not only buy but sell data on who we are. These platforms are also warping our sense of reality, inundating our psyche with images of violent, capitalist oppression, and worse yet, limiting and repressing the fightback that is taking place within and outside of a digital landscape.

There are many young people, new workers and precarious workers who are caught on a high wire between revolutionary consciousness and demoralization. There is a fatigue in knowing so definitively that the end of capitalism is near. And this fatigue pairs perfectly with the culture of individualism that capitalism has bred — especially here in the center of the empire. How do we offer a way which wins?

We do not say to the distraught worker: Stop worrying about yourself! We say to the distraught worker, the demoralized youth, the oppressed person: Fight for what you deserve! Don't fight each other! And don't fight alone!

Class solidarity matters

We demonstrate that solidarity in this period is not lip service. We must be the harbingers of unity, no matter how difficult. But we must not make decisions foolishly — we must not mistake the urgency of this crisis as an opportunity to be rash, to cut corners or to not wrestle with the new conditions of this period which distinguishes it from many of the previous stages of capitalism.

There is enough time for a breath, for ideological re-armament, to take our perspective to the highest level possible and in the most winning way possible. We must tell the truth about what is happening to our class, and we must be truthful in the role we hope to and can play as revolutionaries.

This struggle did not start with us, and it is very possible that it will not end with us. But are we ready to take up the responsibility of giving our class a true, fighting chance? Our class is everywhere. How can we be everywhere with them? How do we fight and organize to make them the best fighters in their own best interests, the best carriers of history?

Is this the year our class becomes a tsunami breaking the chains of capitalism? I don't know. But I do know this has to be the year we get ready for the years ahead — some of which may be very long, some of which could pass by very quickly. We have no crystal ball, we are not psychics — in fact, we are better than psychics. We are communists, who know that the making of a socialist revolution requires many things. Perhaps foremost is the requirement that we are embedded in struggle, that we contend with reality to make sense of a historical imperative: the liberation of all humanity from capitalism and oppression.

We've got to prepare our class to become manifest of its responsibility as the locomotive, the carrier of history.

We must do this for the Birmingham Four, for Flint, Michigan, for Stonewall, for Mumia, for Leonard Peltier, for Leslie Feinberg, for the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory workers, for the Haymarket Martyrs, for Sandra Bland, for Palestine, Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Haiti, Libya, for the gravediggers of capitalism, and for the future of and the infinite possibilities of humanity.

Black Lives Matter! Build a Workers World! Smash patriarchy! Free Mumia! Long live Stonewall!

Edited version of a talk by Loan Tran, a member of the Executive Committee of Workers World Party's Interim Central Committee and a leading organizer of the Durham branch, at the WWP national strategy meeting held May 11-12 in Newark, N.J.

Working-Class Youth Want Socialism!

WWP Editorial (May 9, 2020)

According to a poll by YouGov in September 2019, 70 percent of millennials — people between 23 and 38 — would vote for a socialist. One-third view communism favorably compared to capitalism. What this poll implies is that young people in the U.S. increasingly believe in a socialist future for humanity and the planet.

Trust in the basic institutions and the founding mythology of the United States is crumbling. Only 57 percent of millennials favored the U.S. Declaration of Independence over the Communist Manifesto as a document that would “guarantee freedom.” That’s compared to 94 percent of people over 74 choosing the Declaration over the Manifesto.

Communism’s popularity among millennials is growing quickly, with their support increasing by 8 percent in the last year. Meanwhile, 35 percent of millennials view Marxism favorably. One in five believe the world would be better off if private property were abolished. When it comes to reforms, totally free college has 45 percent support, and 50 percent believe the government should guarantee everyone a job.

What are the conditions and experiences that created all these “red millennials”?

This is the generation that occupied Wall Street, that led Black Lives Matter, that goes on strike for climate justice, that votes for Bernie Sanders and candidates further to the left, and that continues to fight every racist, fascist attack by Trump.

This is a generation that is pro-union, pro-im/migrant, pro-LGBTQ2+ and pro-gender equality, as well as anti-war and anti-racist.

This is also a generation that is underemployed, faces trillions in student debt and can’t pay down their credit cards or medical bills. Children of millennials, those born today, face a lower life expectancy than their parents. This crushing statistic is an indictment of the criminal capitalist system that caused the decline — an indictment of capitalism at a dead end.

Despite the annihilation of living standards by capitalism, the impact of anti-communist propaganda over the past century — a response by capital to the victorious Bolshevik Revolution — is still a reality. For example, 61 percent of people polled deemed the word “communist” to be an insult.

Significantly, though, only 37 percent of all people found the word “socialist” insulting.

A majority of those polled viewed Donald Trump as the greatest single threat to world peace. He continues the classic anti-communist crusade, calling Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other progressive elected officials “Communists” and “anti-American.”

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party leadership faces a challenge from “democratic socialists” within their party, creating a divide over whether they continue to be the unapologetic party of neoliberal imperialism or cede ground to those pushing a more progressive agenda. Old Guard Democratic Party leaders such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi continue to defend market-oriented, capitalist perspectives.

While the Democrats flounder, socialist and communist parties in the U.S. are growing as the entire world grapples with the demise of capitalism.

Capitalists celebrate fall of Berlin Wall, but socialism advances

When the Berlin Wall came down 30 years ago, it ushered in a global counterrevolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Capitalist apologists proclaimed the end of history, declaring capitalism to be the world’s permanent economic system.

Yet after three decades of capitalism in the former German Democratic Republic, Eastern Europe and the former USSR, polls show a majority in those countries prefer the life they had under socialism. They have experienced the contrast between a system which guaranteed jobs, inexpensive housing, universal child care, free quality health care, versus the ills of capitalism: unemployment, homelessness, wage theft, low pay, illiteracy, right-wing nationalism, lack of mental health support, to name a few.

In China today, hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty and serious steps are being taken to address the climate emergency. The people of Cuba live longer than people in the U.S.

Reality runs counter to all the capitalist propaganda that “socialism is a good idea, but it can’t work” or that the U.S. “saved the world” from communist “slavery” and “dictatorship.”

Pro-socialist governments in countries like Venezuela and Bolivia, currently under siege by U.S.-backed, right-wing forces, have made tremendous gains for the people and built grassroots movements after winning bourgeois elections.

However, the primary question remains: Which class will control the banks, major industries, the media and civil society — along with the state

apparatus? This question will be decisive for the survival of humanity and all life on the planet.

Socialist revolution is, in fact, the only real alternative to the capitalist system of exploitation and the growing danger of fascism.

Since our founding 60 years ago, Workers World Party has steadfastly defended the socialist camp and its endeavors to transform the world. We look forward to many young millennial communists joining our ranks and fighting in the streets to build a workers' world!



Section 6

Fighting Oppression! Gender, Sexuality, Disability & Age

Task of a Party: Building Class Solidarity

By Monica Moorehead (November 24, 2009)

Workers World Party held its 50th anniversary Workers World Party National Conference, Nov. 14-15, 2009 in New York City. Excerpts of plenary talks are being printed in upcoming WW issues. The following excerpts are from a talk given by WWP Secretariat member, Monica Moorehead.

When I was first introduced to Workers World Party in the early 1970s in Norfolk, Va., it was in the aftermath of the assassination of political prisoner George Jackson, the Attica rebellion and the COINTELPRO genocidal war on the Black Panther Party.

While my involvement with the Norfolk Party branch was educational and rewarding, especially where the struggle against racism was concerned, there was something holding me back from taking a leap forward in becoming a Party member.

Then came along a life-altering moment that forced me to look at Workers World Party in a whole different light. That moment was the 1974 March Against Racism in Boston, because I began to understand why a revolutionary party is needed.

The Party saw Boston as an important battleground in the ongoing struggle against racism within U.S. capitalist society. And therefore, the Party understood the necessity of mounting a political struggle against the forces of racist reaction not only in South Boston but throughout the country. The Party wanted to send a clear message with this mobilization that wherever racism rears its ugly head, it will be militantly opposed.

Workers World Party understood that in order to go against this growing tide of racism, where buses filled with Black school children were being stoned by white racists, where Black men were being beaten in broad daylight in the streets, that it would take a broad multinational united effort to turn this situation around. This involved a national campaign to show that the Black community of Boston and its allies were not isolated and alone.

Workers World Party did not let its modest numbers of cadre or lack of resources stop it from doing what was necessary to not only fight against racism just because it was the right thing to do, which of course it is. Fighting

racism also means building class solidarity in order to advance the struggle for real economic justice and eventually class emancipation.

Activists put aside any political differences under the banner of “Say No to Racism” and defending the right of Black people to go to any school they want without fear of racist attack. The Party had taken these political demands and put into practice the Leninist conception of defending the right of self-determination of an oppressed nation.

The Boston march was the defining moment for me that helped me to take a gigantic leap forward to join the Party in 1975. The Boston march and countless other examples go to the heart of what a revolutionary, working-class party should be all about — doing everything that is necessary to unite and hold our class together even if it means going against the tide of political reaction; even if it means going it alone in certain situations. This is the acid test of a revolutionary party.

Our founding members who are no longer with us — Sam Marcy, Vince Copeland and Dorothy Ballan — left this powerful legacy of doing everything in our power to show by example what it takes to build and maintain a revolutionary party with all the ebbs and flows of development. It was never a question of picking which legitimate struggle to defend or support when it involved the struggles of workers and the oppressed in this country or around the world. It was never a question of whether the leaders of these struggles shared a common world view or not with us or other like-minded formations. It was about and remains today primarily about which side you are on — is it the side of the bosses and bankers, who view the world as their private domain to make profits at the expense of human needs, or is it on the side of those fighting for their democratic rights, for their national liberation, for sovereignty and even for socialism.

Other examples of class solidarity

Fighting for working-class solidarity is the antithesis of racism, national oppression, women’s oppression and lesbian, gay, bi and trans oppression — all of which are dangers to building solidarity within our class. And for a Marxist-Leninist party to abandon this principle of fighting for class solidarity, especially the right to self-determination of oppressed nations, is tantamount to falling prey to opportunism, class collaboration, sectarianism and demoralization.

Our Party has avoided these dangerous traps throughout our 50-year existence, like organizing a defense committee in support of Black activists Robert Williams and Mae Mallory, who defended their right to armed self-defense against the KKK in North Carolina back in the early 1960s.

Our Party was the first left tendency in the U.S. to hold a solidarity demonstration for Palestine during the June 1967 war against Arab countries launched by the Zionist state of Israel backed by U.S. imperialism. This

demonstration, which was viciously attacked by pro-Zionists, was held in virtual isolation when anti-war movement forces refused to support a call for unity initiated by our Party chairperson, Sam Marcy, to support Palestine's right to self-determination.

And it is Workers World Party that can both defend an African-American president against racist and neofascist attacks and, at the same time, not let this historic moment for the Black masses stop us from calling for all the U.S. troops to leave Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq and at the same time defend colonized peoples fighting by any means necessary to get imperialism off their backs.

There is another important aspect to building class solidarity and that is without dedicated, class-conscious revolutionaries, there would be no party. But revolutionaries are first and foremost human beings living under a class society and are subject to all kinds of prejudices, contradictions and backwardness similar to our class. But just because revolutionaries are not perfect, does it mean that they can't make a contribution to the class struggle within a party? Many people join a workers' party, including myself, not because we have read all of the writings of Marx or Lenin or because we can speak with great confidence or because we understand every important development.

The main criteria for joining a party is not solely because of our hatred for the capitalist and imperialist system and everything that is rotten about it but because we want to fight tooth and nail against this barbaric system, not as individuals but as one, until this system is finally overthrown by the workers of all nationalities and in its place will be a humane system of socialism where every human need will be met in the absence of racism, war and poverty.

Being a comrade in Workers World Party means not taking our relationships for granted but rather being sensitive to each other's special oppressions and challenges and to find positive ways to build and strengthen class solidarity from within. Sam, Vince and Dotty were exemplary examples of what it takes to build a fighting workers' party inside the most powerful imperialist country in the world, which ain't easy. Many others gallantly have tried and failed.

We are about taking the lessons we have learned from those before us and using them to push today's struggles forward as we face the biggest political crisis ever, which rests upon the biggest capitalist depression since the 1930s. Our Party can't carry out this challenge alone, just as the movement can't do it alone. It will take an historic upsurge of the working class to turn around the mood of pessimism and reaction. But the workers cannot carry out their historic mission of seizing power in a spontaneous way. They will need a workers' party with class conscious leadership, and political and organizational tools to help lead the way.

Trans Lives, Revolutionary Lives

WWP Editorial (April 2, 2019)

Here's to Trans Visibility Day! It was held on March 31. Maybe you didn't know it happened?

It's not a day that's going to be very "visible" on big business media.

Because this day is organized by and for trans people speaking for themselves and their own lives, telling the world how they define themselves and celebrating the complex realities of trans lives.

The corporate media have obsessively presented trans lives as a circus for sweeps-week or narrated trans people as political footballs being kicked back and forth during rightwing attacks.

Instead, it is trans people who have insisted on this truth: They have been part of the fabric of human existence from the beginning of our species.

As trans comrade Gery Armsby commented on Facebook on Trans Visibility Day: "Throughout history human societies have 'assigned' socio-economic roles to people in myriad ways that we today understand as 'gender.' As all societies are subject to constant internal and external forces of change, it is reasonable to understand how gender roles are not now and never have been static, let alone binary. [Gender roles] certainly have little if anything to do with actual human biology. This is nothing new."

In fact, in matrilineal preclass societies, before the rise of class patriarchy, it was the societal norm to have sex and gender complexity that might be called "trans" now. The many different varieties, names, customs and histories of this gender complexity continue today through still-existing Indigenous peoples, cultures and nations.

But, as Armsby noted in their Facebook comments, within the U.S. and elsewhere that class patriarchy has trampled, the struggle for that complexity "for many trans people, especially trans women of color — amounts to a life and death struggle for correct pronouns, for bathrooms and for whatever resources and measures [that] trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit folk believe are worth fighting for."

The "external forces" at work in the U.S. have produced oppressive, narrow concepts of "man" and "woman" as public goals — to create colonial settlers, soldiers for imperialism and malleable workers.

It was no accident that, at the beginning of the 20th century, as the U.S. began to invade and occupy nations beyond its continental borders, President

Teddy Roosevelt campaigned to “toughen up” young boys into “manly men.” As historian Sarah Watts notes, he wanted men in the imperialist United States to be “the true inheritors of the cowboy tradition of white, aggressive, armed, nationalist manhood.”

Trans lives give all of us the vision and hope of a world that rejects rigid, dominating and harmful ideas about masculine and feminine, male and female. As trans warrior, historian and activist Leslie Feinberg once said: “People of all sexes have the right to explore femininity, masculinity and the infinite variations between — without criticism or ridicule.”

Feinberg also knew that a socialist future offered the only possibility of a world where trans people, and all people, could live fully in their own beautiful, unique sex and gender complexity. Workers World comrade Feinberg died in 2014 with these last words: “Remember me as a revolutionary communist.”

In an early pamphlet, “Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come,” Feinberg wrote: “Like racism and all forms of prejudice, bigotry against transgender people is a deadly carcinogen. [As workers] we are pitted against each other in order to keep us from seeing each other as allies. Genuine bonds of solidarity can be forged between people who respect each other’s differences and are willing to fight their enemy together. We are the class that does the work of the world, and can revolutionize it. We can win true liberation.”

Zero Tolerance! Abusers Out!

WWP Editorial (February 7, 2020)

The following editorial was written by gender non-binary and women comrades of Workers World Party.

The progressive movement has come a long way from its shameful history of gender abuse. There is still a gargantuan mountain to climb toward socialism, gender equity and justice. We link arms and will continue to climb together.

We must resoundingly affirm that we will protect each other from racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism and abuse. If we are to succeed, abusers and their enablers must not be welcome in our spaces or in our movement.

In consulting the 2010 essay, “Why Misogynists Make Great Informants” by Black gender activist and academic Courtney Desiree Morris, we find that the danger is twofold. Misogynists and abusers chase people of oppressed gender out of the movement. In fear for our safety and in recognition that trans and cis women, trans men, lesbians, queer folks and gender- nonconforming individuals’ lives and contributions are not valued the same as cis (het) men’s, we are wary of entering spaces where we are not supported.

Losing comrades in the movement is always a detriment, and losing the unique perspective that gender-oppressed comrades contribute to the struggle is a road to failure. By accepting abusers into movement spaces we allow a fertile ground for state infiltration that takes advantage of the havoc abusers create.

People of oppressed gender have the right to defend themselves from abuse, homophobia and misogyny. We have the right to hold organizations accountable that do not support our self-determination. Spaces and organizations that do not take this into account create an untenable situation for the 21st century.

Women and others of oppressed gender are expected to silence ourselves and put up with abuse in an effort to build unity. Unity for who? Not unity with women and others of oppressed gender who have every right to insist on their inclusion in the movement. After all, we are also struggling for liberation. We are the backbone of the struggle for liberation.

Abusers and their enablers will see this insistence for safety as proof that we are not putting the movement first. We are told to “close our eyes and

think of socialism.” But what socialism can we visualize when we cannot be sure it will prioritize our safety and contributions? We can only see a form of socialism that prioritizes our safety and contributions.

Under a Trump administration that is attacking the bodies of women, trans and GNC people, people of oppressed gender have a rage that is growing. It is a righteous rage. Our fears that our comrades and allies in the movement do not have our back is made manifest every time an abuser is allowed to remain in our movement.

While transformative justice is an important model to develop, it cannot be practiced in an environment where women and people of oppressed gender feel under physical threat. It cannot be developed in an environment where we feel like our comrades and allies do not have our backs. It cannot be developed in an environment where abusers do not take responsibility for their actions.

Until there is unity around removing abusers from our movement, there can be no discussion of how to bring them back as healed individuals.

Transgender Warrior Leslie Feinberg United All Struggles for Liberation

By Minnie Bruce Pratt (April 1, 2015)

Workers World Party commemorated and celebrated the life and contributions of our beloved comrade, Leslie Feinberg, with a memorial in New York City on March 28 at the Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center at 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. Leslie was a member of the party's national committee.

Feinberg joined Workers World Party in 1973 through its branch in her Buffalo, N.Y., hometown and died at age 65 in November after decades of illness from tick-borne diseases. Her last, very deliberate words were: "Remember me as a revolutionary communist. Hasten the revolution!"

Building on the groundbreaking work of WWP member Bob McCubbin in his "Roots of Gay and Lesbian Oppression" (1976), Leslie developed the first Marxist analysis of the origins of transgender oppression in "Transgender Warriors: Making History" (1997) and numerous writings. She was internationally recognized for this theoretical work, as well as her activism for workers' rights; lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer liberation; the rights of women, prisoners and people with disabilities; and against racism and imperialism.

During her life, Feinberg was clear this work sprang from principles established for Workers World Party by founding comrade Sam Marcy, including his insistence that LGBT lives were to be honored and LGBT oppression was to be fought against as integral to the working-class struggle.

Feinberg requested no memorial except one given by Workers World Party. She asked that this be used to strengthen the party and to bring comrades and friends together to share lessons of political experience relevant to ongoing struggles.

The memorial movingly and amply documented Feinberg's life dedicated to "hastening the revolution," and contained many pointed and poignant lessons in building a "workers' world."

Building a workers' world

A program of WWP members and friends from across the U.S. offered anecdotes of moments when Feinberg extended respect, solidarity, empathy, access, compassion, caring, political insight and revolutionary optimism

in individual personal encounters and day-to-day political work. Comrade LeiLani Dowell, a managing editor of WW, summed up the impact of those moments, “I want to say, fist held high, Black and queer and proud, that I and my comrades will forever continue the struggle in Leslie’s name.”

Bob McCubbin placed these moments in context, saying, “Leslie Feinberg spent her whole adult life building a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist combat party to overthrow imperialism and build a socialist future.”

McCubbin told of meeting with Feinberg at the beginning of her life in the party; how she talked to him as a worker who had, in her words, “barely completed high school;” how she spoke of the intimidation of weighty ideas; and how the party nurtured her as a worker-intellectual, who then created her groundbreaking theoretical work. McCubbin emphasized that Feinberg — using the Marxist dialectical-materialist method to interpret both her own life and that of other workers within broad social, political and economic developments — was able to bring hope to millions that the “capitalist nightmare” could be ended.

Feinberg defined herself as “an anti-racist white, working-class, secular Jewish, transgender, lesbian, female, revolutionary communist.” She used the complexities of her identities as the starting point for a Marxist-Leninist analysis.

International Action Center co-director and WWP secretariat member Sara Flounders stressed that Feinberg exemplified the process by which “the oppressed themselves bring their own issues and lives into the struggle” using Marxism as a tool.

Feinberg shared those insights with the working class, not just through her individual writings, but by serving as a managing editor of Workers World newspaper, writing hundreds of articles and serving for some years as editor of the political prisoners’ page. Workers World editor and party secretariat member Deirdre Griswold reflected that Feinberg never allowed her individual fame in the wider LGBTQ movement and literary world to be used by the ruling class to divide her from the working class. Instead, through her work Feinberg “made people feel the significance of their own lives.”

Bet Power Alwin, director of the Sexual Minorities Archive, spoke of one of Feinberg’s last acts in support of the political development of the working class and especially of transgender people — the donation of her research library to the Archive, where it will be freely accessible to all.

Rooted in the working class

Feinberg’s deep roots in the working class and her long connection to Workers World Party were highlighted by founding comrade Milt Neidenberg. He noted

that her father, a bitterly anti-union worker at Bell Aircraft in Buffalo, benefitted from the successful 1949 strike led by comrades who went on to found WWP.

Neidenberg first met Feinberg when she spoke at a 1968 street meeting for the United Farm Workers in Buffalo. Her commitment to labor militancy stretched from then through the 1994 founding of Pride at Work, to which she helped contribute the word “transgender” to its self-definition, and the 2002 Harvard Living Wage sit-in struggle. She was a proud member of United Auto Workers Local 1981, the National Writers Union.

Because discrimination against her as a transgender person made it impossible for her to get steady work, Feinberg earned a living for most of her life through a series of low-wage temp jobs. And as a trans person, she also experienced violence, constant physical abuse, threats and disrespect, as comrade Tom Scahill reflected. These experiences grounded her commitment to medical care and access for transgender people, her work for women’s access to abortion, and her participation in clinic defense against 1992 and 1998 anti-abortion assaults in Buffalo.

Comrade René Imperato noted that Feinberg’s “contributions to all of humanity” included “fighting in the streets” — through street rallies, marches and demonstrations and in literal street battles — to defend the most oppressed. Imperato and Feinberg fought side by side against bigots attacking gay and trans people — mostly people of color — at a bar once located only 100 yards from the meeting hall.

Feinberg’s fighting spirit continued through her 2012 arrest to protest the imprisonment of African-American trans woman CeCe McDonald, jailed for “daring to fight back against those who would kill her,” as comrade Kris Hamel, a WW managing editor, recounted.

A video was shown of Feinberg’s speech to a standing-room-only Madison Square Garden event to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Feinberg was one of the founders of Rainbow Flags for Mumia, which organized the meeting in 2000. Comrades spoke of her key roles in other anti-racist campaigns that WWP took on, from the 1974 school desegregation struggle in Boston to the 1988 anti-Klan march in Atlanta.

‘Only socialism will free us all’

Throughout the memorial, comrades and friends emphasized that Feinberg always used insights into her own oppressions to forge connections with all oppressions, including international solidarity with countries under assault by neocolonialism and imperialism. Her very first Workers World demonstration was in support of Palestine in 1973, as comrade Betsey Piette noted, and comrade Joyce Chediak spoke of her last international travel in 2007 in support of ASWAT, an organization of Palestinian lesbian women.

Comrade Frank Neisser was emphatic, “Leslie’s legacy is clear: militancy, solidarity, struggle, communism.” WWP secretariat member Teresa Gutierrez spoke of Feinberg’s love of the glorious Cuban revolution. Gutierrez affirmed that Feinberg made a unique contribution with her book, “Rainbow Solidarity: In Defense of Cuba” (2009), by countering U.S. imperialist misinformation about LGBTQ life in Cuba. Gutierrez stated what Feinberg knew: “Only socialism will free us all.”

We mourned comrade Leslie Feinberg as comrade Pam Parker sang Nina Simone’s “I wish I knew how/It would feel to be free /I wish I could break/All the chains holdin’ me.” And we mourned as comrade Martha Grevatt spoke the poetry Lenin quoted on Frederick Engel’s death: “What a torch of reason ceased to burn, what a heart has ceased to beat!”

We vowed to emulate Feinberg when WWP secretariat member and a WW managing editor Monica Moorehead said, “Leslie Feinberg, you fought for your own liberation and that of your class until the very end!”

And at the end, we affirmed Feinberg’s commitment to a revolutionary communist workers’ world by singing the “Internationale,” the revolutionary anthem of the world working class: “Arise ye prisoners of starvation, Arise, ye wretched of the earth, ... The earth shall rise on new foundations; ... We have been naught, we shall be all!”

Note about pronouns: Leslie said in a 2006 interview: “For me, pronouns are always placed within context.” Over the years, comrades and friends have related to Leslie through a range of pronouns. But Leslie’s preferred pronouns with close friends and family were she/her and ze/hir, and thus the former have been used here.

Minnie Bruce Pratt is Leslie Feinberg’s partner and spouse of 22 years.

Together in Solidarity and Towards Socialism

By Kathy Durkin (January 16, 2020)

The Women's March Global, set to take place on Jan. 18, will be the fourth such international protest since 2017 after the inauguration of misogynist/bigot-in-chief Donald Trump as president. Over 100 chapters and thousands of members are mobilizing for multinational, multigendered, multigenerational protests around the U.S. and in countries around the world on that day.

March leaders set an “intersectional platform” known as Global Unity Principles. They call for ending violence against women and rights for workers, immigrants, people of color, Indigenous communities, individuals with disabilities and LGBTQ2+ people. They include climate justice, too. They demand reproductive rights — now under vicious attack in the U.S., with the worst impact on oppressed women.

Another point of agreement among march organizers is opposition to all forms of racism and bigotry, including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Workers World supports these principles and the movements which fight for them. The Me Too movement, founded by African-American leader Tarana Burke, has become a mass movement that includes job actions against workplace sexual abuse. The Fight for \$15 per hour minimum wage and unionization continues. Although campaigns to raise the minimum wage have succeeded in 22 states, some workers are left out, including tipped workers, and many women, immigrants and people with disabilities.

Trump's racist, xenophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, misogynist, ableist, transphobic and homophobic bigotry is dangerous, as it inflames the ultra-right and endangers the safety — and the very lives — of millions of people, as it undermines their legal and human rights. Already, fatal attacks have led to many needless deaths.

Washington's horrific war on im/migrants, especially those from Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Africa — with detentions, deportations, family separations and caging of children — cries out for solidarity and action. So does the occupation of oppressed communities by racist police, which endangers women, gender-oppressed people and their loved ones. So do hate crimes, including murder, being committed against trans women of color.

All the bigoted vitriol, plus the Trump administration's anti-worker, anti-poor stance, translates into reactionary measures that weaken people's legal rights and cut vital, even life-saving government services, including health care and food programs. These attacks are particularly aimed at low-income and oppressed people, mainly women and children, seniors and people with disabilities.

However, it's not just Trump and his cronies who push reactionary, racist ideas and policies. Underlying their venom is the ideology promoted by the richest individuals — the capitalist class — who seek to whip up hostility and divisions among workers and communities to prevent them from uniting to fight for their rights.

The richest 26 billionaires — most of them in the U.S. — own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population. In their mad rush for super-profits, capitalists impoverish people around the globe, paying exploitation wages while fighting unionization and workplace safety. In their global search for oil, gas and minerals, they steal land and resources from Indigenous peoples and destroy ecosystems. They disregard ethical responsibility for human beings and the planet's health.

For worldwide solidarity!

A look at the impact of globalized capitalism (imperialism) shows that women are disproportionately affected; they comprise 70 percent of the world's poorest people. Moreover, millions of women and gender nonconforming people must emigrate each year, leaving their families and homelands, to find jobs.

Imperialism causes endless war, as capitalists seek to grab countries' resources and to attain political, economic, strategic and military domination of whole regions to exploit and control them. Washington has militarily occupied countries in the Middle East for years, as it seeks to oust noncompliant governments, install puppet leaders and beat out competing countries for the spoils. This is true in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere in Asia, too.

Today there is a serious threat of U.S. war against Iran. And the Pentagon refuses to remove its troops from Iraq, despite the population's insistence that U.S. troops leave their country. Flouting the wishes of people in the region, Washington just sent an additional 3,500 soldiers to the Middle East.

Women and children are the hardest hit victims of war and occupation. Solidarity with our sisters in Iran and the rest of the Middle East is crucial. We must loudly insist: "No war on Iran! U.S. out of Iraq!"

WW calls for solidarity with our Palestinian sisters against the U.S.-backed militaristic, apartheid state of Israel. To express sisterhood with oppressed women who are living under the gun in their own homeland, with no legal or human rights, is not anti-Semitic, but a moral imperative.

We also express solidarity with women and their families — one-third of humanity — who live in the 39 countries under U.S.-imposed sanctions. A new campaign entitled “Sanctions Kill” opposes this form of economic warfare and calls for global actions March 13-15. (See sanctionskill.org)

While supporting the fight against women’s and gender oppression at home and abroad, let us also work together to take the movement to the next level — to strike at globalized capitalism — the root cause of bigotry, the oppression of people of all genders and nationalities, inequity, poverty and war.

WW asserts there is a system that would prohibit all forms of discrimination and inequality. It would outlaw millionaires and billionaires, ban the enrichment of a few to exploit the labor of the majority, and use the wealth created to provide everyone with jobs, housing, education, medical care and nutritious food — and protect the environment. That system is socialism.

Disability Rights: A Rich Theater of the Class Struggle

By Brian Shea (July 12, 2014)

Shea has been an organizer in the Disability Rights movement for more than 30 years, starting with the Disabled Peoples Liberation Front in Boston. He attended the First International Conference on the Rights of People with Disabilities held in Havana, Cuba, in 1995. The following is based upon a recent talk given by Shea.

PART 1: There are two important things to know about the struggle of people with disabilities in the U.S. First, we organize to lift the restrictions imposed upon us by capitalist society. Second, we are people in isolation breaking through many barriers into the power of collective struggle. We are like the old union song: “The union makes us strong.”

There is so much in this theatre of the class struggle. I will give an overview of some of the most significant events. Our job is to add more significant events to that history, and we will.

The real Helen Keller

I wanted to open with the example of Helen Keller. She is a historic figure because of her achievements despite the obvious barriers of deafness and blindness, and despite the barriers imposed by society upon deaf and blind people. Few know that she was a socialist, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, and an organizer who spoke out against the first imperialist war (World War I).

She was criticized by the bourgeoisie for her politics. Their message was “Stick to the wonderful things you are doing with blind people; don’t comment on war and poverty.” But she didn’t keep quiet.

She said: “So long as I confine my activities to social service and the blind, they compliment me extravagantly, calling me ‘arch priestess of the sightless,’ ‘wonder woman,’ and a ‘modern miracle.’ But when it comes to a discussion of poverty, I maintain that it is the result of wrong economics — that the industrial system under which we live is at the root of much of the physical deafness and blindness in the world — that is a different matter!

“It is laudable to give aid to the handicapped. Superficial charities make smooth the way of the prosperous; but to advocate that all human beings should have leisure and comfort, the decencies and refinements of life, is a Utopian dream, and one who seriously contemplates its realization indeed must be deaf, dumb, and blind.” (letter to Sen. Robert La Follette, 1924)

The bourgeoisie’s portrayal of Keller has to be overcome because it is the usual maudlin, nauseating, inspirational tripe that they say about people with disabilities. We don’t need to inspire the bourgeoisie.

I want to speak about some of the movements that have been influenced by people with disabilities and were formed by people with disabilities.

1932 Bonus Army raises veterans’ rights

There is the Bonus Army. In the spring-summer of 1932, 17,000 World War I veterans — many with disabilities — and their families and supporters marched on Washington. They demanded that the government immediately fulfill its promise of benefits. The government had awarded the mostly out-of-work veterans bonus certificates, but they were not redeemable until 1945.

Many set up an encampment and said they wouldn’t leave until they could immediately cash in their bonus certificates. This Bonus Army consisted of many veterans who had acquired physical, psychological and emotional disabilities as a result of fighting in the war, and then found themselves dumped back into society without support. These veterans were trying to organize to get some of that support they needed and were promised.

President Herbert Hoover’s response to the Bonus Army was to send in Army troops, led by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, to drive out the veterans and burn their encampment. At least two Bonus marchers were killed, many others injured, and many arrested.

Another important group was the League of the Physically Handicapped, which organized in the 1930s in New York City. Its members had physical disabilities and organized because they were being discriminated against when seeking jobs with the government-run Works Progress Administration. They picketed and occupied WPA offices, and their picket lines were supported by much of the left. The League won some partial concessions.

Independent Living Movement is born

After the Second World War, improvements in health care, sanitation and medical technologies increased lifespans. These health improvements also meant that many who wouldn’t have lived before these developments were surviving with more residual impairments.

By the 1960s and 1970s, there was a critical mass of people with disabilities, organizing mutual support and peer support networks. They set their own models for the support services they needed to live independently in their homes and communities, and in the delivery of these services. They advocated for physical accessibility in buildings, jobs, homes and schools. This was the beginning of the Independent Living Movement of the 1970s.

In the midst of these developments, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was signed. It was significant that the wording of the act was directly lifted from the Civil Rights Act of 1964. “No otherwise handicapped person [they used the term “handicapped” at that time] will be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity by the U.S government.”

The act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment and in the employment practices of federal contractors.

The signing of this act was a direct concession to the growing disability rights movement. But the law was not implemented. The Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations sat on the regulations until 1977.

It took the longest occupation of a federal building still in use to get the law applied. In 1997, protesters occupied the San Francisco offices of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for 28 days. The HEW offices in Washington, D.C., were also occupied for a shorter period. The occupation eventually won an agreement by Carter’s HEW secretary to enact the regulations.

The major part of that struggle was the active, concrete solidarity of unions and community organizations. These groups held support demonstrations outside of the occupation and kept supply lines open to the sit-in, making sure that food got in and messages got out. The Oakland branch of the Black Panther Party extended important support, even though the BPP as a national organization was decimated by the FBI’s criminal Cointelpro program years earlier, and much of its national leadership was in prison, had been murdered or was in exile. Their support was very much appreciated.

Covid-19 and the Crisis of the Elderly

By Teresa Guttierrez (April 22, 2020)

San Antonio, Texas

This Texas city rarely makes national news. But since the outbreak of Covid-19, the so-called River City has made the national news twice.

The later one was the poignant scene on April 9 of 10,000 families lined up for a food bank distribution. The scene exposed the crisis of hunger in this country.

The first national news, however, was the case of a nursing home, the Southeast Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, in the predominantly Brown and Black southeast part of this city. News reports on April 1 stated that residents and staff at the facility had tested positive for Covid-19.

Since then, 17 of the elderly residents have died from the virus, and 28 of the staff have been infected or become sick.

Community leader Tommy Calvert called the nursing home “a house of horrors.” (Fox News, April 16) KENS radio website noted that during the facility’s last government inspection in 2019, Medicare gave it “one out of five stars.” (April 15)

Many have written that “a country is judged by how it treats its frailest members.” How sad that after having the chance and privilege of living a long life, workers are considered dispensable and disposable, simply because they are no longer able to produce wealth for the bosses.

Covid-19 exposes conditions for the elderly

Covid-19 has laid bare for the world to see that the capitalist system is incapable and unwilling to take care of its sick or vulnerable, including the elderly. Covid-19 substantiates that a “for-profit” decentralized health care system must be abolished. And it must be abolished now.

Early on in the Covid outbreak, Seattle was hit, and it too had a nightmarish outbreak at a nursing home, where beginning Feb. 26 more than two dozen residents died. The New York Times said: “The outbreak ... exposed the great vulnerability of the nation’s nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and the 2.5 million people who live in them.” (March 4)

The article continued: “These institutions have been under increasing scrutiny ... for a unique role they play in inflaming epidemics. Research shows these homes can be poorly staffed and plagued by lax infection-control

practices, and ... residents frequently cycle to and from hospitals, bringing germs back and forth.”

At the San Antonio facility where Covid-19 surfaced on April 1, workers were found to “work at 10 other nursing homes” at the same time, also showing the brutal schedule of low-wage caregivers. (KSAT News) More headlines continued to reveal the crisis.

On April 15, a New York Times article announced, “After Anonymous Tip, 17 Bodies Are Found at Nursing Home Hit by Virus.” It added, “There have been 68 recent deaths of residents and nurses from the facility in a small New Jersey town.”

The next day, the newspaper headlined: “29 Dead at One Nursing Home from the Virus. Or More. No One Will Say” about a nursing home in Queens, N.Y.

Imagine the pain, uncertainty and fear of the families of those elders. Imagine not being able to hold your mother or wife or partner, one last time. Imagine the horror of not knowing how your loved one spent their last moments on Earth, or the sadness of not being there to comfort your loved ones because (correctly so) nursing homes are suddenly on lockdown.

Nursing homes in bad shape before Covid-19

In 2000 the Department of Health and Human Services stated: “People are dying ... because they don’t get enough water and nutrition into their system. ... A congressional report says 1,600 U.S. nursing homes — nearly one-third — have been cited for abuse.” (CBS News, July 20, 2001)

Nineteen years later on April 18, a Washington Post article wrote: “Forty percent of more than 650 nursing homes ... with publicly reported cases of the coronavirus have been cited more than once ... in recent years for violating federal standards meant to control the spread of infections.”

These violations included “unsafe conditions that can trigger the spread of flu, pneumonia, urinary tract infections and skin diseases. Dozens were flagged by inspectors only months before the coronavirus pandemic struck the United States.”

The facilities that had broken federal regulation standards for safe conditions and now had Covid-19 deaths included Pleasant View Nursing Home in Maryland where “24 people had died” of the virus; the Canterbury Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center near Richmond, Va., with 49 deaths; and a center in southwestern Pennsylvania where “officials have warned that all 750 residents and staff members could be infected.”

The staff at these institutions cannot be blamed for the problems, even if some have carried out antisocial behavior while performing health care duties. In reality, it is the capitalist system that is at fault, not the health care workers.

If these nursing homes had already been cited, where was the government follow-up to make sure corrections had been made?

Low pay, lack of training, difficult hours and demanding tasks make the care of our elderly challenging under capitalism. It is not easy to deal with diaper changes or bed sores for adults, especially if the patient has dementia.

Nonetheless, there are reports after reports that health care workers are going out of their way to tend to the needs of the elderly, despite low pay. Countless family members sing the praises of certified nurses assistants, nurses, receptionists, administrators and others who take time to FaceTime or Skype residents with their family members on the outside during this period. That is beyond the call of duty.

The care of the elderly is a very important job that requires skill and, one would dare say, tenderness. The job — really the career — should provide quality training and pay extremely well.

This is not likely to happen without a mass struggle. Covid-19 must lay the basis for that struggle.

Under socialism the elderly would not be thrown out to pasture. Elders would be seen as a source of pride, wisdom and history; they would be treasured as they are, for example, in Indigenous communities.

A challenge for Marxists

Silvia Federici, professor emerita and a teaching fellow at Hofstra University, challenges the left to make the demand of care for our elders part of the struggle for socialism.

In “On Elder Care Work and the Limits of Marxism,” Federici writes: “Care work ... especially eldercare, has come in recent years to the center of public attention ... in response to a number of trends that have put many traditional forms of assistance into crisis. First among these trends has been the growth ... of the old- age population and the increase in life expectancy which has not been matched by a growth of services ... for the old.”

One key factor, she writes, is “gentrification ... that has destroyed the support networks and forms of mutual aid on which older people living alone could once rely, as neighbors would bring food, make beds, come for a chat.”

“As a result,” she continues, “... it is now recognized that for a large number of elderly, the positive effects of a longer life-span have been voided or clouded by the prospect of loneliness, social exclusion and increased vulnerability to physical and psychological abuse.”

She appeals to the left to make the question of elder care part and parcel of the work of Marxists and revolutionaries: “The struggle over elder care must be politicized and placed on the agenda of social justice movements. A

cultural revolution is also necessary in the concept of old age, challenging its degradation as a fiscal burden on the state and the younger generations (on one side), and (on the other) its mystification as an ‘optional’ stage in life that we can ‘cure,’ ‘overcome,’ and even prevent.”

The road to socialism will be multigenerational

When one considers the shortened lifespan in the Global South or among prisoners, the homeless, in oppressed U.S. communities, it is right to conclude that growing old is now a privilege.

Young people today face one existential crisis after another. The climate crisis alone evokes the question: How long do even millennials have on this planet?

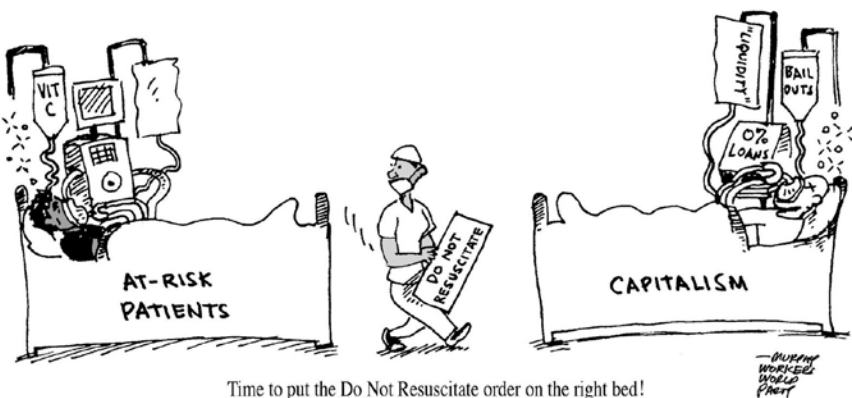
But in struggle after struggle — whether fighting against climate change or a lack of health care or fighting to raise the minimum wage — we see young and old hand in hand.

The generations may not always understand each other’s languages in entirety, but young revolutionaries understand that any benefit they have was built on the shoulders of their elders.

And elders — despite back pains and other tolls of aging — have all along fought to change society for future generations.

A better world is indeed in birth. Whether elders on the left live long enough to see that world, they will nonetheless go down fighting for socialism — until death.

Gutierrez’s 90-year-old mother lives in a San Antonio nursing home two blocks from the Southeast facility with the Covid-19 outbreak.



Time to put the Do Not Resuscitate order on the right bed!

Section 7

International Solidarity: Defending our Global Class

Organizing Workers to Fight for Solidarity

By Larry Holmes (June 14, 2018)

We have to begin to overturn the narrow conceptions of how workers are organized.

Conventional trade unionism, that is, business unionism, says, “Well, we’ll organize workers if we feel that they can win recognition and get a contract and be able to negotiate the terms of their exploitation. If they can’t do that, we don’t know what to do with them.”

This is the main reason why several unions gave up on trying to organize fast food workers. The argument was: “You can’t organize McDonald’s. You’ll never get recognition. We’re throwing good money after bad.” All kinds of excuses. So they gave up.

That’s very dangerous, because from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, if you don’t organize as many workers as you can, under whatever circumstances they’re toiling, then you make it easier for the system to pit workers against each other.

There’s something we can learn from the teachers who are striking in Arizona and Colorado and other places. They’re also going out in North Carolina. This is revolutionary. I don’t know whether everybody gets this.

These education workers — it’s not just teachers — are fighting in so-called right-to-work, anti-worker, anti-union states. They are not recognized by the government. Their strikes, according to bourgeois law, are illegal. Which means it’s a rebellion where tens of thousands of them are saying to hell with it. They could get fired. They could get fined. But still they’re walking out.

It’s a message to every worker everywhere. Regardless of your circumstance, regardless of the laws in your state, you can organize if there are revolutionaries and activists and militants like ourselves who understand and who will help you any way that we can. And that’s the big challenge for us.

We need what one might call “real internationalism.” There’s a big struggle going on in France. It’s very important. It’s basically the workers again rising up and fighting against what the bourgeoisie has been trying to do there for several generations — take back all the gains of the workers so it can be more competitive.

The problem is, the other workers in Europe should be standing with them. And actually, it should be more than just a European struggle. It should be a worldwide struggle. Why? Because if the bourgeoisie is victorious there, then they'll try it everywhere else, like they already have in Detroit and Puerto Rico.

We need to give a new revolutionary scope to our struggle: That it's really a global class struggle.

This is from the "Communist Manifesto," written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels about 170 years ago: "Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one nationwide struggle between classes."

I think what they just did here was give you a Marxist analysis of social media. It's communications technology that has made it easier to organize across large distances. The bourgeoisie uses it for its purposes, and the working class uses it for its purposes. Now you can contemplate the unimaginable possibility of a global strike. It's going to happen one day.

Capitalism throws workers into violent competition with each other. And in a crisis, this competition is exacerbated; it gets worse. It's only when the struggle reaches a certain momentum that it changes that problem, and solidarity becomes stronger. Then solidarity has a lot of gravity and the workers come together.

This is where the danger of Trump comes in. We can say a lot about Trump. As bad and dangerous as Trump is, actually he's a sign that the system is falling apart. He's a sign of desperation. However, let us not forget what Trump is about, primarily. He's about smashing the working class. He's about dividing the workers from the most oppressed sections of the working class.

If we understood what Marx was about, we probably would have tried to do more in solidarity with the immigrant workers who came to this country in a caravan recently, whom Trump has been attacking and attacking for weeks. He sent troops down there, and more cops, and more judges, and more of the state apparatus to repress them.

I'm not saying that the reason why we need to zero in on solidarity with immigrant workers is because their plight is necessarily worse or greater than that of other workers in another part of the world, or that it's a moral question. No, that's not it at all.

If we get what the ruling class is up to — if we really understand how they want to keep the working class chained — then we would know that it was time to find a way to solidarize ourselves with these migrant workers. Fortunately we're going to have another opportunity to do that. As a matter of fact, many opportunities.

I hope Workers World Party and all of our allies, communists and socialists or however you characterize yourselves, those who want revolution, those who want to help the working class and lift it up, and those who want to go beyond immediate demands and see something else at the end of the tunnel called socialist revolution — let us work harder. Let us use Marx's 200th birthday to inspire us to do that.

Part 2 of a talk by Larry Holmes, first secretary of Workers World Party, at the May 6 meeting titled "Marx@200: Class Struggle in the Age of Trump" in New York.

Coronavirus Highlights Gap Between Socialist and Capitalist Responses

By Joshua Hanks (March 22, 2020)

March 9 — Mounting concern and panic over the global outbreak Covid-19 has gripped headlines as more countries grapple with its spread. Over 100,000 people worldwide have been confirmed positive for the virus, with many more cases surely going undetected. Italy has declared a travel ban in the entire country, and other countries are considering drastic responses.

The Western media focused for months on China's response, often condemning it as authoritarian and downplaying its effectiveness. Yet it has become clear that China's unprecedented quarantines, rapid construction of new hospitals, huge increase in testing capabilities and production of medical supplies, free testing and treatment, and mass mobilizations of medical workers, People's Liberation Army soldiers and Communist Party members have succeeded in slowing the spread of the virus and reducing infections.

China's ability to take steps based on human need rather than by seeking to maximize profit has given it an advantage in combating the epidemic.

Praise for China's approach

In a March 4 interview with the New York Times, Dr. Bruce Aylward, part of the WHO team that visited China in February, said, "A rapidly escalating outbreak has plateaued, and come down faster than would have been expected. Back of the envelope, it's hundreds of thousands of people in China who did not get Covid-19 because of this aggressive response."

He added, "China is really good at keeping people alive. Its hospitals looked better than some I see here in Switzerland. We'd ask, 'How many ventilators do you have?' They'd say, '50.' Wow! We'd say, 'How many ECMOs?' They'd say, 'Five.'" (ECMOs are machines that circulate blood outside the body for oxygenation.)

"The [Chinese] government made it clear: testing is free," Aylward pointed out. He noted if you tested positive for Covid-19 when your insurance ended, the state picked up all costs, and that in the U.S., personal cost is a barrier to speedy treatment: "That's what could wreak havoc. This is where universal health care coverage and security intersect."

Asked if China's response was "possible only because China is an autocracy," Dr. Aylward replied, "I talked to lots of people outside the system — in hotels, on trains, in the streets at night. They're mobilized, like in a war, and it's fear of the virus that was driving them. They really saw themselves as on the front lines of protecting the rest of China. And the world."

Sylvie Briand, director of Infectious Hazard Management at the WHO, told reporters, "Measures on movement restriction have delayed the dissemination of the outbreak two or three days within China and a few weeks outside China." (cgtn.com, Feb. 19)

High-cost response in the U.S.

The U.S. response to growing numbers of Covid-19 cases contrasts with China's. In a Feb. 26 press conference, Vice President Mike Pence, who has no medical training and was governor of Indiana during one of that state's worst HIV outbreaks, was tapped by President Trump to direct the federal government's response.

During the press conference, Trump made several misleading and outright false claims that contradict the government's own scientists. He claimed that cases are "going very substantially down, not up" and that the U.S. is "rapidly developing a vaccine" and "will essentially have a flu shot for this in a fairly quick manner."

The director of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci, however, stated that a vaccine won't be ready for another 12 to 18 months. Health Secretary Alex Azar refused to say that a potential vaccine would be affordable for all. This mirrors other parts of the high-cost U.S. health care system.

At the March 3 White House press conference, CNN correspondent Jim Acosta tweeted: "WH is allowing only still photos of this Coronavirus briefing. No audio or video permitted." A week earlier the administration sought to lock down information about the outbreak, instructing scientists to coordinate all statements and public appearances with Pence.

Federal agencies are wholly unprepared for an epidemic of this scale. There are nearly 700 vacancies at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention due to a freeze in hiring Trump initiated to cut costs. Public health agencies across the board have suffered from funding cuts for years.

In 2018 Trump slashed 80 percent of the budget from the CDC program to prevent global disease outbreaks and disbanded the government's global health security team created to lead the U.S. response in a pandemic.

With nothing to back him up, Pence promised that the U.S. would be capable of performing over 1.5 million tests a week. The actual numbers are

far lower. Washington state, which reported the most cases as of March 8, can perform a little over 1,000 tests a day. Oregon can only test 40 a day, while Arkansas can test just four or five. Earlier this week the CDC announced it would stop reporting how many tests it has performed.

Statements about tests have omitted reporting that, in order to confirm a positive result, a person must be tested twice. A state conducting 1,000 tests a day can only test 500 people. The country's true testing capability is unclear, leaving the public in the dark as to just how widespread the virus has become.

The failure of capitalist health care

The slow, botched and opaque response of the Trump administration contrasts with China's rapid response that has slowed the spread of disease within its borders.

The U.S., with a larger but completely capitalist economy, has failed to do what China has done on its road to socialism. U.S. government officials seem more concerned with how the stock market and quarterly profits will be affected than with public health.

China's quarantines and other measures negatively impacted its economy, yet China's steps against the virus protected the health of millions of people — within China and around the world.

The capitalist U.S. seemingly cannot, or will not, prioritize the health of even the people living within its borders.

China's Socialist Planning and Covid-19

By Sara Flounders (April 4, 2020)

The global Covid-19 viral pandemic has exposed in the sharpest light the contradiction between a globalized world economy and a still existing but archaic capitalist system based on the private expropriation of wealth and resources.

The relentless drive to reap a profit from every type of human interaction now stands exposed as the greatest danger to the people of the whole planet.

At the same time, China is sending enormous amounts of assistance to countries desperate for medical and personal protective equipment. These massive solidarity shipments demonstrate the superiority of China's basic socialist planning.

China is sending by air, rail and sea needed medical equipment to 89 countries around the world. This includes test kits, facemasks, protective clothing, goggles, forehead thermometers and ventilators.

Chinese medical workers and plane loads of essential supplies have already been sent to 28 countries in Asia, 26 in Africa, 16 in Europe, 10 in the South Pacific and nine in the Americas. This assistance is China's most intensive and wide-ranging emergency humanitarian operation since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. (China Daily, March 26)

22 airlifts of medical supplies from China

By contrast the United States, still the largest and richest economy in the world, is overwhelmed by a complete lack of planning and even the capacity to mobilize the population for their own survival. Reported Covid-19 deaths in the U.S. now exceed those in China, even though China has almost four times the population and was the first country hit with this new disease. (worldometers.info/coronavirus, April 2)

U.S. for-profit health corporations and government agencies at every level are now turning to China to order essential supplies. This follows two months of racist ridicule, political attacks and rejecting offers of assistance from both China and the World Health Organization.

Totally frustrated with the inability of any arm of the U.S. government to solve these essential supply problems, governors, mayors, charitable

organizations, nonprofit and sister-city groups, and major health complexes have each started making their own trade deals with Chinese corporations to get emergency shipments of supplies.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency stepped in and ordered 22 airlifts of supplies from China — but set up their distribution through profit-taking private sector networks. On March 29, a commercial aircraft carrying 80 tons of medical supplies arrived in New York from China. It delivered 130,000 N95 masks, 1.8 million facemasks and gowns, 10 million gloves and thousands of thermometers for distribution in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Similar flights to Chicago and Cleveland were planned for the next two days. (New York Times, March 29)

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo says the state, which is now the epicenter for the coronavirus, is in urgent need of 40,000 ventilators. Unfortunately, ventilators were unavailable. European corporations had already bought up the entire inventory of the largest Chinese ventilator producer.

European Union also overwhelmed

The coronavirus has overwhelmed not only the United States, the center of international finance capital. Other highly developed imperialist countries, including Italy, Spain, Germany, France and Britain, are staggering under its impact.

They were also unable to respond effectively. In order to revive their capitalist corporations and banks after the 2008 global capitalist crash, the European Union had imposed years of austerity and cutbacks in social programs on member countries. after the 2008 global capitalist crash. Now the EU is refusing to share assistance, even with its member countries. with its countries.

None of these imperialist countries is offering anything to the rest of the world as this extreme medical crisis spreads to over 190 countries.

Less than an hour of Pentagon spending

With great fanfare, the U.S. government pledged \$62 million from the Agency for International Development to address the pandemic. This is less than what the Pentagon spends in an hour. The enormous \$746 billion Pentagon budget — much of which is a subsidy to oil and military corporations — consumes roughly \$2 billion a day or \$80 million an hour.

While offering no real assistance to any country, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo blasted China and the countries that accept China's aid, claiming: "The Chinese Communist Party poses a substantial threat to our health and way of life, as the Wuhan virus clearly has demonstrated." (Los

Angeles Times, March 29) The Trump administration has also used the hardships of this global crisis to tighten sanctions and increase threats on Iran and Venezuela.

China's 'Health Silk Road'

The coronavirus is arriving in many countries that have already suffered humanitarian crises caused by U.S. wars and sanctions, as well as natural disasters and climate change. So China is setting up what it calls a Health Silk Road. Skilled Chinese medical teams have begun arriving in a growing number of countries, including Iran, Iraq, Italy, Serbia, Venezuela, Pakistan and Cambodia.

On March 11, as the Covid-19 virus abated in China, immediate assistance was also promised to countries in Africa. Equipment alone cannot overcome the health crises in countries lacking a national health care system. However, the 20,000 test kits, 100,000 masks, 1,000 protective suits to be delivered to each African country will have a big impact.

On March 22, a Chinese medical team arrived in Serbia with its first shipment of 16 tons. The European Union had denied any assistance to Serbia, citing U.S.-imposed sanctions.

On March 27, 130 tons of protective gear from China bound for Italy were unloaded in Vienna.

The China-Europe Express, a train line opened more than a decade ago, links 48 Chinese cities with Europe. On March 28 the first freight train to leave China after two months of lockdown departed from Wuhan. Its 19 cars were loaded with locally manufactured medical supplies.

Wuhan had been China's hardest-hit city by the Covid-19 virus. Now it has a great deal of expertise and newly manufactured medical equipment to offer the world. Reuters reports that a shipment of a million masks and gloves from China arrived in France on March 22.

China develops diagnostic and treatment plans

China's National Health Commission has compiled an invaluable set of diagnostic and treatment plans. It is sharing them, as well as other technical documents, with 180 countries and more than 10 international and regional organizations.

The commission has also conducted in-depth exchanges with the international community, holding about 30 video conferences on technical issues regarding the coronavirus with more than 100 countries and regions.

One such video conference with the World Health Organization, held on March 12, shared China's experiences with representatives from 77 countries

and seven international organizations. It was viewed online by more than 100,000 people.

Profit system creates disaster

In this global economy, why have offers of essential testing equipment and medical supplies from China, and even from the World Health Organization, been rejected by the Trump administration?

It's not only because of growing U.S. hostility to China's stunning level of development. Nor is it driven only by right-wing ideologues.

Medical care exists for profit. Free or inexpensive test kits and medical supplies threaten the capitalist drive to profit out of every human transaction. Pharmaceutical, medical and insurance companies are the most profitable corporations in the U.S. today. Along with oil and so-called defense corporations, they dominate finance capital.

During the crucial two months when these vital supplies could have been quickly ordered or manufactured and stockpiled, there was not yet a strong enough profit incentive to produce them. Medical facilities in the U.S. operate on a lean ship-to-order basis.

The unplanned and competitive nature of capitalist production distorts all social interaction. Wild speculation and bubbles of quick profit are the norm.

As the crisis became obvious to millions, anything assumed to be in possible short supply was immediately hoarded for speculation. This has led to life-threatening shortages of hand sanitizers, facemasks, essential foods and even toilet paper.

Who will pay and who will profit is the fundamental question in all capitalist relations. What is most needed — to fulfill people's needs — is not part of the calculation.

As early as January, the Trump administration's own medical experts identified a probable shortage of ventilators as a critical problem. Yet "both the White House and the Federal Emergency Management Agency struggled to define what was needed, who would pay for it and how to solve the problem of supply chains." ("Alliance with industry does Trump no good in quest for ventilators," New York Times, March 20)

Knowing that nothing was actually happening to solve any of these problems, Trump continued to make assurances: "We are going to have plenty."

Many media reports have confirmed that the lack of testing kits arose from the manufacturers' insistence on exclusive contracts with guaranteed profits. Follow-through and distribution plans were also totally lacking. Even how to keep a count of test results was not worked out in advance.

No planning for the population's needs, along with chaotic planning for what is profitable, has created a crisis in every hospital in the U.S. Private and public hospitals, competing city, state and federal agencies, local and national charities are now in bidding wars for existing supplies.

Socialist planning is the answer

How was China able to control the virus? How is it now able to begin providing massive assistance to other countries on a global scale?

Clearly, socialist planning and large-scale collective ownership of major industries, including the medical industry, have been decisive.

Even in small developing countries, socialist planning frees up the economy to meet domestic need and even make major contributions to other countries trapped by U.S. economic domination and archaic social relations.

Look at Cuba. A country of only 11 million people, it sends more doctors to developing countries than does the World Health Organization. Cuba has also developed and freely shared with the world a medication that aids in treating those who test positive for Covid-19: Interferon Alfa-2B.

Up to now the U.S. government has not only barred the use of medications from Cuba, it has actually threatened countries that accept them. But as the death toll mounts in the U.S., demands for treatments and medical equipment may force changes in seemingly set-in-stone policies.

China has struggled to overcome past underdevelopment by balancing different forms of central planning, local collective ownership, capitalist incentives and shared ownership with Western corporations and banks. At the same time, the Communist Party has maintained broad political and economic control. It has guided national development plans and controlled what imperialist corporations can and cannot do in China.

China is still a developing country emerging from 200 years of colonial looting and underdevelopment. But it has maintained steady development since its 1949 Communist revolution overturned archaic property relations and imperialist domination. That revolution 70 years ago has made all the difference in this global pandemic.

Lesson from Cuba: Disaster Capitalism and Socialist Planning

By Nathaniel Chase

The following was adapted from a Workers World Party talk given Nov. 11, 2017 after the “In the Footsteps of Che International Brigade” returned from Cuba. Over 200 people from over 20 countries traveled with the brigade to show solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Che Guevara’s death.

So far this year, three Category 4 or 5 hurricanes have made landfall in the Caribbean or southern United States: Harvey, Irma and Maria. It’s commonplace to speak of these storms as natural disasters. After all, they are natural events, albeit abetted by human-made climate change.

But there is nothing natural about the destruction that follows in a hurricane’s wake. Not in these times, when the dangers of hurricanes can be observed, predicted and communicated days in advance of landfall.

Nowadays, hurricanes are a human-made disaster, because the extent of their damage is determined based on the principles by which the societies they affect are organized.

Hundreds of people, perhaps more, have died in Puerto Rico in Maria’s aftermath. Harvey and Irma killed at least 160 people in the continental U.S., including 12 left to die in a Florida nursing home across the street from a functioning hospital. Why did more people die in that nursing home than in all of Cuba during Hurricane Irma?

Cuba safely and efficiently evacuated over a million people before Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis in 2004 and 2005, while over 100 people died during the 2005 Houston evacuation ahead of Hurricane Rita.

The Puerto Rican and Cuban electrical grids were both completely shut down by recent hurricanes. The vast majority of the Puerto Rican people are still without electricity at this moment. Yet the Cuban electrical grid was 70 percent restored within a week and fully restored within three.

Why is the U.S., the wealthiest country in the world, with all its infrastructure, industry and communications technology, unable to deal with hurricanes, while Cuba, a small island with a fraction of the wealth, a fraction of the infrastructure, a fraction of the industrialization, is able to respond so well?

The answer is in one word: Socialism!

Cuba is a country organized under socialist principles for the benefit of its people and led by a Communist, Leninist Party. The U.S. is a capitalist, imperialist country, run by and for the bourgeoisie, their banks and their profits, with Puerto Rico, held as a U.S. colony, run by the banks through a Fiscal Control Board.

It's all well and good to say socialist principles are why Cuba responds so well to hurricanes. But what I had the opportunity to learn in Cuba is how socialism enables Cuba to respond so effectively.

Cuba's socialist defense against disasters

An hour's drive from the north-central Cuban coast, where the impact of Irma was greatest, our delegation visited the University of Sancti Spiritus. There we met officials from Cuban National Civil Defense and representatives of the students and administration to learn about their response to hurricanes.

National Civil Defense is an integrated system, mobilizing all of Cuba's response to protect its people, economy, social institutions and natural resources from both climate change and war.

That's right, Cuba explicitly frames hurricane response as defense against climate change — a dramatic difference between Cuban and U.S. approaches.

In the revolution's early years, Civil Defense concentrated on preparing the Cuban people to defend themselves against foreign military intervention. But Hurricane Flora, striking Cuba in 1963 and killing more than 1,200 people, showed painfully the need for disaster preparation, now the Civil Defense's main focus.

Every Cuban adult goes through a civil defense training program preparing them to assist during evacuations. Since 1986, National Civil Defense has organized a yearly, nationwide, two-day hurricane preparedness drill. In every part of Cuba, evacuation and shelter plans are in place. When a hurricane arrives, people carry out what they have already practiced.

Stores of building materials, medications, tents and other supplies are strategically maintained across the island. Before Hurricane Harvey, Houston officials said it was impossible to organize an evacuation with just a few days notice. Exactly! You have to plan beforehand.

When hurricanes are imminent, a four-phase Cuban plan is set in motion:

1. **Inform:** Media begin broadcasting warnings. Students and members of mass organizations go door-to-door so everyone knows about the danger.

2. **Alert:** Evacuations begin. Those living in sturdy homes take in neighbors. Large buildings like churches and universities serve as shelters. Unions, the University Students Federation, the Young Communist League and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution are mobilized under the leadership of the National Civil Defense.

Civil defense relies on pre-existing communication and coordination plans within the mass organizations and does not have to create an ad-hoc communication network with every emergency.

Cubans are evacuated along with their belongings, pets and whatever tools and equipment they need for work. Elderly and sick people are looked after. Everyone is accounted for and no one abandoned. Evacuation plans include contingencies to protect farm animals, machinery and other means of production to minimize economic losses. All these measures require extensive planning, and everyone is encouraged to participate.

The U.S. approach could not be more different: No mechanism is in place to mobilize people in a coordinated fashion, there are no large-scale hurricane response drills, and people are abandoned, left to organize their own evacuation, so that poor, infirm and elderly people are often unable to leave.

3. **Alarm:** The hurricane arrives. Civil Defense works to maintain communication, and national media broadcast information about the storm. The Federation of Amateur Radio Enthusiasts provides communication if phone lines are lost.
4. **Recover:** Damage is assessed and rebuilding begins. Unions mobilize skilled workers from across the island to travel to affected areas. Cuba's system of reservoirs traps rainfall for use during drier times. Neighborhood committees are set up to distribute building materials directly to the people. Depending on a family's financial means, people receive free materials, a subsidy, a loan, or they purchase materials at price.

Disaster capitalism and socialist planning

The day after Irma hit, the price of all construction materials in Cuba was halved. This is the difference between disaster socialism and disaster capitalism. Under capitalism, needed products become fabulously more expensive, and the capitalists make super-profits off people's suffering.

But in Cuba the prices fall, because that's what the people need. This happens despite the fact that building materials are one of the most difficult products for Cuba to purchase because of the U.S. blockade.

At the meeting we brigadistas attended, university students and administration representatives described their personal experiences with hurricane response.

In addition to the school providing civil defense courses, students regularly visit coastal fishing villages to develop relationships essential in an emergency. As Irma approached, students traveled to Yaguajay, a nearby town, to inform people of the need to evacuate. At least 1,000 Cubans from the coast were sheltered at the University of Sancti Spiritus ahead of Irma.

University staff lived on site and provided beds, food and also cultural activities, which are viewed as an essential need. Medical care, as always in Cuba, was available and free.

After the hurricane, students returned daily to Yaguajay and the surrounding areas to help with repairs, provide information about the rest of the country and eventually redecorate the community. Again, the arts are not seen as a luxury or bourgeois decadence: The community's cultural decoration is seen as a basic material need.

Under long-term planning that is characteristic of socialism, Cuba acknowledges the tragic reality that many coastal villages will eventually be lost to rising sea levels because of climate change. Rather than abandoning these communities, the university helps them gradually relocate their homes to higher ground. The U.S. could not be more different: Consider the recent boom in high-priced high-rise construction along the Miami waterfront.

The speed of repairs in Yaguajay, and in Havana where the storm surged 6 meters, was incredible. Some damage was still visible when we were there, but daily life, both economic and social, had resumed. Contrast that with the U.S., where New York City is still repairing subway damage from Hurricane Sandy in 2012, and Puerto Rico is a massive humanitarian disaster.

One of the tragedies of hurricanes is their predictability. Year after year they come, and each time Cuba admirably provides for its people, while the capitalist world abandons its masses to their fate.

Lives are saved under socialism in Cuba, while people are left to die in the U.S. Why is capitalism utterly unwilling to respond to hurricanes?

Because under capitalism, the lives of the working and the oppressed are worth only the surplus value, otherwise known as profit, that can be extracted from them. In the era of capitalism at a dead end, when the crisis of overproduction is a continuous state of affairs, when the reserve army of labor is large and always growing, workers are easily replaced.

The death of hundreds and the displacement of millions isn't seen as much of a problem for the capitalist class. Just the opposite! Disasters are a fantastic investment opportunity for capitalists, stimulating demand and increasing prices.

But what is the lot of our class, the lot of the working and the oppressed, under disaster capitalism? Exploitation, poverty, displacement, death.

If I can bring back one lesson from Cuba to you, it is that revolution IS possible. We can and must win.

Let us today, 50 years after Che's death, and 100 years after the October Bolshevik Revolution, consider and draw strength from what Che said to us in the United States in 1964, borrowing from Cuban hero Jose Marti: "You North Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all — you live in the heart of the beast."

Let us consider the awesome responsibility with which his words charge us.

Let us not shirk from the task before us, but go forward, confident in ourselves and our class. Venceremos! Hasta la Victoria Siempre!

U.S. Uses ‘Drug’ Lies to Menace Venezuela

By Raymond Tyler (April 28, 2020)

During a time when thousands are dying every day in the United States of Covid-19 and resources are dwindling, the United States has found the resources and money to plant “anti-drug” navy ships off the Venezuelan coast and threaten that country’s leaders with arrest. The Pentagon ordered Navy ships there to display power during yet another attempt to get U.S.-appointed leader, Juan Guaidó, to replace President Nicolás Maduro in office. To top that off, the U.S. put a \$15 million bounty on Maduro.

U.S. accusations that Venezuelan leaders are involved in drug trafficking come with no evidence and are blatant hypocrisy.

Colombia, a subservient ally of the United States and a neighboring country of Venezuela, produces and ships the largest supply of cocaine around the world. The amount of drugs allegedly shipped in the accusation of Venezuelan drug trafficking doesn’t come close to that number.

Covid-19 took the mask off the United States for-profit health model, exposing a grotesque reality: The U.S. government cares more about supremacy and profit than protecting its people. Despite being the wealthiest nation in history, the U.S. has the highest confirmed death toll from Covid-19.

The remarkably high death toll arises from inherent flaws and contradictions in the capitalist system. The Covid-19 battle plays second fiddle to the protection of capital.

The United States may be the wealthiest country in history, but the wealth that it extracts from U.S. workers is only a portion of that wealth. Much of the wealth and the corporate profits come through the extraction of resources and labor from other parts of the world.

The extraction of these resources is nonconsensual. Large portions of Latin America, Africa, Asia and even Europe have U.S. troops present or nearby; and they have to bow to U.S. economic power because of military and economic coercion. Nations that don’t submit to the financial model and the dominance of the U.S. dollar are cut off from the world economy and trade via U.S. sanctions and attempted military coups.

Countries under U.S. attack

Countries that are working to build socialism and separate themselves from the international capitalist system are under constant attack. Sanctions prevent these countries from getting medical supplies and equipment as well as other necessities, and they sabotage the countries' economic growth and manufacture discontent. The current attack is focused against Venezuela.

Right now, when the United States can't provide adequate health care for its population, Washington gave Guaidó \$80 million in "Liberation Funds" that are supposed to be distributed to Venezuelan health care workers. However, 17 percent of that money is to go to something called "the defense and strengthening of the national legislative power and the social protection of its members" — a program that seeks to overthrow the democratically elected government of Venezuela.

The United States has seized frozen assets of Venezuela and given them to Juan Guaidó. (venezuelanalysis.com, April 23) Despite the money pumped into the U.S.-Guaidó-attempted coup starting in January 2019, the majority of Venezuela's population still supports Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution.

These steps — the anti-drug navy ships, the seizure of Venezuela's frozen assets and the program to give some of that money to health care workers via Guaidó — are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela's oil deposits. Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build thousands of hospitals and schools and uplift the overall living standards of working and poor people.

Acquiring Venezuela oil would be a victory for U.S. big business.

For revolutionary Venezuela's transgressions against U.S. capitalism, the country has been sanctioned, attacked and threatened with invasion. Special interest think tanks and media have falsely claimed that Venezuela doesn't have "proper elections." In reality, the only problem with Venezuela's election is the people's choice goes against U.S. interests.

Why the U.S. Threatens China — as a New Superpower

By Sara Flounders (December 27, 2019)

China's growth into the world's second-largest economy is being evaluated by all the corporate media, reflecting debates in U.S. ruling circles and the U.S. top military command.

They are forced to admit that most of their hopes and dreams that the Chinese government could be easily overwhelmed, and that Wall Street would find an open road into China, are now dashed by the reality of a stable government that seems to have wide mass support and growing prosperity.

The New York Times Sunday edition ran a 20-page special supplement titled "China Rules" on Nov. 25. It begins with the admission: "The West was certain China would fail. Government-controlled economies stifle growth. Oppression smothers innovation. The Internet is an untamable force. A new middle class will demand a vote. None of these proved true. China is a superpower and it may soon surpass the United States. This is the story of how it got there."

Of course the whole supplement is full of self-congratulatory myths about the "democracy and freedom" of imperialist countries. But there is also recognition of 40 years of uninterrupted growth in China and that the country is on track to become the world's largest economy. "Economic growth in China has been 10 times faster than in the U.S. and it is still more than twice as fast," the Times states.

It is an incredible accomplishment!

More than 800 million people have been pulled out of dire poverty. This is a measure without precedent in modern history. The rate of extreme poverty in China is now less than 1 percent, according to World Bank studies. Yet China remains a developing country, because its per capita income is still a fraction of that in "advanced" countries.

While opening the country to foreign capital investment, organized and centrally planned attention was focused on raising the economic level of the whole population, especially in rural and most underdeveloped areas.

From an illiteracy rate of more than 80 percent at the time of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, illiteracy is now totally eliminated. China today produces

more graduates in science and engineering than the U.S., Japan, South Korea and Taiwan combined.

The billionaire deciders and power brokers of U.S. imperialism are totally hostile to the dramatic improvement in the lives of hundreds of millions of people in China.

Whether this stunning growth will continue, despite U.S. imperialism's determined effort to stop it with tariffs, a trade war and military encirclement, is now debated in ruling circles. Can they stop China?

As the Washington Post explained: "The trade war isn't about trade. The trade war is about the United States trying to contain China and counteract its rise." (Sept. 24)

Every economy in the world will be impacted. The Nov. 16 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Papua New Guinea, with 10,000 delegates and guests, was so riled by the trade war, new tariffs and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence's arrogant demands that diplomats could not even issue a closing statement. The Nov. 30 meeting of the Group of 20 in Argentina is under a cloud of uncertainty.

Remembering past Western domination and humiliation, China is determined to defend its national sovereignty, both economically and now militarily. China has imposed its own tariffs on U.S. products. Confrontations are accelerating with U.S. warships carrying out aggressive "freedom of navigation" exercises in the South China Sea.

The "pivot to Asia" is a major military reorientation of the Pentagon war machine to focus on China. Aircraft carriers with nuclear weapons, destroyers, nuclear submarines and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile batteries are being moved into place.

U.S. demands

Under the screen of diplomatic negotiations, just what are the fundamental changes in China's policies that U.S. corporations and banks want?

The Trump administration — and other major imperialist powers — want to reverse China's industrial and development policies. Their terms seem abstract: ease restrictions on market access, end forced technology transfers for corporations setting up factories in China, respect intellectual property and patents, and weaken currency controls.

For example, Trump accuses China of keeping its currency artificially low in order to boost its export industry. The value of Chinese currency, the yuan, is largely shut off to foreign speculators. Interest rates are set to help guide the economy.

The hostility is sharpening. It is an all-out effort to fundamentally overturn Chinese economic policies put in place starting in 1978.

Market socialism: a compromise

Market socialism, or “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” is the compromise of maintaining a planned economy while opening up a market economy. It is described in China as a primary stage of developing socialism in an underdeveloped country.

Since 1978 China has experimented with ways of attracting foreign investment and different forms of integration into the global capitalist market. They made deals with many Western corporations, while maintaining centralized control of the state apparatus. They also continued many forms of public, cooperative and social ownership.

Special economic zones were established to lure Western technology. These zones, with thousands of labor-intensive factories and millions of workers earning low wages, were centers of capitalist exploitation that reaped enormous profits for the U.S. and other global capitalists. Private minority stakes in state firms were sold. The communes were broken up and land was leased. Many forms of small businesses were allowed.

In recent years, through thousands of strikes and job actions, workers in China have won increased wages, social benefits and improved working conditions.

There are many different views of this process and its future dangers for the socialist organization of society. But in almost all the deals with Western capital, China has insisted on keeping the technology and blueprints and demanded that Chinese workers be trained in operating and running the enterprise. This was a radically different deal than other countries had previously required. And while Western technology and funding of factories were welcomed, Western-funded political ideas, organizations, oppositional political parties and media were tightly monitored by the state and by the Communist Party.

State-owned enterprises predominate

What frustrates the capitalist class, far more than China’s incredible growth, is that the top 12 Chinese companies on the Fortune 500 list are all state owned. They include massive oil, solar energy, telecommunications, engineering and construction companies, banks and the auto industry. They receive state support and subsidies. (fortune.com, July 22, 2015)

Chinese firms filled an unprecedented 115 places on the Fortune Global 500 list for 2017. There were only 10 Chinese firms on the list in 2000. The U.S. has trended in the other direction: from 179 firms in 2000, only 143 U.S. firms were in the top 500 in 2017.

The U.S. is opposed to subsidies to state-owned enterprises and declares the subsidies an “unfair advantage.” They consider SOEs to be squeezing out the profits the global capitalists feel are rightfully theirs. They are enraged that SOE profits are plowed into developing and modernizing China’s most underdeveloped regions. This “unfair advantage” granted to state-owned industries is the primary reason given by the Trump administration for new tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum. (industryweek.com, April 17)

Both the Obama and Trump administrations and the World Trade Organization have opposed subsidies to China’s SOEs.

This is sheer hypocrisy! The largest U.S. corporations are military contractors with billions in federal subsidies, but super-rich investors reap all the profits. Privately owned U.S. agribusiness has received decades of subsidies. Privately owned Wall Street banks received U.S. federal bailouts, a giant subsidy totaling \$16 trillion, in the 2008 global financial crisis.

It was during the 2008 crisis that the difference in who controls the state stood out in sharpest contrast. China saved and further strengthened its state-owned enterprises, while letting the privately owned and foreign-owned corporations fend for themselves.

China’s internet is way ahead

An expectation of big capital globally was that the wide use of the internet would forcibly pry China open to Western pressure, ideas and propaganda. But China allowed Chinese innovators to compete in setting up privately owned but monitored internet companies. Today Alibaba, Tencent, Weibo, ByteDance, TikTok and Baidu rival Amazon, Google, Facebook and YouTube.

Tencent, with 647 million active users, is the world largest online community. Alibaba is the largest e-commerce platform in the world.

Smartphone payments in China are years ahead of those in the U.S. Chinese companies operate a cyberspace of creative short videos, podcasts, blogs and streaming TV. For example, WeChat has 889 million users who socialize, play games, pay bills and buy tickets all from the mobile messaging app.

National laws on sexual harassment, workers’ rights

The social gains in China are monumental, especially when compared to no rights, no education and no standing for women, and no rights for any workers or peasants, before the Chinese Revolution. As in every country, social gains, especially for women, are uneven and in continuing struggle.

In China, many gains have been codified into national laws, rather than through piece-by-piece struggles against every corporate boss or laws passed state by state.

The inclusion in China's civil code of laws to curb sexual harassment in the workplace is ahead of what exists in the U.S. and most other countries.

Included in the draft of the new civil code, presented to the National People's Congress Standing Committee on Aug. 27, management and employers are responsible to take measures to prevent, stop and deal with complaints about sexual harassment. Victims can demand perpetrators "assume civil liability" for committing sexual harassment through words or actions or by exploiting someone's subordinate relationship. (reuters.com, Aug. 27)

The China Labour Bulletin states: "China has a comprehensive legal framework that gives workers a range of entitlements and protects them from exploitation by their employer. Workers have the right to be paid in full and on time, a formal employment contract, a 40-hour working week with fixed overtime rates, social insurance covering pensions, healthcare, unemployment, work injuries and maternity leave, severance pay in the event of contract termination, equal pay for equal work, and protection against workplace discrimination.

"Workers also have the right to form an enterprise trade union and the enterprise union committee has to be consulted by management before any major changes to workers' pay and conditions." (clb.org.hk)

Belt and Road Initiative threatens U.S. position

China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative provides infrastructure loans, equipment and training to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America for a network of trade routes, with new rail lines, ports, highways, pipelines, telecommunications facilities and energy centers linking countries on four continents. It includes financing to promote urban planning, potable water, sanitation and food development. China is calling it the "plan of the century." It is projected to be 12 times the size of the U.S. Marshall Plan, which rebuilt Western Europe after World War II.

Imperialism is worried that China's huge, unfolding global infrastructure projects could challenge the U.S.-led world order.

Because the most powerful U.S. corporations are military industries, U.S. aid is built around enormous debt for military equipment purchases that are quickly obsolete. They are not able to match China's development proposals. But U.S.-funded nongovernmental organizations and media outlets are waging widely publicized scare campaigns against these sorely needed development projects.

Meanwhile, China is reining in a number of projects by Chinese capitalists who were seeking ways to move their profits outside of Chinese government controls through exploitative foreign investment schemes.

Hands off China!

Big debates will continue within the progressive U.S. working-class movement on the social character of the Chinese experiment in “market socialism.”

It is valuable to study the impact of the global and internal capitalist market and a growing consumer society in China. The forms of socialist planning in the economy and in the culture hold lessons for the many developing countries.

The social weight, legal status and inheritance rights of the millionaire, and now even billionaire, capitalists in China should be evaluated.

The Chinese working class now numbers 623 million people. Its social weight and political consciousness are growing. Thousands of strikes and job actions have consolidated new gains in pay and working conditions. Its capacity to organize all future society will be decisive.

There is much we don't know about the ownership of the productive forces in China — by the state, by Chinese and foreign capitalists, and about the many forms of collective ownership of small industries at the provincial, city and rural township levels. A lot is in rapid transition.

But in the final analysis, clarity and militant working-class solidarity are essential in opposing all threats to China from U.S. imperialism and its giant military machine.

Opposing sanctions, economic threats, trade wars, increasingly hostile media lies and military encirclement by U.S. imperialism is not open to debate.

Hands off China!



Cuba, Reforestation and the Climate Crisis

By Stephanie Hedgecock (February 23, 2020)

We meet on stolen land. This is Lenapehoking, Lenape homeland. We look forward to the day that all Indigenous nations' land claims are paid in full.

As we are meeting on environmental issues tonight, I wonder how many of you may have read part of the new U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on the status of the oceans? The report covers the impacts of carbon pollution on ocean, coastal, polar and mountain ecosystems and the human communities that depend on them. Part of that extra carbon in the atmosphere goes into the ocean waters and makes the water more acidic. The acid directly impacts shellfish growing their shells — and coral reefs.

The acidity and the extra heated temperatures, which are much worse in the oceans, and massive amounts of plastic trash made from petroleum, are killing life in the oceans. But life on an ocean planet depends upon the life in the oceans!

How many of you may have read part of the August IPCC climate and land-use report, the first one with a majority of its authors from developing countries, the first one to rely on interviews with Indigenous populations as a key source?

That report covered destruction of lands and habitats by agriculture, logging, mining and drilling — and it covered the point of view of people first impacted by global warming. It said, “Based on Indigenous and local knowledge, climate change is affecting food security in drylands, particularly those in Africa, and high mountain regions of Asia and South America.”

Many young people are reading these reports. For those of you who have not been keeping up with the news about global heating, the youth have left you behind. It's time to catch up.

Settlers' war with nature

Deforestation and environmental devastation started in North and South America and in Africa with colonialism, and the arrogant thieving mentality that came with it of “man over nature.” The settlers started a war with nature in these lands. In fact, Europe's massive ship-building phase, [which enabled settlers] to go forth and steal, leveled swaths of Europe's forests.

Modern scholars now estimate Indigenous populations pre-invasion at 50 million to 100 million people [in North America]. But by 1800, less than 1 million Native people remained within what are the current U.S. borders, threatened by 15 million European settlers.

And the Native peoples' population collapse led to immediate imbalances with other species such as game animals. Why? Because Indigenous cultures centered on living in balance with the natural world, centered stewardship of the forests and lands.

Before 1492, what is today the U.S. had about 1 billion acres of forests. Since 1600, some 286 million acres were destroyed (and that might be a low estimate). In a 1763 letter, Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Cleared land absorbs more heat and melts snow quicker." That he and [Thomas] Jefferson and the settlers were focused on rapidly taking down the forests is well-documented in their writings.

By the early 1800s, settlers had cleared a 100-mile-wide swath from what is now Maine to Georgia, with one-half to three-quarters of the forests cleared. Settlers regarded these lands and resources as plunder for them to abuse. It was not long before soil fertility was damaged — lands were abandoned, and more lands stolen from Native nations.

Eighty percent of Earth's land animals and plants live in forests. Even taking out part of a forest's insulating canopy damages habitats and causes temperature swings harmful to plants and animals. And rainforests are key to water supplies and clean air. Between 1990 and 2016, we lost another 502,000 square miles of Earth's forests.

Colonialism fueled capitalism's growth. Colonialism and the growth of capitalism have deforested the world. This is a big part of the crisis of global warming; in addition to the massive ongoing increases of carbon in the atmosphere, the forests that draw carbon back out of the atmosphere have been destroyed. The world needs reforestation.

Cuban reforestation: role model for the world

As someone who has suffered eco-grief for years, [this writer brings] a message of hope. As a member of the 50th Venceremos Brigade, I witnessed Cuba doing what the world needs to do.

After the 1959 Revolution, Cuba implemented its first Agrarian Reform. Cuban reforestation began in 1968 in the [mountainous region of] Sierra del Rosario, with support from the revolutionary government, when local villagers decided on a plan.

The area had been totally denuded during Spanish colonization. The original forest was cut down for livestock and plantations. The indigenous

trees — Mahogany, Majagua, Cedar, Ebony and others — were entirely wiped out. By the mid-1800s, the soil was degraded, and deforestation continued into the early 1900s. The impoverished rural people worked for ranchers, or they burned trees to make charcoal to sell. By the time of the Cuban Revolution, there was nothing left but isolated palm trees in those mountains.

Socialist Cuba saw a need to implement social and economic projects in the rural areas. This reforestation plan, launched along with the establishment of community services and livelihoods, targeted improving soil quality and providing essential work for the area's people. They used a terrace-planting system on the mountain slopes. The plan began with an initial 12,355 acres (5,000 hectares) in the eastern part of the mountain range.

Cuban scientists assisted [the project] to determine which indigenous trees to plan, and the villagers planted 3,000 Mahogany, Hibiscus and Teak trees. Within eight years, the rural people in the valley had planted 6 million trees. In 1971, they founded the village of Las Terrazas [the terraces].

The revolutionary Cuban government stated that fruit trees should also be planted among the other trees in order to feed the people. Over 80 percent of the food eaten in the biosphere is locally grown, all of it organic, including bananas, pumpkins, grapefruit, avocados, oranges, mandarins and mamey — all grown between the forest trees.

Indigenous ecosystems restored

When the Cuban people restored the forests, the indigenous mammals, plants, birds and insects, many of which had become endangered during centuries of colonialist and capitalist exploitation of the environment, began to come back. The indigenous ecosystems began to be restored.

Today Cuba has 131 species of birds, 26 [of them] indigenous, the rest pass through on migratory routes to their nesting areas in Cuba. There are 33 reptilian species, including 17 species of snakes and 11 species of lizards. Some of the world's smallest mammal species are from Cuba — the jutía conga and jutía carabalí, rodents which live in the trees, returned to the forest, and, it is believed, the tiny endangered Cuban solenodon as well.

In 1985, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized this reforestation project — and, in conjunction with the Cuban government, added 61,776 acres (25,000 hectares) of the Sierra del Rosario — as the first Biosphere Reserve in Cuba.

During the Special Period, after the loss of the Soviet Union and Cuba's other former socialist trading partners, there was revolutionary support to promote ecological and cultural tourism with a doubled focus on sustainability.

Also beginning with the Special Period, it became mandatory to grow organic food.

Local villagers restored a coffee plantation from the ruins of one of the colonial plantations. They planted coffee trees and began to harvest shade-grown, arabica coffee. Honey is also locally produced, and beekeeping is widely practiced.

Las Terrazas: Model for reforestation projects

My subgroup of the brigade visited Las Terrazas [in the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere] July 28. We were joined by Ida, a local guide, at the village, and then we visited the Rio San Juan. The river is fed by sulfur springs, so it is regarded as a mineral treatment. Las Terrazas and the river are popular for workers in Havana to visit on holidays. We were there during the national holidays, and we joined the many Cubans swimming in the river and enjoying the forest.

The village was built with piped water, power, schools, daycare centers, family doctors, dentists, a clinic lab and a pharmacy. From the beginning, scientific workers, public service providers and artists joined the local people — and the project greatly improved [local living] conditions.

Villagers created a lake with fish farming, and some people raise livestock to provide meat. Las Terrazas has some solar power and plans to acquire more when possible. The village later added an eco-museum, a cinema and a disco, as Cubans are renowned for their love of film and music. They later decided to use their tourism profits to build a library.

Las Terrazas [the Sierra del Rosario project] became the model in Cuba for another 11 reforestation projects. UNESCO recognizes the Cuban reforestation programs for “principles of incorporating knowledge and traditional practices to strengthen community involvement in strategic planning,” and UNESCO has recognized five more Cuban biospheres to date.

The Sierra del Rosario Biosphere has regulations of conservation; the community, organized in the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), makes all decisions regarding sustainability, such as limits on further building and housing. The 11 other reforestation communities meet periodically at Las Terrazas to exchange indigenous seeds to promote biodiversity, and they trade produce.

Las Terrazas has three green gardens, which support the schools and community as the source of most of their food. [They also] provide [food] for seven eco-restaurants in the park. Villagers grow fruits, flowers and plants with medicinal uses for herbal infusions and vitamins.

Kindergarten children have their own garden, and they eat their own produce at lunch and snack times. The children even learn to make herbal infusions with various flowers, such as chamomile, and guava, the guayaba fruit.

Ida, our guide, told us, “When I tell you it was mandatory to grow everything we needed, it was not because someone came and told us to do it. We need to do it. And we grow organic all the time.”

Some 7 million indigenous trees have been planted so far, and great biodiversity recovered, with over 800 species of plants. Scientific specialists search for species of plants and animals in the forest daily, and twice a week they work with the local students to teach them to recognize the plants. Even small children know how to recognize six or seven local plants.

Impact of global warming in Cuba

Our guide talked about the impact of global warming on Cuba’s growing seasons and local flora. Some varieties of plants have now disappeared from the forest due to the heat; others are in season earlier and longer, such as mangoes. This July was the warmest month ever recorded in the world. Ida told us the past average year-round temperature in Cuba was 24°C to 25°C (75°F to 77°F), but this year they had a new high of 39.8°C (103.64°F).

Ida said the reforestation plan was focused on the environment from the beginning. She said when she was a child before the reforestation, the rains were so intense that children were forced to stay home from school sometimes for a week or two. Now there are seasonal rains that might last only three days.

The people of Las Terrazas live a rural life — one enriched by living in the peaceful, beautiful forest — but a cultural life very different from a rural life in most capitalist countries. Beyond free health care, education, involvement of the community in all decision-making, the focus on science and sustainability, and the organic food, like all Cubans they are focused on their music and arts.

In addition to the local musicians — one of whom, Polo Montañez, became world famous — every June, Las Terrazas hosts a five-day music festival in tribute to the late Montañez, which is attended by people from all over Cuba and other countries. This village has a very enhanced cultural life.

In the last couple of years, the villagers began to organize work to clean plastic and trash out of the rivers, where foreign tourists and some vacationing Cubans have littered. Children are invited to join the work to clean up the trash tourists leave; in this way, their environmental consciousness is developed from a young age. Their CDR is currently discussing the need to limit the numbers of tourists in order to protect the environment, as a matter of sustainable limits.

Capitalist corporations poison waters

What city in the U.S. ever discusses sustainability? What corporation ever took account of that in its planning around mineral or fossil fuel extraction projects? None of them! They have left huge collection ponds of poisoned waters near shutdown mines that kill flocks of migratory birds.

From the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, in the Arctic, to the BP spill in the Gulf, [corporations] never clean up their devastation of lands and waters. Life pays that penalty — animals, plants, humans.

Capitalism treats our Earth's lands, waters and air as commodities to sell, exploit, damage, and to use as a dumping ground!

We need a rapid transition away from the use of fossil fuels to stop global heating, but capitalism won't stop its war on nature. Capitalism is not going to stop adding to its damages to the atmosphere, oceans and lands. U.S. presidents have been getting briefings on greenhouse gases since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. Big Oil knew the risks decades earlier.

Today, more than 80 percent of U.S. residents live in urban areas, physically and mentally removed from relations with what remains of the forests. [Significantly,] forests that are on western Native reservations are in better shape than U.S. national forests, despite [getting] only one-third of the funding. Native forests are considered by forestry experts to be better cared for and in better condition.

Yet with global heating, there is now a longer fire season and much hotter, faster wildfires. Indigenous nations are focused on sustaining ecological function across the lands. All national forests and parks are stolen Native lands.

The European colonialist worldview of “man over nature” should be seen as superstitious and anti-science. All resource planning needs to become holistic — this is what forestry scientists have learned from working with Native forestry programs: The needs of the forests — the ecosystems — must be protected.

There is no planet B!

Capitalism is not sustainable — it is the death economy, it is the death culture! By its very nature, it cannot be made environmentally sustainable. For those of you who are new to environmentalism, when we speak of sustainability, we are speaking of the biosphere, of life on Earth. There is no planet B.

Big Oil needs to be nationalized and expropriated, and the infrastructure rebuilt as needed to move toward a sustainable living future. And we need to win scientists to a working-class, socialist program — their abilities to help

judge the best practices to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels will be sorely needed.

Instead of personal choices, we need central planning that enables communities and nations to make collective choices, like Cuba does.

Stopping global warming also requires reforestation. Forests do more than clean the air of [excess] carbon. They protect soil, water, air, biodiversity, and they provide livelihoods. Despite decades under the illegal U.S. blockade, Cuba has done 50 years of reforestation work. Cuba protects its endangered species and works to restore indigenous ecosystems. Cuba only grows organic food. Despite proximity to Florida, Cuba's coral reefs are much healthier than Florida's.

Cuba's socialist planning centers on sustainability and enables the Cuban people to do all this. Revolutionary Cuba, despite the economic aggressions of imperialism, is a model for fighting global warming.

Like Fidel said, like the Zapatistas say: "Another world is possible!"

Mni Wiconi! Water is Life! Cuba Sí! Bloqueo No!

The article is a slightly edited version of a talk given at a Workers World Party forum on Oct. 3, 2019 in New York City. Hedgecoke participated in the 50th Venceremos Brigade this summer

Section 8

What Is Socialism?

What is Socialism? Part 1

Denmark, Imperialism and Social Democracy

By Deirdre Griswold (August 22, 2018)

For several years now, large polling companies have been asking younger people in the United States whether they preferred socialism or capitalism. Of those who expressed an opinion, the majority have replied “socialism.”

This is a welcome sea change from attitudes in the U.S. during the very reactionary period that began with McCarthyism and the Cold War and has continued for decades.

But the word “socialism” can mean different things to different people. In this series, we intend to give some historical perspective to the word “socialism” — where it comes from and how its meaning has evolved with the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin and other theoretical (and practical!) leaders of the movement for profound, revolutionary social change.

And we’ll look at how “socialism” is often used today in a very different way, a way that promises change without revolution, by adding the word “democratic” to mean progressive reforms legislated under capitalism.

It was long required of bourgeois economists in this country — especially when there existed a bloc of countries in Eastern Europe, led by the Soviet Union, where the means of production belonged to the state, not individual capitalists — that they pooh-pooh the slightest hint of socialism and praise capitalism as the be-all and end-all of social development.

But that doesn’t work now, in the era of Trump rollbacks of all progressive social programs; the stoking of racism, misogyny, bigotry and xenophobia; and the incredible and growing wealth divide between billionaires and an increasingly pauperized working class.

So some of the writers in the big capitalist media are defending — not socialism, even “democratic socialism” is a bit too much for them — but “social democracy.” A case in point is an Aug. 16 column in the New York Times by Paul Krugman, who often writes for that paper on labor issues and calls himself a “progressive.”

Socialism versus ‘social democracy’

Entitled “Something Not Rotten in Denmark,” Krugman praises that country, saying that in recent decades it has been “veering (modestly) to the left where

we've veered right. And it has done just fine." He contrasts the large amount of government spending in Denmark to all the fear mongering by U.S. politicians against the "redistribution of wealth" through social programs. He points to things like longer vacations, a national health system, a much larger proportion of workers in unions, lower unemployment and a longer life expectancy to show that life is better for Danish workers than for U.S. workers.

"But is Denmark socialist?" he asks. And he answers himself: "It's true that Denmark doesn't at all fit the classic definition of socialism, which involves government ownership of the means of production. It is, instead, social-democratic: a market economy where the downsides of capitalism are mitigated by government action, including a very strong social safety net."

All very true. Denmark is not socialist. But what Krugman leaves out is the fierce class struggle on a global scale that has led the rulers of this small imperialist country to accede to some of the workers' demands in order to maintain their privileged class position. They have given a little in order to stay in power and continue to exploit the labor of the workers, both at home and around the world.

Gains of workers' struggles being undermined

He also leaves out the current workers' struggles in Denmark to hold on to what they've won as they face an onslaught of capitalist reaction that is deepening throughout Europe. Far-right political forces there, just as in the U.S., are seizing on immigration to drive a wedge between native-born and immigrant workers.

The "gig economy" exists in Denmark, too — temporary employment with little security and fewer rights. While large manufacturing and public sector workers are mostly organized, industries like food service and retail establishments are superexploiting im/migrant workers from the "global south" who have fled the horrible conditions in their home countries created by imperialist wars and neocolonialism.

Many of these immigrants are highly educated. To be eligible to work in Denmark under a points-based Green Card system, made even more difficult over the last two years, applicants likely to be accepted should have a master's degree or higher and be able to speak Danish, a language used by less than 6 million people worldwide. Despite these stringent requirements to work in Denmark, many highly educated immigrants who do finally get a Green Card end up washing dishes or cleaning bathrooms with few legal protections — like so many immigrants in the U.S.

Most of the left in Denmark — both Danes and migrant workers — are resisting this erosion of their hard-won rights. They have no doubts about Denmark being capitalist, despite its "social-democratic" political

establishment. And they understand that dividing the workers on ethnic, religious or citizenship lines is a dangerous tactic of the bosses meant to undermine the gains the workers have won in the class struggle.

Denmark and NATO

Denmark was a founding member of NATO, which was created in 1949 by global imperialism to militarily encircle and push back the USSR and the workers' states of Eastern Europe and keep Western European countries in the hands of the capitalists. While the "Eastern bloc" countries emerged from World War II having suffered horrible destruction at the hands of the Nazi imperialists, they still offered many things workers didn't have at that time in more prosperous Western Europe: free socialized medicine, free education, longer vacations, earlier retirement, guaranteed jobs and more. These were the fruits of a true workers' revolution in Russia in 1917 and were generally applied also in the East European countries under Soviet occupation after World War II.

The Cold War demonized the Soviet bloc at a time when strong workers' parties in Western Europe were fighting to win these same benefits. These were the conditions that led the capitalists in some Western European countries to accept social democracy as a "lesser evil" to outright workers' revolution.

As long as the capitalist ruling class exists, whether it makes material concessions to the workers or not, it calls the shots. This is especially true in periods of economic crisis — which is deepening all over the globe at present and comes directly from the contradiction of capitalist "overproduction." During this crisis, the capitalists will try to overturn the gains made by workers in order to enhance their profits in the fierce, dog-eat-dog competition that is a built-in feature of this decaying system.

NATO has morphed into an aggressive armed force used against any regime or movement that challenges U.S.-European imperialist domination worldwide. In this global imperialist war, Denmark has sent troops and/or war planes to Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Estonia and Kyrgyzstan.

Trump complained during his election campaign, and still does, that the Europeans weren't paying their "fair share" to NATO and demanded they raise their contribution to 2 percent of their gross domestic product. Bloomberg News predicted that would "break Denmark's welfare state." (Nov. 20, 2016)

In a capitalist country, even a social democratic one, being a partner of world imperialism has its price. The capitalists calling the shots will make sure this price is paid by the working class, not the bosses.

What is Socialism? Part 2

Lessons of an Early Socialist Experiment

By Deirdre Griswold (September 7, 2018)

This Part 2 of the series “What Is Socialism?” consists of an abridged version of the first half of Sam Marcy’s 1992 pamphlet entitled “Soviet Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?” In it, Marcy describes an attempt by a Welsh manufacturer in the early 1800s to overcome the horrors of newly industrialized capitalism by establishing a town in the U.S. based on communist principles. He analyzes its many achievements but also what eventually overwhelmed this bold experiment. The complete pamphlet can be read at workers.org/marcy/cd/samsoc/index.htm.

Not far from the Wabash River in southwest Indiana is a little town called New Harmony. Its population of about a thousand hasn’t varied much for decades. It has been seen for many years as a cultural center in a largely agricultural region.

The town of New Harmony has considerable significance from a historical point of view. It was a milestone in the evolution of socialist thought and has retained some features of social reform that have practical political significance, even today.

What makes New Harmony stand out? More than 150 years ago, when it was still a frontier town, an attempt was made to build a communist society there. There were many similar ventures at that time, but this one is notable because it was organized and inspired by one of the truly great figures of the 19th century, a Welshman named Robert Owen.

Robert Owen stands out like a giant because he did spend his considerable fortune in the cause of improving the lives of the workers. He established a number of communist societies in Scotland and in the United States and devoted the better part of his life to tireless defense of the interests of the working class.

Robert Owen: early communist

In his book “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” Frederick Engels, the co-worker of Karl Marx, described how Owen’s work began at a time when the conditions of the working class in the large manufacturing towns of Britain had become frightful.

“In the industrial revolution most of his class saw only chaos and confusion, and the opportunity of fishing in these troubled waters and making large fortunes quickly. He saw in it the opportunity of putting into practice his favorite theory, and so bringing order out of chaos.

“He had already tried it with success, as superintendent of more than 500 men in a Manchester factory. From 1800 to 1829, he directed the great cotton mill at New Lanark, in Scotland, as managing partner, along the same lines, but with greater freedom of action and with a success that made him a European reputation.

“A population, originally consisting of the most diverse and, for the most part, very demoralized elements, a population that gradually grew to 2,500, he turned into a model colony, in which drunkenness, police, magistrates, lawsuits, poor laws, charity were unknown. And all this simply by placing the people in conditions worthy of human beings, and especially by carefully bringing up the rising generation.”

How different this was from the underfunded, ill-conceived social services of today, which help drag down the spirit of the people!

Engels continued:

“Whilst his competitors worked their people 13 or 14 hours a day, in New Lanark the working day was only ten and a half hours. When a crisis in cotton stopped work for four months, his workers received their full wages all the time. And with all this the business more than doubled in value, and to the last yielded large profits to its proprietors.

“In spite of all this, Owen was not content. ... ‘The people were slaves at my mercy.’ The relatively favorable conditions in which he had placed them were still far from allowing a rational development of the character and of the intellect in all directions, much less of the free exercise of all their faculties.’ And yet the working part of this population of 2,500 persons was daily producing as much real wealth for society as, less than half a century before, it would have required the working part of a population of 600,000 to create. ‘I asked myself, what became of the difference between the wealth consumed by 2,500 persons and that which would have been consumed by 600,000?’

“The answer was clear. It had been used to pay the proprietors of the establishment 5 percent on the capital they had laid out, in addition to over £300,000 clear profit. ... The newly-created, gigantic productive forces, hitherto used only to enrich individuals and to enslave the masses, offered to Owen the foundations for a reconstruction of society; they were destined, as the common property of all, to be worked for the common good of all. ...

“His advance in the direction of communism was the turning point in Owen’s life. As long as he was simply a philanthropist, he was rewarded with nothing but wealth, applause, honor and glory. ... But when he came out with his communist theories, that was quite another thing. ...

“Banished from official society ... he turned directly to the working class and continued working in their midst for thirty years. Every social movement, every real advance in England on behalf of the workers links itself on to the name of Robert Owen. He forced through in 1819, after five years’ fighting, the first law limiting the hours of labor of women and children in factories. He was president of the first congress at which all the trade unions of England united in a single great trade association.”

New Harmony

From 1825 to 1827, New Harmony [in Indiana], now in the hands of Owen, attracted many of the most idealistic and inventive reformers of the day, as well as women and men of the natural sciences. In addition, many jobless people found their way there, inspired by public lectures Owen gave in many Eastern cities.

The principles of the community were explained as follows: “Within the community all work was to be equal. One was to receive that which was necessary to him. The teachers’ work was to be on the same footing with the laborer, the farmer the equal of either. All were to perform to the best of their ability and receive the same compensation.” (“The New Harmony Story” by Don Blair)

In its few short years of existence, the communist society at New Harmony broke new ground. It introduced into the United States the first kindergarten, the first infant school, the first trade school, the first free public school system, the first women’s club, the first free library, the first civic dramatic club, and it was the seat of the first geological survey.

The progressive achievements of this little utopian colony inevitably became the basis for important demands taken up later by the working-class movement. The bosses are still fighting tooth and nail against such benefits

and cutting them back wherever they can. To the extent that they are today more generally available to the workers, it is owing to bitter class battles across the country. How interesting that what were at that time considered utopian have now become very practical and indeed necessary.

Long after it ceased to be a communist colony, New Harmony was a social and cultural oasis. It was to become a center of both the abolitionist and the women's movements.

Why it disintegrated

Why did it disintegrate? The common explanation given by bourgeois critics of these early communist experiments is that they failed to reward "personal initiative" and the "rugged individualism" for which capitalist imperialism is so famous.

However, the more important reason for their failure was that they were in competition with the capitalist mode of production and dependent upon it for the purchase and sale of materials.

Owen had based his conception of communism on the view that the success of his colonies would enlist the cooperation of the bourgeoisie, who would join in when they saw how superior these societies were. He and the other great utopians, like Claude Henri Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, overlooked the characteristic feature of the capitalists: their unlimited greed and avarice driven by the profit motive. Not only does that prevent their conversion to the idea of a utopian society, but they cannot be persuaded to grant even the workers' most meager demands without a struggle.

Appealing to the inherent goodness of these capitalists proves to be an exercise in futility. By the time Marx and Engels wrote "The Communist Manifesto," the bourgeoisie had revealed all its basic social and political tendencies. ... Neither the philosophers nor the theoreticians of utopian idealism [during Owen's time] could foresee the devastating class character of the society that was emerging under total domination by the bourgeoisie.

Not until Marx and Engels arrived on the scene was it possible to analyze the dynamics of the capitalist system. ... The raging class struggle made any attempt at social equality and abolition of the horrors of capitalism impossible. Socialism can only come as the product of the resolute struggle of the working class itself in irreconcilable conflict with the bourgeoisie.

Above all, Owen could not in his day foresee the emerging anarchy of capitalist production. The destructive force unleashed by the periodic paroxysms of capitalist crisis would not allow even a tiny oasis to carry out the systematic planning needed to build his egalitarian society. Indeed, these cooperative ventures with their more limited resources are among the first to

be swept away, as later history showed. Many of the cooperative enterprises, built up by years of hard work and self-sacrifice, fell victim to the crises that the capitalist mode of production inevitably brings.

Owen started his first cooperative venture in 1800. By 1825, when he tried to develop New Harmony as an island of cooperation in a world torn by class antagonisms, the first worldwide capitalist economic crisis was under way.

Even the capitalist crisis of 1825, while short-lived, was universal in character. It vitally affected New Harmony because no community can stand alone in the face of such great devastation.

Communism as an idea has existed for centuries. Communist societies like New Harmony and New Lanark and hundreds of others were not an accident of history but a response to the meanness, inequality, poverty, etc., of class society.

The roots of communism go much further back, however. They lie deep in the primary stage of the development of human society. Primary communism was the first form of social existence of the human species.

Lewis Henry Morgan's writings on the communal life of the Iroquois in North America confirmed what the socialist movement in Europe had deduced about early societies elsewhere before written history: that there was a universal period when property was communal, there was no state, and the products of human labor were shared equitably. These conclusions have since been fortified by the study of Native peoples all over the Americas, Asia and Africa.

Primary communism based on food gathering and hunting succumbed to private ownership because it lacked the necessary concentration and development of the means of production. But private property, while more productive, also brought subjugation and degradation, first of women.

The discovery of the early communist societies refuted the canard assiduously cultivated by apologists for the bourgeoisie: that a planned society is utopian, that humankind cannot plan its own society on the basis of common ownership of the means of production and equitable distribution of the products of labor. People had done just that for hundreds of thousands of years.

What is Socialism? Part 3

Lessons of the Paris and Shanghai Communes

By Deirdre Griswold (October 16, 2018)

Lately, great interest and support for the idea of socialism has developed in the U.S., especially among younger generations — a marked departure from the fearful and stultifying days of red baiting ushered in by the Cold War of world imperialism against the then-existing bloc of countries trying to build socialism. But how can socialism be achieved?

The Paris Commune of 1871 and the Shanghai Commune of 1927 briefly showed the world what workers' governments might look like.

Back in the 19th century, capitalist development in Europe and the United States skyrocketed, much of it fed by the ruling classes' superexploitation of workers in the colonized parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America and, in the U.S., of Black people still subjugated, even after the abolition of chattel slavery. The consolidation of political power by an immensely wealthy class of merchants, manufacturers and bankers led to intolerable conditions for the growing working classes at home.

In Part 2 of this series, we described attempts by earnest utopians almost a century and a half ago to build socialism by setting up model communities, which vastly improved the workers' lives and pioneered in liberating working women from household drudgery. But these utopian experiments were overwhelmed by the boom-and-bust cycles of the capitalist world order surrounding them.

Even as the utopian socialists were unable to gain ruling-class neutrality, let alone support, for their reforms, another ideological current was developing. As early as 1848, the need to overthrow the capitalist ruling class was advanced by two young Germans, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They wrote in "The Communist Manifesto": "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones."

Marx and Engels not only gave voice in stirring language to the aspirations of the workers, but they fought on the barricades in the German revolution of 1848. While that struggle was basically for democratic rights against the

repressive bourgeois state and the remnants of feudalism, it already strongly reflected independent demands of the working class.

Paris Commune of 1871

It would be another 23 years, however, before the working class had the opportunity — even if for only a brief period — to show what it could do if it took power. The Paris Commune of 1871 lasted only a few months, but in that time the workers of Paris, women and men, upended the pillars of bourgeois rule. You could say that they showed the world “this is what workers’ democracy looks like” as they dismantled the repressive organs of the bourgeois state and replaced them with armed workers’ defense committees.

Marxism, as it was already called by then, was based not on speculation and wishful thinking but on a materialist analysis of the existing state of human society. Thus, it was with great excitement and enthusiasm that Marx and Engels studied the Paris Commune and its achievements.

The Commune took power against a backdrop of chaos and suffering inflicted on the masses by the Franco-Prussian War and the Prussian Army’s siege of Paris. The Commune lasted less than three months, but in that time valuable lessons were learned on what the workers needed to do in order to transform society from one based on class oppression to one with the potential to abolish class privilege and divisions.

On March 18, 1871, the Central Committee of the Commune had issued a manifesto: “The proletarians of Paris, amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs... They have understood that it is their imperious duty, and their absolute right, to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power.” And they did hold power, for just over two months — enough time to show what workers’ power could do.

In May 1871, shortly after the Commune was crushed by the combined strength of both the Versailles government of France and its adversary, Prussia, Marx wrote that it had demonstrated: “[T]he working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.”

That “centralized state power,” he wrote, “with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature,” had originated “in the days of absolute monarchy, serving nascent middle-class society as a mighty weapon in its struggle against feudalism.” But once the capitalists had replaced the feudal lords and the class struggle between workers and capitalists heated up, the bourgeoisie “now used that state power mercilessly and ostentatiously as the national war engine of capital against labor.”

New political organs of power

The workers of Paris had to create new organs of power. And they did.

They effectively defended Paris from the Prussian siege of the city in the fall of 1870 by establishing a National Guard made up mainly of workers. One of the first decrees of the Commune was for the suppression of the old standing army and its replacement by the armed people.

The Commune was made up of municipal councillors from all the city's wards, chosen by universal suffrage. Their short terms could be revoked if the people weren't satisfied. It was a working body with both legislative and executive powers. All officials, including the police, magistrates and judges, were to be agents of the Commune, could be recalled at any time and were paid the same wages as regular workers.

The Commune forgave all housing rents accumulated from October 1870 to April 1871. If these rents had already been paid, that was to be deducted from future payments. It also stopped all sales of items held in the city's pawnshops.

Having gotten rid of the standing army and police, the Commune then severed the connection between church and state, ending endowments and material privileges for the Catholic Church, still unofficially the state religion. The priests, said Marx, "were sent back to the recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the apostles." The Commune's newspaper, *Mot D'Ordre*, exposed the church's crimes against nuns who had been incarcerated and even tortured by priests. Church control over schools was ended, science triumphed over dogma, and education was made free of charge.

Engels, in his introduction to the German edition of Marx's "The Paris Commune," wrote that on April 6: "[T]he guillotine was fetched out by the 137th battalion of the National Guard, and publicly burnt amid loud popular applause. On April 7, the Commune ordered the triumphal column on the Place Vendome, which had been constructed by Napoleon I after the war of 1789 out of captured cannon, to be overthrown, as it was a symbol of chauvinistic and mutual hatred among the nations. This was accomplished on May 16. It has since been restored.

"On the 16th of April, the Commune issued an order for a statistical account of all factories and workshops which had been closed by the employers, for the elaboration of plans for their management by the workingmen hitherto engaged in them, who were to be formed into cooperative societies for the purpose; and, also, for the federation of these societies into one great cooperative organization. On the 20th it abolished the night work of bakers."

Engels added that the German apologists for capitalism had "lately been thrown once again into wholesome paroxysms by the expression

‘dictatorship of the proletariat.’ Well, gentle sirs, would you like to know how this dictatorship looks? Then look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat.” Yes, it was a dictatorship, but one wielded by the majority, having overthrown the dictatorship of a wealthy few.

Women at the barricades

At a time when women had few rights of any kind, the Commune was strengthened by the formation of a Women’s Union — Union des Femmes — spearheaded by women socialists. They demanded the right of women to take up arms in defense of the revolution and fought heroically on the barricades when the French bourgeoisie, in collusion with the Prussian military that had Paris under siege, attacked the Communards.

The Union des Femmes demanded equal pay for women, the right to divorce, education for girls and recognition of all children as “legitimate.” Widows of killed National Guardsmen were to receive pensions for themselves and their children, whether “legally” married or not. On the day before French troops entered Paris — with Prussia’s assistance — to crush the Commune, the Commune officially declared equal pay for women and men workers.

While women in other “enlightened” capitalist countries were still decades away from winning even the right to vote, the working-class women of Paris were on the cutting edge of fighting for social equality.

Shanghai Commune of 1927

The establishment of workers’ rule in the form of a Commune resurfaced in China in 1927. A search of English-language books on China reveals little about what the workers’ rebellion in Shanghai was able to carry out during its short life, but Agnes Smedley, in her biography of the leading military figure of the Chinese Revolution (“The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh”), gives a detailed account of how the Commune was defeated.

The establishment of the Commune took place during a tempestuous turning point in the long struggle against foreign domination and domestic reaction. Sun Yat-sen, leader of the Kuomintang, which had been a bourgeois nationalist party fighting against the warlords and their colonial patrons, had died. Under its new leader, Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang suddenly broke its alliance with the Communist Party of China and would soon drown the workers’ movement in blood.

The city of Shanghai was notorious for the brutal treatment meted out by the occupying foreign powers, particularly Britain, against the impoverished working class. The racism of the imperialists was so blatant that Chinese of any class were barred from the foreign-controlled sections of that key port city and could be murdered on the spot if they violated the imperialists’ sanctions.

Starting in February of 1927, wrote Agnes Smedley, “[A] special British expeditionary force, together with American, French and Japanese marines, landed at Shanghai, on which Chiang Kai-shek’s forces were converging. On February 19, three days after their landing, the Shanghai workers walked out in the first of three general strikes, all of them organized by Chou En-lai. General Sun Chuan-fang, warlord ruler in the lower Yangtze, struck with everything he had at the first and second general strikes, crushing them and beheading hundreds of workers as a bloody warning to others.

“Undismayed, workers called their third general strike, which paralyzed the city in late March, as Chiang’s forces drew near Shanghai. Spearheaded by 300 men armed with pistols, the workers stormed police stations, garrison headquarters and, finally, the arsenal. With captured arms they fought and drove warlord Sun’s troops from the entire Shanghai area, then sent out a delegation to welcome Chiang’s troops to the city.”

The workers, not realizing that Chiang had betrayed the alliance, expected support from the Nationalist army. Instead, it mowed them down.

Bloodied but not defeated

Smedley quotes Chu Teh as telling her: “By mid-1927, the Great Revolution was finished ... rivers of blood were flowing, generals were changing sides, and there was chaos and confusion everywhere. Chiang Kai-shek was rising to power, drawing old and new warlords to him and playing them off one against the other to keep himself on top. ... Chiang was being propped up by the combined forces of foreign imperialism, the Chinese bourgeoisie, and the feudal landed gentry. ... Chiang was proclaimed by foreigners as a patriot, a statesman, a great administrator, and the one strong man capable of holding China together.”

The Chinese Revolution had suffered a terrible blow, but it was not defeated. The struggle for socialism went on and eventually new leaders — Mao Zedong chief among them — made a strategic retreat to the deep countryside.

Many of the thousands who joined in the 4,000-mile Long March to the hinterlands were workers and intellectuals who had survived the crushing of the Shanghai Commune and other mass struggles in the coastal cities. There they won the support of millions of peasants who joined the rebellion against the hated landlords, bloodsucking usurers and capitalists.

They were confident of the justice of their cause — enough to sustain them for two more hard decades of fighting the landlords, bosses, bankers and Japanese imperialists, until the great day in 1949 when Mao, standing in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, was able to proclaim to the world the establishment of the People’s Republic of China with the words: “The Chinese people have stood up.”

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