

## From DSA to UAW:

# Support to Democrats Is Support to Genocide



Mohammed Dahman/AP, Gpo/EFE (inset)

Gaza Strip, December 7: Zionist devastation of Khan Younis refugee camp. October 18: "Genocide Joe" embraces Netanyahu (inset).

## For Working Class Defense of Palestine!

Over the past two months, millions have expressed outrage at the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians and hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets all over the U.S. to denounce "Genocide Joe." Horrified by the genocide, they desperately want the bombs to stop. But the protests have had no discernible impact, and the situation

for the Palestinians has only gotten worse. The question is: why?

The pro-Palestine movement has been chained to the Democratic Party—the very party responsible for enabling the genocide. Rashida Tlaib, the sole Palestinian-American in Congress and a DSA representative, has put herself at the forefront

of the movement and directed its energy into a campaign to get Biden to broker a "cease-fire." What differences existed in the DSA over the role of their Congressional representatives have been set aside to unite around Tlaib and this liberal movement. The rest of the left has either welcomed this liberal Democratic lead-

ership or left it unopposed. As such, the strategy of the movement has remained one of impotent moral suasion directed at elected officials.

Many believe we just need to expose the depravity of the humanitarian crisis and build a massive movement that

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# Only Death and Defeat with Hamas A Revolutionary Road for Palestinian Liberation

We reprint below an October 10 statement of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Let's get two things straight. First, Palestinians face brutal national oppression and indiscriminate murder by the state of

Israel—they have every right to defend themselves, including through force. Second, the targeted murder of Israeli civilians by Hamas and its allies is a despicable crime which is totally counterproductive for Palestinian liberation. With Gaza now facing starvation and mass murder at the hands of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the international workers movement must urgently oppose this onslaught. But to advance and triumph, the struggle for Palestinian liberation needs a totally

different road from everything on offer, whether Islamism or secular nationalism. What is needed is not empty sentiments of empathy from the cabal of left liberals and fake socialists but a revolutionary road for Palestinian liberation.

### How to Defeat the Zionist State

To defeat one's enemy, one must exploit its weaknesses and neutralize its strengths. The resilience of the state of Israel comes from the fact that the millions of Jewish

people living within its borders see it as the only way to defend themselves in a hostile region. As long as this is the case, Israelis will fight to the death to defend the Zionist state. This was all part of the plan from the time British imperialism decided to back the Zionist project. Today the U.S. and Israel secure their interests in the Middle East by violating the national rights of the Palestinian people and fostering a permanent state of hostility between

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Our comrade Edward Kartsen died suddenly on November 2 at age 70. A longtime cadre of the Spartacist League, Ed was a member of the SL/U.S. Central Committee from 1980 to 2002 and a member of the Political Bureau from 1986 to 1995. As a leader of our party, Ed ran for public office, helped direct our trade-union work and was an important part of our mass labor/black mobilizations against the KKK. He was a tireless fighter for the party to intervene as a conscious factor in black and working-class struggles.

For our memorial meeting in New York City, Ed's family created a video montage about Ed's early life that highlighted his multiple talents. He was such a childhood math whiz that his mother took him to her math classes at Queens College to help her with advanced problems and concepts. He was a talented artist whose family home was his art gallery. The importance of Ed's political work was highlighted with pride. There were also many beautiful scenes of Ed relaxing and having fun with his family and his wife of 20 years, our comrade Diana Kartsen—the founding librarian of the Prometheus Research Library. Ed and the party suffered the pain of her loss from ALS in 2007.

Ed was won to Marxism as a student at the City College of New York and joined the SL's youth organization in 1973. He was one of several black comrades recruited to the party in the early to mid 1970s following the split and demise of the Black Panther Party. Ed became a leader of the Spartacus Youth League and was its spokesman in a public debate on "What Strategy for Black Liberation?" at Harvard University. In polemicizing against black pseudo-nationalism, which despairs of fighting against segregation, Ed argued that black people have strategic power "as part of a racially united proletariat which can overthrow capitalist society, laying the basis for a planned economy within which full racial emancipation is possible. The black working class must play a key role in the American revolution. This is the perspective of *revolutionary integration*" (*Young Spartacus* No. 92, Summer 1981).

In the early 1980s, Ed became a signal maintainer in the NYC subways and was a member of the Trade Union Commission. He was a leader of the Committee for a Fighting TWU, a revolutionary opposition in Transport Workers Union Local 100. The program he ran on for Local 100 president in 1983 called to defend the right to strike and for elected union safety committees to shut down unsafe work, among other things. It linked these and other demands to the need for workers rule:

"FOR LABOR ACTION TO BRING DOWN REAGAN/KOCH! Reagan is after everybody—the Russians, the blacks, the poor, the old and the unions. He's trying to provoke World War III, from El Salvador to Poland to the Middle East to Korea. But you can't fight Reagan with the Democrats."

The platform ended, "Democrats or Republicans—no difference! Same game! We need a workers party to fight for a workers government!"

In 1982, the party ran a campaign to counter Ronald Reagan's escalating anti-Soviet war drive. As Reagan toured Europe, so did Ed, who spoke in six European cities. He brought the perspective of a militant transit worker fighting within the belly of the beast, saying: "The oppression of black people is as fundamental to American capitalism as is the exploitation of labor, imperialist war and their anti-Soviet war drive." Referring to his campaign for TWU Local 100 pres-

# Ed Kartsen



Kartsen Family



1953–2023

ident, Ed said: "I raised the issue that the working class in America must fight politically for power if it is to defend its interests against the capitalist attacks" (WV No. 310, 23 July 1982).

The fascists were so emboldened by Reagan's union-busting, rollback of civil rights, attacks on women and imperialist saber rattling that the KKK tried to march in Washington, D.C., for the first time since the 1920s. Ed played a key role in the November 27, 1982 united-front labor/black mobilization that *stopped* the Klan in the nation's capital, which has a significant black population.

Our condition to move ahead with this demonstration was securing a hard core of support from the organized proletariat in the region. Ed was dispatched to Norfolk, Virginia, to help lead that work. He was effective in talking with workers about how capitalism spawns fascism and why the ruling class protects fascists and uses them to attack labor and blacks. He helped organize a busload of shipyard workers and students for the demonstration as the "Nat Turner Brigade" in honor of the slave rebellion leader who was a hero to black people in the Tidewater area. He also helped obtain endorsements from trade unions representing tens of thousands of black workers, many of whom served in the rally's labor defense squad.

On the day of the planned Klan provocation, the reformists who looked to the state to ban the fascists held a diversionary rally in a distant location to siphon off protesters who truly wanted to stop the KKK. In opposition to this liberalism, Ed was at the lead of the rally that militantly took to the streets in a victory march for labor/black power—a stinging political defeat to the fascists, Reagan and the D.C. cops.

Ed's courage and the karate skills he employed as a frontline defender of our party in numerous demonstrations are famous among his comrades. When political opponents foolishly attempted to exclude the SL from a March 1982 El Salvador demonstration in Washington, D.C., Ed kicked and chopped through their goon squad lines. Comrades also recall more lighthearted occasions when Ed practiced his martial arts moves on the dance floor under a disco ball at the Palladium in NYC.

In 1985, Ed was the Spartacist candidate for Manhattan Borough President. Amid an endless siege of cop terror and mounting racist vigilantism, our campaign statement said: "Everyone has the right to defend himself! Gun control kills blacks! Mobilize labor and minorities to stop racist attacks! For integrated armed workers defense guards, drawn from responsible union men and women!" The following year, Ed helped found the NY Labor/Black League for Social Defense, which grew out of the successful fight, led by the Committee for a Fighting TWU, against the vicious prosecution of transit worker James Grimes for defending himself on the job.

In recent years, the International Communist League went through stormy internal struggle to reaf-

firm that the task of Marxists is to fight for revolutionary leadership of today's struggles in opposition to the liberals and their conciliators. Following the SL/U.S. Conference last year, Ed was quite animated about this turn in the party and, like many of us, he grappled with applying its key lessons.

Most recently, regarding our fight to revitalize and lead the movement against police terror with our campaign to "Open All Police Archives!" Ed wrote: "Everything depends on the relationship of forces which are determined through struggle. Only by waging struggle can we determine the degree the capitalist may be forced to comply to our demand at least partially. Only by successfully extending the class struggle for power can our demand be fully realized."

Ed had a number of great political qualities, but one that stood out is that he never retreated. Even when he made a misstep in his contributions to our struggle, he kept at it, trying to help advance the party's work and its interventions in the working class. His determination to be a part of shaping the party's course is to be saluted and emulated. When he was won to political arguments against his views, he explained in writing why he changed his mind and thereby helped others more fully understand the issue. One example is his letter on the Ukraine war that was published in WV No. 1177 (17 March).

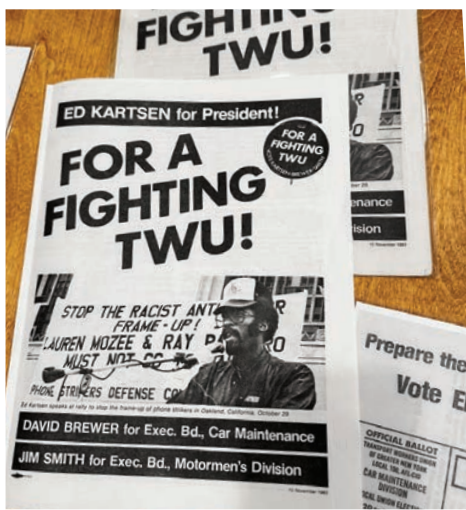
As a comrade and former transit worker said at Ed's memorial meeting, "I saw Ed a few days before he died, and he was focused on our tasks since the struggles of the last international conference, which he attended despite his health situation.

We are a different party because of this conference, and Ed wanted to continue the fight for revolutionary leadership of the working class." Shortly before his death, Ed wrote: "In order to provide the necessary leadership to win struggles, we must adapt the organizational and disciplinary methods of Bolshevism [outlined in] the Organizational Resolution of the Third Congress of the Communist International."

In the last decade, Ed came to work at the PRL. He understood that Leninist parties are built through struggle and liked that the PRL's purpose is to collect, preserve and make available the history of the communist movement. He helped build and maintained the library's website and online catalogue (prl.org). Thanks to Ed's assistance, every book and pamphlet produced by the PRL is available to anyone, anywhere in the world, extending the PRL's reach around the globe.

It was not easy to be one of the leading black comrades in a party that is still predominantly white, in a country where the dangers and pressures of being a black revolutionary are immense and relentless. Ed is the first of the party's black cadre to die at his post. His death is an immense loss and keenly felt.

It was a party tradition for Ed to lead the singing of the Internationale with gusto at party gatherings in his beautiful baritone voice. We will miss his voice, in all respects. We extend our condolences to his mother, sisters and extended family on behalf of all Ed's friends and comrades around the world.



WV Photo

Ed's 1983 campaign flyer for Local 100 president on program of Committee for a Fighting TWU.



WV Photo

Ed running for Manhattan Borough president in 1985 on slogan: "New York City for the Working People!"



# Spartacist/South Africa Refounded

## Introducing

# AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA

The following is reprinted from *Ama-Bolsheviki Amnyama No. 1* (October 2023), published by *Spartacist/South Africa*, section of the ICL.

Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), is proud to launch *Ama-Bolsheviki Amnyama* [The Black Bolshevik]. With this paper, we aim to create a revolutionary tool of intervention to fight for Leninist-Trotskyist leadership of the struggle for the national and social emancipation of the mainly black proletariat and oppressed masses of South Africa. This is a fundamental break with the politics of our previous paper, *Spartacist South Africa*, and the programme upon which the SSA was founded.

As the article below elaborates, that programme was non-revolutionary because its method of “opposing” black nationalism and Stalinism consisted in dismissing the national-democratic revolution as a diversion from socialism. To win the masses away from the nationalists, however, communists must push *forward* the national-democratic and anti-imperialist struggles, showing at every stage that breaking with nationalism is a necessary condition for victory.

This understanding was central to the SSA’s Eighth National Conference, held in late 2023, which refounded the section on the basis of upholding and defending permanent revolution against our previous revision of Trotskyism. This was a continuation and application of central lessons from the re-arming of the ICL (see *Spartacist* No. 68). The article below is an edited version of a motion adopted at the SSA Conference.

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The main task of communists in South Africa is to fight for revolutionary proletarian leadership of the liberation struggle, in counterposition to the black nationalists and in competition with them, by demonstrating to the black masses that only such a leadership is capable of advancing their struggle for national and social emancipation and taking it to victory. This is the key lesson from the anti-apartheid struggle, which was centrally defined by the contradiction that the main social force driving it was the black proletariat and yet it was led throughout by petty-bourgeois nationalists. This leadership, although it

represented no independent class force, was able to restrain and contain the power of the working class at every stage of the struggle. This led in the end to the wretched neo-apartheid betrayal, in which the African National Congress (ANC) tops were co-opted to government office, leaving intact the dominance of white monopoly capital and superexploitation of black labour.

The black nationalists’ reactionary role is rooted in their petty-bourgeois class character. On one side, the brutal and totalitarian character of racial oppression in South Africa, which prevented the formation of a black propertied class of any significance, has led the nationalists to adopt a national-democratic programme that is quite radical and at times to engage in heroic and self-sacrificing struggle, while also seeking the support of the proletariat against white domination through an unprecedented degree of collaboration with its parties and unions. On the other, their intermediate class position and bourgeois aspirations make them mortally fear the prospect of the class struggle sharpening into a fight for black proletarian power, while looking eagerly for an opportunity to kowtow to the imperialist masters.

Utterly incapable of playing an independent role, the nationalists are forced to do a balancing act between the black proletariat on the one hand and the Randlords and imperialism on the other. It was the black proletariat’s own reformist leadership—centrally the South African Communist Party (SACP), including through the trade-union federation COSATU bureaucracy—which played the key role in ensuring its political subordination to the petty-bourgeois nationalists. They did this by pushing a Menshevik programme dictating that participation in the national-democratic struggle necessitates binding the working class in a strategic alliance with the ANC.

The fundamental problem with the SSA’s founding programme, and the central reason why it is a revision of permanent revolution, is that it cedes leadership of the liberation struggle to the black nationalists. It does this by painting the nationalist movement, its programme and strategic aims as purely and simply reactionary, dismissing their progressive sides by referencing their non-proletarian class charac-

ter and rejecting the national-democratic struggle as a class-collaborationist diversion from socialism.

This is a capitulation to imperialist reaction and white domination, doing precisely what the “Theses on the Eastern Question” adopted by the Comintern’s Fourth Congress in 1922 condemned as “opportunism of the worst sort that can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East.” refusing to take part in a struggle against national oppression and imperialist tyranny under the excuse of supposed “defence” of independent class interests. To be sure, we have given this reactionary programme a centrist cover, with lots of declarations about the national liberation struggle being “the strategic motor force for socialist revolution,” calls to “fight for black proletarian power,” etc. These phrases are exposed as completely hollow by our polemics against the SACP, the NUMSA metalworkers union and others on the left on all the burning questions of the national-democratic struggle. Prominent examples include (but are not limited to):

(a) *Rejecting the Freedom Charter.* We have argued that fighting to implement the Freedom Charter limits the proletariat to a bourgeois programme and subordinates it to the nationalists. This is completely sterile and lifeless, and leads to reactionary conclusions. It is true enough that the Freedom Charter, although radical, is a bourgeois-democratic programme. It is *also* true that this programme appeals to the national and social aspirations of the black masses, and that its realisation requires a struggle against the basic interests of the white big bourgeoisie and the imperialists. In fact, it is the *refusal* of would-be revolutionaries (such as the SSA) to fight for the working class to lead a struggle for the Freedom Charter’s implementation that ensures the black

proletariat’s subordination, not only to the nationalists but directly to imperialist finance capital.

This made the SSA stillborn as a revolutionary factor to break the black working class from the ANC’s nationalist popular front (despite our constant denunciations of the Tripartite Alliance and exhortations to break with it). As Trotsky explained, “It is impossible merely to reject the democratic programme; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it.” In sharp counterposition to our old programme and practice, this means communists must wage a constant struggle to show the nationalists’ utter incapacity to realise their own programme, using their vacillations and capitulations in order to fight for the proletariat to take leadership of the national-democratic revolution on the basis of its own independent class-struggle methods and programme.

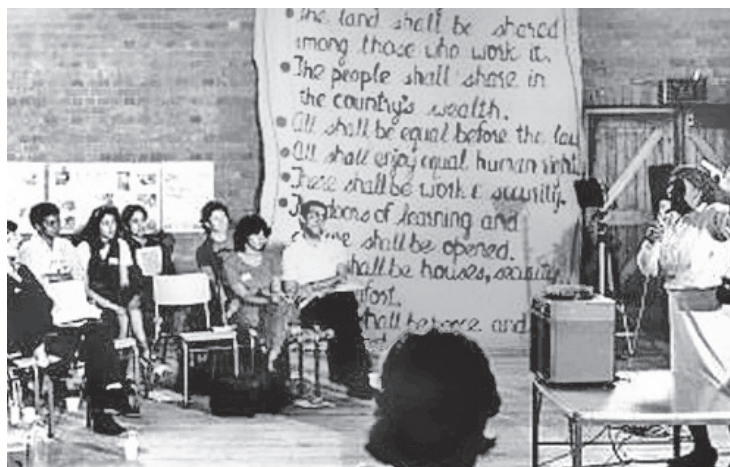
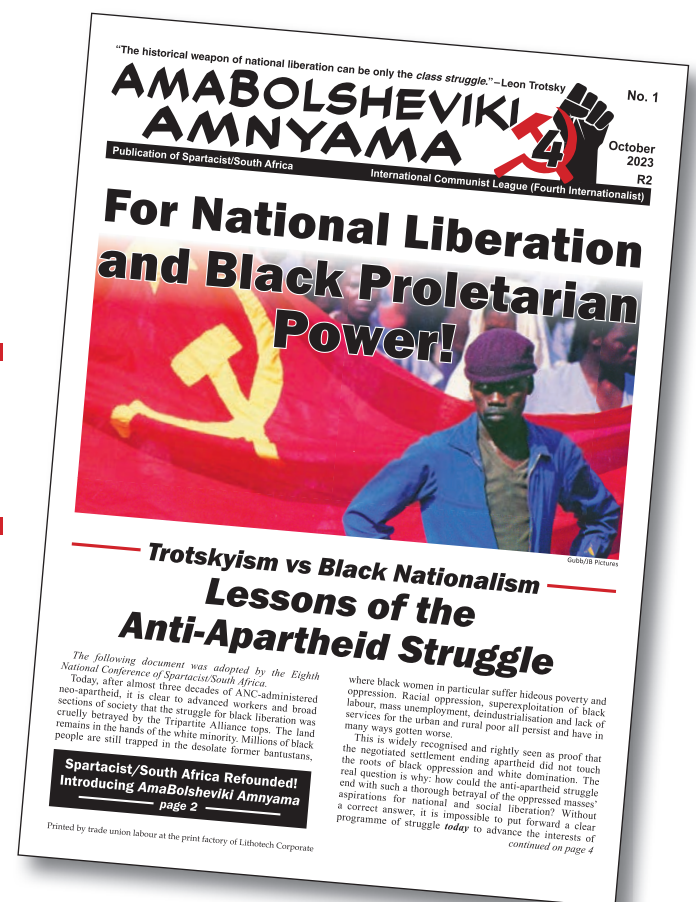
This is the only way to really fight for the political independence of the proletariat from the influence of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists. In particular, communists must show concretely how the objective tasks of the national-democratic revolution go beyond the framework of even the most radical nationalist programmes, simply because a decisive victory of this revolution is incompatible with the rule of world imperialism and the nationalists are incapable of breaking free from the thousands of threads tying them to the imperialists.

(b) *Opposing nation-building.* We have argued that in the epoch of imperialism, nation-building in the neocolonial world can only be reactionary. For example, in *Polemics on the South African Left* (1997) we argued that whereas national assimilation was a progressive development in Europe during the 17th to 19th centuries:

“However, in Africa and Asia today, the weak native bourgeoisies, dependent on and shackled by imperialism, *cannot* transform these neocolonial states into modern industrial societies. Hence ‘nation-building’ becomes synonymous with oppression of national and ethnic groups by the dominant people.”

Yet again we see how the contradictions of the nationalist movement are denied, with abstractly orthodox statements about imperialism and the dependent bourgeoisies wielded to justify utterly reactionary conclusions that align us with the chauvinism of the *actually* “dominant people”—the imperialists and white South Africans. Yes, the nation-state has become reactionary under imperialism. But this applies first of all to the *imperialist* nation-states that dominate the rest of the world. In the neocolonial world, on the other hand, a struggle for national consolidation and development can have a

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no credit



Hadebe/AP

Left: 1955 Kliptown conference unveils Freedom Charter calling for South Africa’s wealth to belong to the people. Right: 2019 EFF election rally voices unfulfilled demands for land and jobs. Nationalist leadership is roadblock to achieving national and social liberation.



# For Palestinian Liberation! For Quebec Liberation!



Serkan Senturk/ZUMA



no credit

Left: Pro-Palestinian demonstration in Montreal, October 14. Right: March in defense of FLQ political prisoners during Quebec's Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. These national liberation struggles must be united into an anti-imperialist movement.

The following is a translation of an article from *République Ouvrière* No. 5 (Autumn 2023), newspaper of the *Ligue trotskyste au Québec et au Canada*.

## RÉPUBLIQUE OUVRIÈRE

While the Israeli army continues its genocidal massacre in Gaza, a virulent racist campaign against supporters of the Palestinian cause is sweeping across Quebec and Canada. From prime minister Trudeau to Quebec premier Legault, university administrations and the corporate media, support for the Palestinians' just cause of national liberation is associated with "terrorism" and militant Islamism. The Québécois masses, who have very extensive experience of national oppression, feel deep revulsion in the face of the massacres in Gaza. But they are also manipulated by the demagogues of the nationalist right, the rags of Quebecor and others to recruit them to the racist campaign, seeking to associate the Palestinian cause with the hypocritical "multiculturalism" of English Canada, anti-Semitism and hatred of women. A loud and clear program linking defense of the Palestinians to the cause of Quebec's national liberation is thus more urgent than ever.

But the response from the left and the organizers of pro-Palestinian demonstrations is only a web of impotent liberalism or, in some cases, an apology for the reactionary *jihaddists* of Hamas (or both at the same time). Demonstrating in English on the streets of Montreal to ask Trudeau to apply the great "Canadian values" on the international scene is a very effective repellent for oppressed Québécois who associate the name of Trudeau with the brutal oppression of Quebec (as in the October Crisis). Furthermore, the declaration of our international organ *Spartacist* explains (see page 1) these strategies only lead to defeat for the Palestinian people!

In any case, as in every past war waged by the Zionist state against the Palestinians, the big imperialist powers (and little ones like Canada) and the UN have made it very clear that they have no concern for the national rights and lives of the Palestinians. We must face reality squarely: the strategy of trying to convince these imperialist leaders to act in the interest of the Palestinians leads nowhere and can only

produce more defeat and demoralization. It is necessary to change course.

### Organize the Anti-Imperialist Struggle

In Quebec and Canada, the only concrete way to help the Palestinians and oppose Zionism is by attacking Canadian imperialism and its big brother, the U.S. In Canada, a major arms exporter, it would, for example, be easy enough for the unions to *stop* all arms shipments to the Zionist state—Canada exports millions of dollars in weapons to Israel. It is Québécois workers and their brothers and sisters in English Canada who manufacture and transport these weapons. They have the power to stop these arms deliveries intended to continue the massacre and national oppression of the Palestinians. This would be a concrete way to fight for the liberation of the Palestinians and also for the liberation of Quebec, because it would also be an attack against the interests of the Canadian bourgeoisie and its bosses in Washington.

But even such elementary actions come up against the pro-capitalist leadership of the labor movement. Several unions have denounced the sending of weapons to Israel by Canada...but are not lifting a finger to mobilize their members in concrete boycott actions. The reason for this is that the opposition of these bureaucrats to the Gaza war is entirely within the scope of what may be "acceptable" to Trudeau and the other imperialists. The trade-union federation CSN, for example, was content to support a declaration begging the Liberal government for "an end to the arms trade with Israel." Without concrete actions, this liberal whining toward the oppressive Canadian state is worse than doing nothing. But it illustrates the need to build an anti-imperialist pole opposed to these labor traitors, one that fights to link concrete actions in defense of the Palestinians—in arms production factories and international transport such as at the port of Montreal and Dorval-Trudeau airport, for example—to a battle

for the national and social liberation of Quebec from the Canadian state and its lackeys among the elites and the nationalist Québécois union leaders!

Even though Canada is a second-tier imperialist power (to be charitable), it is part of the U.S.-dominated global imperialist order. Today the world is more unstable than it has been since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the conflict in the Middle East is only causing more headaches for the American imperialists. The U.S. and its allies need to restore stability to the region at any cost, especially a region abundant in oil. The Zionist state as well as the reactionary and hated Arab regimes are necessary for this stability.

The interests of the international working class are diametrically opposed. The imperialist global order is the enemy of billions of people suffering from national, economic and social oppression around the world. It is in the interest of the international labor movement to bring down

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## Free Oosaka Masaaki Now!

The Partisan Defense Committee issued the following statement on December 14.

We vigorously demand the immediate release of Oosaka Masaaki and demand that all charges against him be dropped. Since 2017, Oosaka has been imprisoned in solitary confinement and denied any visitation rights. He is being tried on multiple fabricated charges, including the killing of a policeman at a demonstration in 1971 against the Okinawa Reversion Agreement, which stipulated the continued presence of U.S. military bases in Okinawa. Oosaka participated in this 1971 demonstration, which itself was met with severe repression by the capitalist state.

Oosaka has been denied a trial by lay judges [selected from the public for certain criminal trials], and the prosecution says that some of their supposed evidence has been lost. Multiple witnesses have recanted, with one stating he was "made to sign a false statement by prose-

cutors and police officers." The state persecution of Oosaka is not only an attack against [the leftist group] Chukaku-ha, of which Oosaka has been a longtime cadre, but is intended to intimidate every worker, leftist and young person who wants to protest the military buildup of Japanese imperialism and the broader attacks on working people. It is in the interests of the workers movement in Japan and internationally, regardless of political differences, to champion Oosaka's freedom. If the workers movement takes up Oosaka's defense, it will strengthen its own struggles against the Japanese imperialist rulers. An injury to one is an injury to all!

To defend comrade Oosaka and more broadly the left against the widespread state repression, it is crucial to create a broad front of the workers movement. For this, it is urgent to break through the pervasive sectarianism on the left, where each group refuses to defend the other.

This week the Partisan Defense Com-



Yomiuri Shimibun

### Oosaka Masaaki

mittee contributed ¥30,000 to Oosaka Masaaki's defense fund, and we encourage every left group and working-class organization to also contribute.

**Free Oosaka Masaaki now!  
Drop all charges!**



# DSA...

(continued from page 1)

appeals to the better nature of Joe Biden and the “international community.” The liberals see Biden’s occasional criticisms of Netanyahu, and his saying that indiscriminate bombing could lose Israel support, as possible evidence that Biden is beginning to see the light. But his comments are just a cover for support to Israel’s war aims.

The U.S. imperialists back the Zionist state—and therefore the genocidal oppression of Palestinians—not out of mere moral failing. Israel is their outpost and key to maintaining their interests and domination in the region. It serves as a bulwark against surrounding hostile regimes and houses a major weapons depot, used recently to supply arms for their deadly adventure in Ukraine and now to murder Palestinians. Especially at a time when the imperialists feel their hegemonic grip on the globe slipping, they are not about to abandon this strategic foothold simply because public opinion is waning.

Due to the strategic interest the American ruling class has in maintaining the Zionist state, the capitalist Democratic Party will *never* be a vehicle for the liberation of Palestine, which requires the *destruction* of the Zionist state. Any movement based on political unity with even the most “left-wing” Democrats can only be an obstacle, not a step forward. One cannot wage the necessary working-class action against the imperialists to force their submission, while also seeking to influence and build unity with their defenders and representatives.

Representatives of capital might be compelled to say nice words about the need for peace, but they are opposed to the action necessary to bring it about. If there is to be any hope of advancing the struggle for Palestine, there must be a break with the Democratic Party and the losing strategy of pro-imperialist pacifism. Instead, the fake socialists and the “progressive” union bureaucrats paralyze the struggle by channeling it within the framework of Democratic Party politics.

## The Impotence of Left Social Democracy

There is a glaring contradiction for DSA members who solidarize with Palestinians and want to stop the genocide, but are part of the very party enabling it. In recent years, various left and so-called “communist” opposition groupings within the DSA have raised and debated throwing out their Zionist and pro-imperialist electeds and breaking from the Democratic Party. But instead of tossing out

the traitors and breaking with the Democrats, they now build unity with them in the name of a “cease-fire.”

The likes of Rashida Tlaib, AOC, Ilhan Omar, Cori Bush and Jamaal Bowman were discredited in the eyes of many activists, having done nothing to stop police brutality or protect abortion. Each has voted for one imperialist measure after another, be it smashing the rail strike last year, pushing anti-China protectionism, approving NATO funding for Ukraine or even supporting military aid to Israel.

But the ranks of the DSA closed behind Tlaib when she was censured by the House as part of the witchhunt against anyone who dares say Palestine should be free “from the river to the sea,” no matter how tepid and pro-imperialist their politics might be. We oppose the government’s lying equation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, and this McCarthyite witchhunt regardless of whom it targets. But even when she runs afoul of the Zionists in her own party, Tlaib is providing the imperialists an invaluable service. Her outspoken criticism of Biden gives false hope that, despite the class nature and

“left” then capitulates to the electeds to build their dead-end liberal movement.

Take the Reform and Revolution caucus inside the DSA, which raises criticisms of the electeds. Now they say, “All of DSA is correctly united” in support of the electeds’ call for a cease-fire. At the same time, Reform and Revolution criticizes “relying on moral appeals to governmental leaders” and appealing to the imperialists of the “international community.” They further argue that “the most effective strategy for winning liberation will come from the building of a mass movement from below of the Palestinian people.” But they find themselves in a bit of a bind, since the only way to mobilize “from below” requires a *break from and fight against* the politics and politicians with which they currently find themselves “united.” While Reform and Revolution is critical of other left caucuses that refused to oppose Hamas’s criminal attacks on Israeli civilians, what unites them all is their unity with “progressive” Democrats.

The Red Labor caucus statement on Palestine sounds left, calling for the DSA to



Probal Rashid/ZUMA

November 24: Pro-Palestinian activists beg imperialists for cease-fire.

hilt is dragging the name of socialism in the mud. Every second spent inside the Democratic Party is a crime, because it undermines the socialist movement for being complicit in deepening the oppression of the Palestinians. Revolutionaries inside the DSA should, right now, (1) fight for a clean break from the Democratic Party of genocide and (2) put forward an anti-imperialist program for Palestinian liberation explicitly counterposed to liberal pacifism.

## Pro-Capitalist Labor Leaders Are Obstacle to Palestine Struggle

A struggle must be waged that threatens to jeopardize the imperialists’ position so much that they might relent for fear of losing more than their significant interests in the region. The only force that has both the social power and objective interest to do this is the organized working class. Workers man the factories that build the weapons, the trucks and trains that transport them and the ports that ship them. They can stop the flow of arms with their hands, Biden be damned. A major strike against the war could cut off the flow of profits and bring the imperialists to their knees. The same American ruling class is responsible for the exploitation and misery here and in Palestine. Workers here have every interest in striking a blow against the shared imperialist class enemy at this crucial juncture. In fact, it is only by actively opposing the ruling class’s depredations abroad that they will ever be able to sufficiently weaken the enemy and advance their own cause.

Unions must act, not ask, to stop arms shipments to Israel. But the trade-union leaders refuse to do so. Why? Because the AFL-CIO is run by people who support imperialism. They have a long, sordid history of support to U.S. war operations internationally, from investing in Israeli bonds to



Bill Clark/AP

December 14: UAW chief Fain and DSA “Squad” members chain youth and workers to pro-Zionist Democratic Party that is enabling genocide of Palestinians.

program of the Democratic Party, perhaps it could change course and be a force for the defense of Palestine. She keeps those outraged by the Democrats’ Palestine policy within the fold.

Tlaib’s and the other DSA electeds’ vocal support for Palestine serves the same purpose as their fork-tongued support to other movements—for black, women’s and gay/trans rights, etc. It goes just far enough to gain broad popularity but will never go beyond what is acceptable to the Democratic Party. And, just as qualitatively improving the lives of workers and the oppressed masses in the U.S. is impossible while respecting the limits of the capitalist parties, so too is advancing the cause of the Palestinian people. The “left” of the DSA might be angry that the electeds capitulate to the “estab-

lishment” Democrats, but the “left” then capitulates to the electeds to build their dead-end liberal movement. Take the Reform and Revolution caucus inside the DSA, which raises criticisms of the electeds. Now they say, “All of DSA is correctly united” in support of the electeds’ call for a cease-fire. At the same time, Reform and Revolution criticizes “relying on moral appeals to governmental leaders” and appealing to the imperialists of the “international community.” They further argue that “the most effective strategy for winning liberation will come from the building of a mass movement from below of the Palestinian people.” But they find themselves in a bit of a bind, since the only way to mobilize “from below” requires a *break from and fight against* the politics and politicians with which they currently find themselves “united.” While Reform and Revolution is critical of other left caucuses that refused to oppose Hamas’s criminal attacks on Israeli civilians, what unites them all is their unity with “progressive” Democrats.

The Red Labor caucus statement on Palestine sounds left, calling for the DSA to

## Partisan Defense Committee

# Hands Off Pro-Palestinian Demonstrators!

The statement below was issued by the Partisan Defense Committee on October 31.

On October 26 the Partisan Defense Committee sent protest letters demanding the dropping of charges against scores of pro-Palestinian demonstrators in New York City and we urge others to do the same.

The next day over 300 were arrested at NYC’s Grand Central Station—many more are sure to follow. There has been widespread repression against pro-Palestine demonstrations in cities in the U.S. and around the globe, and a frenzied McCarthyite backlash against pro-Palestinian activism around the country, especially on campuses. It is all part of a vile campaign to brand those showing solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people as being anti-Semitic or even terrorists. These acts of repression represent a threat to anyone oppos-

ing the Israeli massacre of Palestinians, which is backed to the hilt by the U.S. and other imperialist powers.

The organized working class is the only force that can really defeat the murderous policy of the imperialists and take a real step towards stopping the current massacre. Trade unions in the U.S., from railway to longshore workers, must take concrete action to stop arms shipments to Israel. The unions must also take actions against the repression of pro-Palestinian groups and demonstrations. These actions must be prepared and carried out against support of genocide by the U.S. imperialist government.

The major impediment to such workers action in the U.S. is the pro-imperialist trade-union bureaucracy who either join the bosses in their “stand with Israel” chorus or who seek to pressure the White House to negoti-

ate a “cease-fire.” But a cease-fire brokered by the imperialists solves nothing: it means the continuation of Palestinian oppression and the conditions that led to this crisis to begin with.

Even worse are those union officials who silence and purge members who actively oppose the Israeli atrocities. At least two union activists have recently lost their jobs for speaking out in defense of Palestinians. Tania Singh was terminated from her job as a union organizer for her pro-Palestinian stance. Similarly, Kooper Caraway, a former Service Employees International Union official in Connecticut, was forced to resign his post for speaking in solidarity with Gaza at a rally in New Haven. Union workers must oppose this political censorship and witchhunting. We demand that Singh and Caraway be reinstated in their positions with full back pay!



Kena Betancur/AFP

October 21: Anti-Zionist protester arrested by NYPD.



# German Spartacists Defy Ban, Defend Palestinians

The German state has imposed a widespread ban on any demonstration in defense of Palestinians. The national parliament, including representatives of the Left Party and the Social Democratic Party, voted to ban Palestinian organizations like the Palestinian prisoner defense group Samidoun. In the face of this pro-Zionist witchhunt, our comrades of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands held a successful action on October 22 in defense of Samidoun. Below is a translation of their statement issued immediately following the protest.

\* \* \*

This afternoon, comrades of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands seized the initiative and mounted protest actions at Hermannplatz in Berlin-Neukölln and at Rio-Reiser-Platz in Kreuzberg, standing up in defense of Gaza and against the ban on Samidoun and all state repression against Palestinian organizations.

While the bourgeoisie, backed by the leaders of the DGB trade-union federation, SPD and Left Party, was celebrating its support for Israel and its anti-Palestinian attacks at Brandenburg Gate today, the planned pro-Palestine demonstration on Potsdamer Platz was banned again. This state repression in support of the mass murder of Palestinians must



Spartakist photos

**October 22: Police menace SpAD demonstration at Hermannplatz in Berlin-Neukölln. The left rejected united-front call (center).**

be answered by actions of the left and workers—and that is what we did. Our first protest at Hermannplatz was stopped by the police, so we continued it in Kreuzberg.

So far, every left group has rejected our proposal for a united front in defense of the Palestinians, thus contributing to the continued isolation and weakness of the movement for the Palestinians. The socialist left limits its solidarity with the Palestinians to fine words and oh-so-deep sympathy and has so far refused to join us in action to defend Samidoun. But liberal phrases about the suffering of the Palestinian people will never win liberation!

We must take action to defeat the anti-Palestinian repression and move forward in the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinians. Our protest today was a small but very important action. It must be the start of a struggle to build a broad front of the left and labor movement against state repression and in defense of the Palestinians. We invite every leftist and fighter for the Palestinian cause to contact us and fight alongside us for the following demands:

**Hands off Samidoun!  
Immediate release of all pro-Palestine activists—  
Drop all charges!  
Defend Gaza!**

supporting the NATO/Ukraine war against Russia. Recently, they have squashed every ostensibly pro-Palestine motion passed by their regional labor councils.

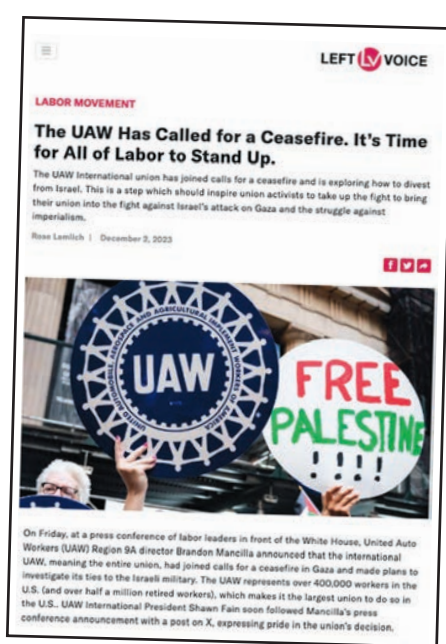
While it's easy to criticize the egregiously pro-imperialist and Zionist leaders of the AFL-CIO, many look to the layer of militant-talking bureaucrats recently in the limelight, like UAW head Shawn Fain. However, the program of these union officials is no better. They will not lead working-class action in defense of Palestine. The “progressive” bureaucrats—many allied with the DSA—refuse to violate the bounds of capitalist acceptability and do their part to ensure there is no break with the imperialist butchers of the Democratic Party. No matter how militant, any pro-capitalist labor misleader who sees Biden as an ally or a “lesser evil” will always refuse to take the necessary action to land a serious blow against the politicians and the system they support.

A prime example is the recent UAW strike, which coincided with the start of the war. We intervened in the strike and made the point that “the main thing that workers can do to fight for Palestinian liberation is to win this strike! A major blow against the capitalist rulers here will throw a wrench in the plans of the bosses and their government, who are destroying everything from Detroit to Ukraine to Gaza.” But the bombs started dropping, and Fain sent everyone back to work. While Gaza was burning and Biden was bear-hugging Netanyahu, POTUS posted a video on Twitter with Fain and Biden patting each other on the back for doing “a hell of a job.”

Shortly after, UAW official Brandon Mancilla—in solidarity with the DSA electeds on a hunger strike for a cease-fire—announced that the union was signing a liberal pacifist resolution that does *nothing* but build illusions that Biden and the Democrats can be a force for “peace.” The left lauds the pacifist popular front around the “cease-fire” demand because it looks like labor and activists are doing something. But this political bloc of socialists and working-class leaders with the liberal wing of the ruling class *prevents* any action against U.S. imperialism and Israel's current onslaught.

## The Centrist Vacillators

Socialist groups like Left Voice talk about the need for labor action against the war. Left Voice correctly states that “imperialism is incompatible with the interests of the working class,” but they praise the UAW's signing of the pacifist pro-imperialist cease-fire resolution as a “progressive move” that “should inspire union activists.” The task of Marxists



**Instead of fighting for communist leadership of pro-Palestine movement, Left Voice praises UAW's liberal pro-imperialist cease-fire resolution.**

right now is to win the workers movement to the cause of Palestinian liberation and break it from all supporters of imperialism. Left Voice says that it is necessary to challenge the agents of capitalism in the labor movement. But you can't expose the pro-Democratic Party labor misleaders who are an obstacle to any actual working-class defense of Palestine and build up their credentials, however critically, at the same time.

A fundamental clash with the interests of capital is required to defend Palestine, not to mention address the problems of

poverty, black and women's oppression, etc. But the current crop of union leaders, including the left-talking ones, has no such perspective. Left Voice knows Shawn Fain supports Biden. Their calls for workers action and to break with the Democrats are in contradiction with their promotion of the imperialists' labor agents like Fain and the pacifist cease-fire movement. It is urgent to fight for communist leadership of the pro-Palestine movement. Since Left Voice doesn't do this, they just leave it under liberal leadership.

For its part, the Socialist Revolution/IMT group, despite criticizing the pacifist “cease-fire” demand, also refuses to forthrightly oppose liberal leadership. In one of their articles, they even pose the question: “What should communists be communicating to the movement at this moment?” They make a number of true points about the nature of U.S. imperialism, the social power of the working class to stop arm shipments to Israel “if we organize and unite” and the need for a “mass communist party.” What they omit is the crucial task of revolutionaries right now: to break the pro-Palestine movement from any kind of alliance with the Democratic Party.

In another article, Socialist Revolution might declare, “We must be clear that the pro-Israel Democratic Party offers absolutely no way out of this disaster,” but only after giving “credit” to Tlaib for having “put forth a more respectable position throughout this affair.” It is one thing to denounce Biden or criticize AOC for her support to the Iron Dome, it is another to draw a hard line against the Democratic Party politicians who people actually have the most illusions in, like Tlaib. They claim

to be for “strike action to shut down the war machine” but refuse to take on the union bureaucracy over the war—and thus are simply duping the working class. To build the “mass communist party” that they say we need or to carry out the anti-imperialist actions they advocate, one must expose the treachery of the existing liberal leadership.

## For Class War to Stop the Massacre!

When we say that we are against an imperialist-brokered cease-fire, a common response that we get from leftists is: Does that mean you are for the continuation of the bombing? The answer is obviously no. The real question is *how* to stop the massacre. Support to the liberal cease-fire movement is not a step toward stopping the bombs, but an obstacle. The only way to stop the onslaught against the Palestinians right now is to wage class war from the U.S. to Israel and Palestine. This is integral to advancing the fight for Palestinian liberation.

It is desperately necessary for the pro-Palestinian movement to change course. Socialists must fight inside the workers movement, as well as inside the movement for Palestinian liberation, for a break with the Democratic Party of genocide. This is the precondition to building an anti-imperialist pole and a new union leadership that will take the struggle forward. If the intervention of socialists at this critical moment is not directed at making the trade-union and Palestinian movements revolutionary—at combating and replacing their pro-imperialist and liberal Democratic Party leaders with Marxists—then it is not socialist! ■

## Palestinian Liberation...

(continued from page 2)

Party in Britain to the Communist Party of Greece have swept under the rug the criminal targeting of civilians by Hamas in the name of Palestine's right to defend itself.

Not only does this drag the name of communism in the mud by associating it with the crimes of Hamas, but it also accepts that the Palestinian people will continue to be led by these fanatic Islamist butchers. They know full well that Hamas will not bring about Palestinian freedom yet remain silent on the issue out of empty liberal solidarity.

The entire Hamas strategy is to pro-

voke a strong Israeli reaction, effectively strapping a suicide vest on all of Gaza. It is necessary to unequivocally stand in defense of Gaza against the bloody retaliation by Israel while at the same time opposing this disastrous strategy.

Some leftists such as Left Voice, U.S. section of the Trotskyist Fraction, whisper at the end of their article that “we are on the side of the resistance of the Palestinian people, without suggesting that we share the strategy and methods of Hamas, whose goal is to establish a theocratic state” (7 October). That said, nothing they write is aimed at breaking the hold of nationalism and Islamism on the Palestinian liberation struggle. They like most of the left take on the role of liberal cheerleaders, who cannot be critical of oppressed groups even as they are being led toward the abyss.

The role of the pseudo-socialist left is all the more despicable given the Palestinians' desperate and ever-growing need of a viable road for liberation. Events are rapidly moving toward a level of carnage and reaction unseen in decades. If socialists do not fight for a revolutionary solution to the conflict, the growing desperation of the Palestinian people will be channeled once more into the arms of Islamist reaction while Jews are pushed deeper into the arms of Zionism. This carnival of reaction will not stay within the borders of Israel and Palestine but will spread far and wide over the Middle East and the world. It is the urgent task of socialists to break this cycle.

**Defend Gaza!  
Israel out of the West Bank and Golan Heights!  
For a socialist federation of the Middle East!** ■



# Exchange Between the ICL and the LFI

## The LFI Chooses Sectarianism

The ICL and the League for the Fourth International (whose U.S. affiliate is the Internationalist Group) will hold a debate on Saturday, January 13, titled “The Fight for the Fourth International Today.” We reprint below the contents of a November 3 Spartacist supplement as useful background.

We publish below recent correspondence between the League for the Fourth International (LFI), known in the U.S. as the Internationalist Group, and the International Communist League, which was first published on their website.

In accordance with the mandate of our recent international conference, the ICL reached out to the LFI proposing to hold leadership discussions between our two organizations and to explore possibilities of common work in defense of basic interests of the workers movement (see “The ICL’s Post-Soviet Revisionism,” *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 68, September 2023).

Since it is the ICL that provoked the unprincipled and shallow split which led to the creation of the LFI, we consider it our responsibility to do everything we can to bring clarity to what has been a confusing and disorienting rivalry. We are determined to reduce organizational and personalist tensions between our two parties and to engage in thorough and clarifying debates. As the correspondence shows, the LFI showed no interest at all in this. The LFI responded to our extended hand with a series of denunciations and accusations. The one redeeming part of their response is their proposal to hold a debate, which we have gladly accepted. It is planned for January 13 in New York.

We are confident that the careful reader will see through the demagogic and false accusations made by comrade Norden in his responses to the ICL. That said, the character of these responses also makes it easy to lose track of the substance of the political questions in dispute. For the sake of clarity, we will elaborate on three key points.

### Founding of the IG and Fights in the 1990s

The correspondence touches on various fights that occurred in the mid to late 1990s in the ICL. In its letters, the LFI argues that our reassessment of these fights is not genuine and not complete. We have already conceded that these fights were unprincipled and have committed to investigating in more detail those that directly precipitated the split. But this dispute is secondary. With their accusations and request that we deepen our review, the LFI buries what has long been recognized by both organizations as the main difference: the question of revolutionary leadership.

The main argument in *Spartacist* No. 68 is that both the LFI and ICL have had a fundamentally wrong understanding of the tasks of communists following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both denied the overwhelming dominance of U.S. imperialism in the post-Soviet world and the concomitant hold of liberalism in the workers movement. This made our respective proclamations for revolutionary leadership entirely hollow because they were not rooted in material reality and not defined in opposition to the dominant trends binding the workers movement to the ruling class.

Given that comrade Norden’s recent letters defend every inch of the LFI’s record, we think it is fair to assume that he also

upholds the blatantly wrong tasks and perspectives both parties shared following the collapse of the USSR. These were codified in the 1992 ICL International Conference document, adopted four years before the IG’s founding cadre were expelled. This is not merely a historical question. It is impossible to provide revolutionary leadership today without understanding that the post-Soviet order was defined by the liberal triumphalism of U.S. imperialist hegemony and that the current period is defined by the breakdown of that order. Today the LFI has no coherent explanation of what is happening in the world

an independent working-class perspective that runs through all our differences, whether over the Ukraine war, China, the black question, social democracy or the national question. It is these questions that we are eager to discuss and debate with the LFI.

### On United Fronts, Blocs and Boiling Water

In response to our proposal for a private leadership discussion and “to engage as much as possible in common work when appropriate,” the LFI essentially accuses us of wanting to form an unprincipled

• In Germany, the ICL called for a united front to throw NATO supporters out of the workers movement, a basic measure of sanitation as well as a tactic to expose the bankruptcy of pacifism. The IG denounced this while proposing nothing else to build a revolutionary pole amid the crisis shaking the left over the Ukraine war.

• In Australia, the ICL together with the Bolshevik-Leninist group applied a similar tactic toward the Labor Party, calling to throw the pro-AUKUS wing out of the party. We also advocate pursuing this fight within the Labor Party to exacerbate the conflict between its working-class base and its leadership. The LFI once again denounced our call while proposing nothing to channel the deep polarization over AUKUS in a revolutionary direction.

• In the ICL’s 11 October letter to the LFI, we stated that “we think that we can possibly find a principled basis to work with you on defense work against political repression.” With brutal repression against the left everywhere and much more on the horizon, there is a real need for common action in the workers movement. But the LFI simply ignored our proposal, probably dismissing it as some kind of ploy to talk to them.

• In the U.S., the fight against police brutality and black oppression is at an obvious impasse and there is widespread demoralization among activists. In this context we are building a campaign to “open police archives” to revitalize the struggle and drive a wedge between militant opponents of police brutality and the liberal leadership of that struggle. Once more the IG denounces us but are themselves unable to chart any path forward beyond proclaiming that socialist revolution will bring justice.

The worst example is the most recent one. In the context of the intense repression against pro-Palestine demonstrations and organizations in Germany, we appealed to the Internationalistische Gruppe (IG) and the rest of the left to take a stand in the form of a united-front forum built on the following three points:

- 1) Defend Gaza!
- 2) Down with anti-Palestinian state repression in Germany!
- 3) Hands off Samidoun [Palestinian prisoner defense group]! Down with the banning of all Palestinian organizations!

The IG declared *agreement with our demands*, stated they would attend our forum *but refused* to support it and join us in any way *to fight* for these demands. While our comrades have faced police harassment, with two venues being canceled and a wall of hostility from German social democracy, the LFI did like the rest of the German left, proclaiming solidarity with the Palestinians but in practice doing nothing to confront the social democratic-led witchhunt. Meanwhile, even a small bloc of our two organizations could have put pressure on the rest of the left to *do something* in defense of the repressed Palestinian groups. This latest example shows the utter bankruptcy of the LFI. For them, drawing a hard organizational line against us is more important than taking up a struggle which is of the utmost urgency and *which they claim to agree with*. Comrade Norden is justified in still being outraged by the actions of the ICL in Brazil in 1996, but what about now? Who is pulling their hands out of the boiling water of the class struggle today?

**DEBATE**

**THE FIGHT FOR THE  
4th INTERNATIONAL  
TODAY**

**Includes a debate on  
Permanent Revolution**

**International Communist League  
— VS —  
League for the Fourth International**

**Moderated by Bryan Palmer**

**Saturday, January 13, 2024 - 1pm**

**Adler Hall, New York Society for Ethical Culture  
2 West 64th Street (corner of Central Park West)**

**\$10 General Admission - \$2 for Low Income**

(agitating about World War III doesn’t count) and even less of the task of communists. The LFI is navigating without a compass, reacting to the erratic moods of the New York petty bourgeoisie, hailing the Communist Party of China’s lockdowns one day and tailing BLM the next.

In contrast, the document “The Breakdown of U.S. Hegemony & the Struggle for Workers Power,” also published in *Spartacist* No. 68, provides a clear materialist explanation of the world situation and a critique of the Marxist left since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, in a world increasingly defined by sharp polarization between political forces representing the liberal status quo and those seeking to upend it, the ICL is fighting to provide a working-class path that cuts against all dead ends on offer. It is the inability of the LFI to put forward such

bloc with them. They rejected the former, basically arguing that the simple fact of sitting down for discussion with us would be unprincipled. This is absurd and says much more about the LFI’s defensiveness than about our supposed opportunism.

They also refuse our proposal to explore common action to defend the basic interests of the workers movement. To justify this, comrade Norden makes a hair-splitting distinction between a bloc and a united front, totally abstracted from any specific proposal. What matters fundamentally is not whether an agreement for common action is for a single event or a sustained campaign; what matters is that the terms of the agreement are principled. The truth is that the LFI has shown it does not want to engage in any kind of common action with us—whether in the form of a “bloc” or a united front.







favoring Creole at the expense of French be opposed by the LFI?

\* \* \*

All in all, the sentences from comrade Norden's letters that most clearly reveal the political method and program of the LFI are probably the following:

"In Mexico, you essentially prettify the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador as anti-imperialist. A question: do you advocate that the 'anti-imperialist united front' in Mexico include AMLO's party, MORENA? Of course, everyone in Mexico knows that AMLO is acting as a border guard for yanqui imperialism."[!]

To Norden's question, our answer is yes. Trotsky wrote that in the struggle against Hitler he was ready to make a united front with the devil and his grandmother ("The United Front for Defense," February 1933, printed in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*). So clearly, if it were posed, we would make a united front with AMLO or even the right-wing PAN in struggle against U.S. imperialism. The LFI wouldn't...?

But more importantly, these few sentences reveal just how disconnected the LFI is from the actual tasks of revolutionaries. AMLO is one of the most popular heads of state in the world, precisely because he is considered a break from previous presidents who were simply yes-men for U.S. imperialism. Half a million people attended his rally celebrating the 1938 nationalization of Mexican oil. To simply brush off the anti-imperialist illusions he generates is not only delusional but profoundly disarming. After all, if "everyone in Mexico knows that AMLO is acting as a border guard for yanqui imperialism," then there are no illusions to break. The result is simply to leave the hold of populist anti-imperialism totally unchallenged.

A similar methodology can be seen throughout the LFI press. Bombastic statements and orthodox jingles are used as talismans against capitulation while the misleadership of the working class is criticized from the left but not challenged fundamentally. There is a lot of huffing and puffing from the LFI, but you will not get an answer to the simple question: what is to be done? The ICL is a very small organization, but we believe we can provide answers for many of the key questions facing the international proletariat. We encourage our readers and supporters to attend the upcoming debate, where we will do our best to lay out our perspective to reforge the Fourth International in today's world.

### Letter to the IG/League for the Fourth International

2 September 2023

Dear comrades,

The recent international conference of the ICL has reoriented our party on fundamental questions (see *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 68, September 2023). This includes a review of our differences with the IG/LFI. As a result, the conference tasked the ICL to conduct "serious political clarification and debate with the IG" and to engage "as much as possible in common action to defend the basic interests of the workers movement." In line with this, we propose opening formal discussion between our organizations.

On several important counts, the International Conference recognized that the criticisms made by the IG of the ICL were correct. The fights that led to the expulsions of the IG's founding members from the ICL were characterized as unprincipled, as was the break in relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. We are currently investigating the disciplinary measures taken at the time. The conference also described the central critique of the ICL made by the IG at its founding as "essentially correct"—that is, that the ICL had reduced the task of Marxists in the post-Soviet period to "keeping the flame alive against attempts to squelch it."

However, when it comes to the courses taken by our two organizations in the

post-Soviet period, we believe that overall they were qualitatively similar. When it came to orienting the working class, neither organization had a correct perspective because neither had as its central objective to break the hold of liberalism on the workers movement—the dominant ideology of the period and the main ideological brake on the struggles of workers and the oppressed.

Our proposal to open discussion is not to paper over our differences. Rather, it

There can be no excuse for disunity in the face of such attacks. Common fronts in defense work would be a modest but important contribution to advancing the interests of the workers movement and would put pressure on the rest of the left to do the same.

We expect that this letter will be met with a certain amount of skepticism on your part. As a first step, we simply propose to hold a private meeting between leadership delegations of both our organi-

1) You state that "the fights that led to the expulsions of the IG's founding members from the ICL" were "unprincipled." Yes they were. The question is, what specifically about them does the ICL now characterize as unprincipled?

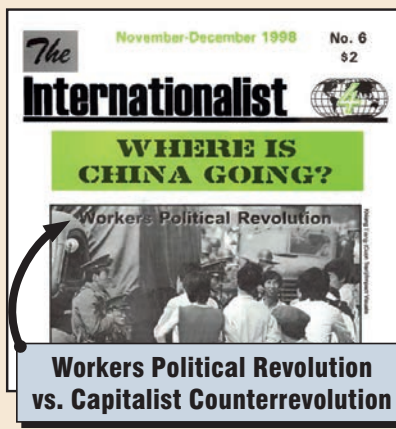
2) You state that you are "investigating the disciplinary measures taken at the time." Does this investigation include the travesty of a "trial" of a comrade centered on outright fabrications, and the preparation of a second frame-up trial shortly thereafter? Does it include the flagrantly chauvinist campaign against North African comrades who opposed the ICL leaders' abandoning the commitment to publish an exile publication? Or coming clean about the unspeakable witch hunt by the ICL in 1999 against the leaders of its Italian section?

3) Your letter now also characterizes as unprincipled the ICL's June 1996 "break in relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil," and *Spartacist* calls for the ICL to carry out "a reckoning" on this unilateral break. But, again, what exactly about its actions does the ICL now characterize as unprincipled? The fact that, at the height of the heated struggle the Brazilian comrades were waging to oust *guardas* (police) from the municipal workers union in the steel city of Volta Redonda, the ICL stabbed the struggle in the back? It called to "pull our hands out of that boiling water" and demanded that the comrades resign their union positions, quit the union and leave town, and then, when they refused this shameful demand, the ICL broke relations. To cover its tracks, it launched a smear campaign which went so far as to brand the black Trotskyist steel workers as "dangerous hustlers," and sought to sabotage their international defense campaign, calling it a "cynical sham" after the courts ordered the "search and seizure" of all copies of a leaflet their Comitê de Luta Classista issued, based on a suit demanding a list of all CLC members.<sup>4</sup>

The recent *Spartacist* claims that the ICL and IG engaged in "almost three decades" of "mutual slander." For the record, the IG/LFI never slandered the ICL. Our critiques have been scrupulously political and always based on fact. In contrast, the ICL unleashed a decades-long torrent of slanders against us, seeking to brand the IG as "anti-American" at the height of post-9/11 hysteria for our call to defeat U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan,<sup>5</sup> "provocateur"-baiting,<sup>6</sup> and much more. You mention in passing (in a parenthesis) the "2010 Haiti betrayal," without saying what that was—the ICL's scandalous support for U.S. occupation troops—and its refusal to fight for independence for Puerto Rico, but not that it denounced the LFI for our principled opposition to imperialist domination. And as for the latter-day ICL's chauvinist line on refugees,<sup>7</sup> the word does not even appear in the latest issue of *Spartacist*.

Proceeding to the proposal put forward in your 2 September letter, you call for "opening formal discussion between our organizations," to "engage as much as pos-

## What a Bad Split Looks Like



is intended to raise the level of political discussion between our organizations, starting from the central questions of revolutionary strategy for the current period. We are hopeful that engaging in such discussions can bring our organizations closer. The split provoked by the expulsion of your founding members from our party has been detrimental to the workers movement. The relations between our two organizations have been extremely hostile, while on most questions the political differences have been shallow at best. We believe there has always been—and remains—a significant overlap in the views of our memberships. If we are to stay divided in two rival organizations, it is our respective duty to ensure that this division is based on crystal-clear differences over the most important questions facing the workers movement today.

The world is rapidly changing and the fight to reforge the Fourth International is posed with burning urgency. Events are shaking the left. Theoretical and political debates among the most advanced layers of the workers movement are crucial to reforging the Fourth International. But fundamentally it is fighting to provide revolutionary leadership in great events that will be decisive. Doctrinal differences within the left can and will be overcome through common struggle.

In this sense, it is essential to engage as much as possible in common work when appropriate. The capitalists are keenly aware of the precariousness of their current situation; their response is to crack down on dissent and target minorities.

zations. The purpose would be to have an initial exchange of views and to consider options for further discussion. We place no preconditions on this meeting. On our part, we commit to seeking the utmost political clarity as opposed to the demagoguery and slander that have characterized our relations thus far.

We look forward to your answer.

Communist greetings,

Perrault

For the International Secretariat of the ICL

### Letter to the International Communist League

27 September 2023

Dear comrade Perrault,

We have received your 2 September letter to the IG/League for the Fourth International and analyzed it in conjunction with the issue of *Spartacist* (No. 68, September 2023) that you refer to, containing documents from the ICL's eighth international conference. Most fundamental for us as Trotskyists are the programmatic issues. It is these that guide our response to your proposal for "opening formal discussion between our organizations," which we will address below.

In your letter, you write: "On several important counts, the International Conference recognized that the criticisms made by the IG of the ICL were correct." Several passages in the recent *Spartacist* make similar statements. In the interest of basic political housekeeping, we must pose some necessary questions.

1 See our July 1996 pamphlet *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*.

2 See "'Chauvinist Hydra' Devours SL/ICL: Some History Ex-Trotskyists Would Like to Keep Hidden," *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

3 See *Back to Trotskyism!* (May 2016).

4 See "ICL Seeks to Sabotage Defense of Brazilian Trotskyist Workers," reproduced in *Responses to ICL Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists* (2010) and *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (1997). Also, "Army Death Squad Targeted Brazilian Worker Militants," *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000.

5 See "ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, 'Anti-American' Baiting the Internationalist Group," *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

6 See the denunciation of this smear by Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's grandson, in "Poisonous 'Provocateur' Baiting from the SL," *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003.

7 See "Strange Encounters with the ICL," *The Internationalist* No. 44 (Summer 1016 [sic]); "Spartacist League vs. Refugees," *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017; "The ICL vs. Asylum for Refugees in Quebec," *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019.



sible in common work,” and, “as a first step,” to “hold a private meeting between leadership delegations of both our organizations,” in order to “have an initial exchange of views and consider options for further discussions.” There is *no principled programmatic basis* for such formal discussions, private leadership meetings or common work. This is, of course, distinct from united-front actions (as opposed to the political bloc you are effectively proposing) when the class struggle calls for it, which we have participated in (and often initiated) with a range of political tendencies, including the ICL.

Such discussions, common work, etc. are the kind of steps that left organizations undertake when there is some process of political convergence. Some might think that since the LFI upholds the programmatic heritage of the Spartacist tendency when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, and you still call your international organ *Spartacist* (for how long?), that might indicate a degree of commonality. But under its new leadership, and for years before then, the ICL has turned its back on and increasingly formally renounced one fundamental Spartacist position after another. You claim that “the courses taken by our two organizations in the post-Soviet period...were qualitatively similar.” In reality, the political differences have continued to grow since the 1996-98 expulsions, and are rapidly accelerating.

You state in the current issue of *Spartacist* that the Spartacist tendency was supposedly “Deformed at Birth” on the question of permanent revolution—a central issue for Trotskyists. To advance this claim, the ICL (new epoch) performs a sleight-of-hand, seeking to turn Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution into a stagist program, in which the first stage is national liberation, even under capitalism, and even in the imperialist countries. On the contrary, Trotsky emphasized that in the present epoch, the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries can only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry.<sup>8</sup>

In the same vein, you now embrace the “Anti-Imperialist United Front” which in practice means political blocs with the bourgeoisie in colonial and semi-colonial countries, the formula used to subordinate the Chinese Communist Party to Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang, leading to the 1927 Shanghai Massacre. In line with that you vilify the Spartacist tendency’s record on Iran, when we warned against the catastrophic consequences of tailing the mullah-led “Islamic Revolution” as some kind of anti-imperialist movement, which led to the jailing and execution of thousands of leftists. In Mexico, you essentially prettify the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador as anti-imperialist. A question: do you advocate that the “anti-imperialist united front” in Mexico include AMLO’s party, MORENA? Of course, everyone in Mexico knows that AMLO is acting as a border guard for *yanqui* imperialism.

“Nation-building” bourgeois nationalism is the political motor force of the ICL’s escalation of its abandonment of the Spartacist programmatic heritage, publicly announced with the 2017 “Hydra” document. A key aspect of “Hydra” was its embrace of anti-democratic language laws in Quebec and Catalonia, which means repudiating Lenin’s crucial position against compulsory official languages.<sup>9</sup> The ICL’s new, blatantly anti-Leninist line on the national question paved the way for a blizzard of further revisions, predictably now leading to repudiating the Spartacist tendency’s crucial position that in the case of interpenetrated peoples (such as



Mexico City, March 18: President López Obrador addresses 500,000-strong rally in support of 85th anniversary of expropriation of oil industry from imperialists. LFI claims that everyone in crowd knows that he is stooge of *yanqui* imperialism, dismissing need to break hold of bourgeois populism.

in Palestine), a just and equitable solution to competing national rights is only possible through establishing workers rule.<sup>10</sup> This is essential to the struggle to defend the Palestinian people and overthrow the Zionist regime, for example. Today the ICL’s embrace of nationalism is extended, both retrospectively (on the USSR, Poland and the other East European deformed workers states) and currently on China.

The basic disagreements between us not only concern what you call “abstract doctrine” but also burning issues of the present day. Thus on the war of the U.S./NATO imperialists and their proxy regime in Ukraine against Russia, a way station toward imperialist war against China, the policy of the LFI is directly counterposed to that of the ICL. While the ICL admits that capitalist Russia is not an imperialist power, you denounce the LFI for upholding military defense of Russia against the imperialists. And while claiming in the latest *Spartacist* that “the ICL and IG are relatively close” on issues

Having declared that the Spartacist tendency was deformed at birth, you deride Jim Robertson as a revisionist and have undertaken the wholesale junking of the programmatic arsenal crucial to revolutionary struggle today. We of the LFI, having fought over the course of decades to defend this legacy and carry it into the living class struggle, will not join you in your endeavor. With the ICL’s consolidation of its break with the “old” Spartacism, you are now junking just about every distinctly Spartacist position from the days when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism. This underscores an undeniable political reality: it is the League for the Fourth International that upholds the revolutionary continuity of the communist program of Lenin and Trotsky.

Having explained why there is no principled programmatic basis for the LFI to hold private “discussions” with you, we instead challenge the ICL to a public debate. We propose that the two organizations work out the date and other details

think that we can possibly find a principled basis to work with you on defense work against political repression. Of course, we cannot have a united front on something we don’t agree with. For example, it seems you do not agree on the desirability of throwing the AUKUS hawks out of the ALP or the fight to open police archives. If you did—and we certainly hope you change your mind—it would be entirely possible to work together on these limited objectives while still defending our respective strategies toward the ALP and black liberation in the U.S.

Now in response to your questions. 1) We believe that everything about the fight which led to your expulsion was unprincipled. Back in 1996 you agreed with the ICL’s overall orientation. However, the fights with you and your comrades, whether over Germany, Brazil or Mexico, were all based on trying to show that you were in opposition to the rest of the ICL leadership. Since this was not the case, existing differences had to be exaggerated or simply manufactured through demagoguery and distortions.

2) Yes, our investigation does include the trials. There is a very long list of fights that were had in the last 30 years which we know to be wrong and damaging. We have prioritized the 1996 expulsion because of its political significance as well as the precedents it set. We are not currently reviewing the 1997 fight in the LTF. That being said, it was unquestionably a despicable fight, including its blanket rejection of an “iskrist perspective” for Algeria. As you know, the 1999 witchhunt of comrades Giulia and Carlo was reviewed in a 2004 ICC investigation. We have not re-examined the question but can certainly state that it was inexcusable to not communicate the result of the investigation to them.

3) On Brazil it is clear to us based on our own published account of events that we had no legitimate political grounds to break off relations when we did. That said, as you note there is much more to the question. We are currently investigating the claims you have made about the actions of our tendency in Brazil and are determined to account for the full truth, no matter how bitter.

In addition to the questions addressed above, your response raises several substantial political differences over the content of *Spartacist* No. 68 and our recent work. I will not respond to all of these in the present letter. On most points we believe that you either distort or caricature the actual arguments we make and/or present our position as somehow being self-evidently opportunist without providing any serious motivation or explanation.

To give only one example, you claim that we seek to “turn Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution into a stagist program” and supposedly repudiate that “the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries can only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry.” However, even a superficial glance at our article “In Defense of Permanent Revolution” will show that this isn’t true. Far from endorsing a “stagist program,” we reaffirm that “only the proletariat, rallying behind it the peasant masses and the urban petty bourgeoisie, is capable

like China, in your previous issue (August 2022) you denounce us for characterizing the “Wuhan lab leak theory” as what it is: imperialist war propaganda against the Chinese deformed workers state.

As for the imaginary scenario of “common work,” again there is no principled basis. From your blanket “Down with lockdowns” line (including in China, where they were very effective) to your recent articles and leaflets, each is more opportunist than the last. This includes calling to join the Australian Labor Party, the governing party that enforces racist immigration laws; the SL/U.S. statement on the ILWU and UPS (19 August) declaring that the “real battle” is “workers vs. the Establishment”; and the openly class-collaborationist “Proposal to Rebuild the Movement” (28 August), calling to “unite the broadest possible forces” to “bring pressure down on all the liberal and progressive politicians who claim to stand for workers and for black rights” to fulfill the “doable” call to “open the police archives,” which, it states, “can be done by any politician in office that is really on the side of black people.” And then there is your abhorrent leaflet on the subway murder of Jordan Neely.

for such a debate, and that it be held in New York City, where both have their largest concentration of members.

Communist greetings,  
Jan Norden  
for the Executive Committee of the League for the Fourth International

### Letter to the IG/League for the Fourth International

11 October 2023

Dear Comrade Norden,

We regret that you have turned down our proposal for a formal meeting. In our opinion holding a frank discussion with another organization claiming the mantle of Trotskyism does not require any prior political agreement. In fact, we believe that such discussions can play an important role in clarifying differences and eventually forging political agreement.

In my September 2 letter I proposed “common action to defend the basic interests of the workers movement” and “common work when it is appropriate.” You reject this arguing that this is a proposal for a political bloc as opposed to united-front actions. We think this is a false distinction. Whether it is to “stop the fascists,” “free political prisoners” or the 1921 UKPD “open letter,” every united front requires some form of political agreement or bloc at least on a limited set of objectives. We

8 Your claim that Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution put forward in 1905 was essentially identical with Lenin’s formula at that time of a “revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” directly contradicts Trotsky’s own presentation in “Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution” (August 1939) which contrasts them.  
9 See Lenin’s “Liberals and Democrats on the Language Question” (September 1913), his seminal “Critical Remarks on the National Question” (October-December 1913) and related works.

10 This was not some Spartacist invention, as you portray it, but was directly based on the Bolshevik experience in areas of mixed populations in Ukraine and the Caucasus.



of breaking the yoke of foreign capital, finishing the agrarian revolution and establishing full democracy for the toilers in the form of a workers and peasants government.”

Finally, we will gladly accept the challenge to a debate. We agree to hold it in New York City. In terms of the time, we are relatively flexible. Our tentative proposal is to hold it in December. Would Saturday, December 9 work for you?

In our opinion, the best way to have a productive and clarifying debate would be to hold a full-day event where we can divide some of the various questions in dispute. We think this can be justified by the fact that this debate is almost 30 years from the making and numerous comrades from outside New York will surely want to attend.

Our proposal is as follows:

Main theme: The Fight for the Fourth International Today

Point 1: Revolutionary Leadership from 1990 to 2023

Point 2: Permanent Revolution

Point 3: The Task of Communists in the U.S.

We propose that the first point be longer than the two others given the breadth of the question and the fact that revolutionary leadership is at the heart of our differences. It is in this point that we propose to take up the question of China and the war in Ukraine. Permanent Revolution seems to us an obvious theme. As for the point on the United States, we think it makes sense given that the event will take place in New York and we both have most members in the U.S. We are of course open to a counterproposal on your part if you have a problem with any of the above proposals. Once we have agreed on a date and questions to debate, we should proceed rapidly in arranging the other details such as a venue, a chair, the format, etc.

Communist greetings,

Perrault

For the International Secretariat of the ICL

### Letter to the International Communist League

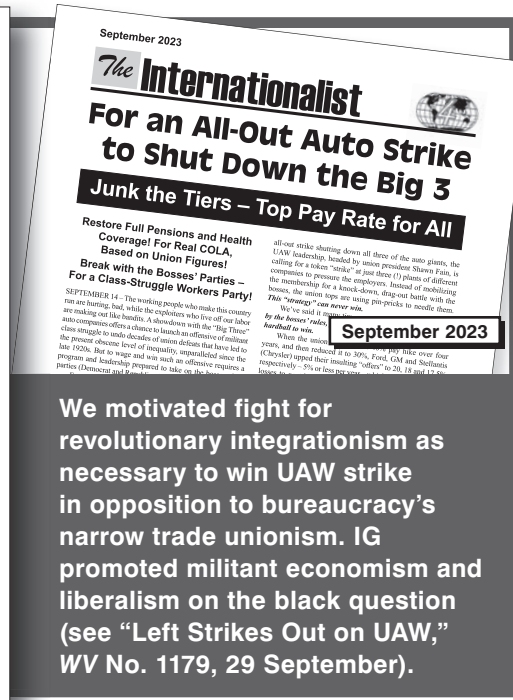
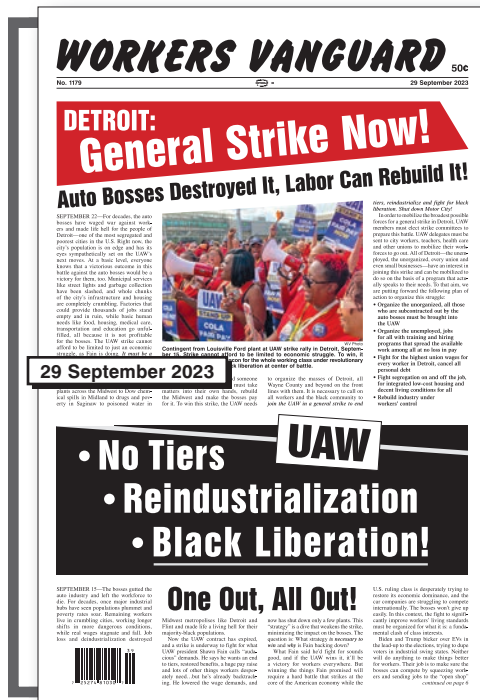
15 October 2023

Dear comrade Perrault:

We have received your 11 October letter. First, regarding the response to our queries about the ICL's investigation of its actions in the period that gave rise to our organization:

Your initial letter (2 September) noted that the ICL now characterizes as “unprincipled” the “fights” that led to the expulsions of the founding members of the Internationalist Group. As our 27 September reply highlighted, that statement, while true, is strikingly general. A much more specific accounting from the ICL is required if the intent is not merely to make do with a quick “confession” but to seriously evaluate the *meaning* and lessons of events that both you and we describe as highly relevant for would-be Trotskyists.

Your 11 October answer, that “everything” about the 1996 “fight” against us



We motivated fight for revolutionary integrationism as necessary to win UAW strike in opposition to bureaucracy's narrow trade unionism. IG promoted militant economism and liberalism on the black question (see “Left Strikes Out on UAW,” WV No. 1179, 29 September).

was unprincipled, is based on the claim that both sides shared the same mistaken political outlook. In reality, the ICL purged us for fighting to implement the Trotskyist program, which it was abandoning—as shown dramatically when, after (and closely connected with) our expulsions, it stabbed in the back the struggle to expel police from the municipal workers union in Brazil's “Steel City.” It was far from just a matter of “distortions,” exaggerations or specious arguments.

In the course of the cynical 1996 purge, the ICL ripped up one basic Leninist norm and party statute after another, launched a chain of willful fabrications, threatened to disaffiliate the Mexican section if it did not vote for statements the members knew to be false, publicly defamed our comrades, and much more, as we laid out at the time (beginning with *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*). For going on 30 years, the ICL sought to ignore and silence the facts. Those serious about revolutionary politics have a right to expect concrete and specific answers, after decades of snow jobs and smears from the ICL.

Your 11 October response to us states that the ICL's investigation does include the 1996 “trials” (sic) as well as “the claims you have made about the actions of our tendency in Brazil.” This was not just “claims,” but facts laid out in detail at the time in materials collected in the dossier *Responses to ICL Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists* as well as *From a Drift...*

We also asked about the 1997 campaign against oppositionists in the ICL's French section, who after their expulsion joined in founding the League for the Fourth International.<sup>1</sup> You write that this “was unquestionably a despicable fight”—but that the ICL is “not currently reviewing” it. Why is that? Nor, to our knowledge, has the ICL made any public accounting regarding this blatantly chauvinist and colonialist campaign whose proclaimed goal was

1 See *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.

to “humiliate” these North African comrades and “demoralize” them, for opposing the disgraceful line the ICL put forward regarding both Algeria and France.

Your response to our 27 September letter notes that it “raises several substantial political differences” with the ICL's current line and work, but does not seek to respond to them all. So we will make brief comments on some of what you do address.

No, the difference between united-front actions and a political bloc is not “a false distinction.” As explained in the fundamental Spartacist pamphlet *On the United Front* (1976): “In contrast to a united front, a bloc is an open-ended agreement to



Russian Embassy in Türkiye

**March 1922: Soviet ambassador to Türkiye (left center) and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (right center). Soviet Union supported Türkiye's struggle for independence. Common action against imperialism is crucial to win communist hegemony of national liberation struggle. LFI rejects anti-imperialist united front.**

collaborate for broadly defined aims”—which describes rather well the perspective you laid out, for which, as we noted, there is no principled programmatic basis. A united front, however, is a joint action for concrete, limited objectives, and as noted in our letter we have initiated many such actions, inviting a range of tendencies, including the ICL.

You reject our statement that the ICL is seeking to turn Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution into a stagist program, and cite a phrase from the current issue of *Spartacist* as supposed evidence to the contrary. With bourgeois nationalism as the driving force for a group (as is the case with the present-day ICL) that still—for now—claims to be Trotskyist, an accurate presentation of permanent revolution can only be an impediment. For left groups undertaking wholesale revisionism, it is standard operating procedure to include a few “orthodox”-sounding phrases.

Turning permanent revolution into a stagist program is what it means to embrace, as you do, the “anti-imperialist united front,” which is the long-standing pretext for such a program and “theoretical” justification for political blocs with bourgeois-nationalist forces. That is also what it means to identify, as *Spartacist* now does, Trotsky's permanent revolu-

tion with Lenin's pre-1917 formula of “democratic dictatorship” of the proletariat and peasantry, and with the formulation that Marx put forward in 1850. When Lenin stood on that formula, he explicitly stated that it meant a “democratic, not a socialist” regime (*Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* [1905]); in April 1917, against those who sought to cling to that slogan, he wrote that “things have worked out differently,” and called instead for “all power to the soviet of workers deputies” (*Letters on Tactics* [1917]). With regard to the formulation by Marx decades before the imperialist era, Trotsky noted: “Marx at that time expected the independent stage of the democratic revolution in Germany... That, however, is just what did not happen” (*The Permanent Revolution* [1930]).

These kinds of revelations now proclaimed by *Spartacist* have been made many times in the past by erst-

while Trotskyist tendencies seeking theoretical cover for their rightward motion. They are part of a package including the idea that democratic demands *rather than* class struggle are the “fundamental lever for socialist revolution.” From China 1927 to Indonesia 1965, Chile 1973 to the Philippines now—and so many other countries—the real-world consequences of a stagist program, tying the proletariat to the “democratic”/“anti-imperialist” bourgeoisie, have been fatal.

Your letter states that we have presented various of the ICL's positions as being self-evidently opportunist. Yes, that would indeed seem self-evident when faced with statements like that of the SL/U.S. (quoted

in our 27 September letter) that the “real battle” is “workers vs. the Establishment” (a standard term that liberals use instead of class). This *openly* contradicts the ABCs of Marxism—based on the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie—and blatantly echoes bourgeois populism of both “left” and right. Then there's the SL's appeal to “unite the broadest possible forces” in a pressure campaign aimed at “any politician in office that is really on the side of black people” which is straight out of the handbook of popular frontism. Etcetera.

Lastly, we are glad that you have accepted our challenge to a debate. Given current events, December 9 would not be practical for us; we propose January 13 instead. We want to have the standard debate format (with presentations, discussion and summaries, extending to two rounds if needed) rather than diluting it into a day-long quasi-conference. We have no objection to the title you propose, “The Fight for the Fourth International Today,” and, as you state, details such as venue, chair, etc., can and should be arranged soon.

Communist greetings,

Jan Norden

for the Executive Committee of the League for the Fourth International

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# UAW...

(continued from page 16)

to show that the labor movement must take up the cause of black liberation to improve conditions for all workers. This requires a revolutionary leadership willing to go beyond the bounds of capitalism. Fain's narrow trade unionism confines workers to the arena of economic struggle, within which none of the problems facing the working class can be resolved. Workers need a strategy that can unite all the struggles of the oppressed to beat back the bosses' attacks, organize all the unorganized workers and prepare for the other battles ahead.

The strike settlement wasn't an easy sell for the UAW tops because so much more is badly needed and everyone knows the bosses have the money. At the same time, Fain's "stand up" strategy exhausted and demoralized many workers, especially those hanging on by a thread, who felt compelled to accept what was on offer when their leadership told them there was nothing more that could be done. Now Fain spins the deal, and even workers' dissatisfaction with it, as a step forward. He has convinced many that it wasn't possible to win it all in one go and that the deal puts workers on a (slow) march toward progress. But whether now, or in 2028, if workers don't have a leadership willing to land a serious blow against the bosses and their government, their struggle will be undermined. Who knows what 2028 will look like, but Fain's strategy of avoiding a major confrontation will be no better then.

## Organizing, Class Independence and Black Liberation

Coming off the strike, Fain announced one of the largest organizing drives in decades. This massive endeavor, if successful, will greatly strengthen the union. Every previous organizing drive has been derailed by the bosses' pitting of one section of the workforce against another, especially along racial lines. Fain recognizes the problem of the bosses' "divide and rule" schemes and says that this time the UAW will organize differently. However, his narrow trade unionism ensures he will only reinforce those divisions and stand in the way of the kind of fight necessary to unite the multiracial working class. In order to advance the interests of the working class at all—be it abolishing tiers, successfully organizing or reindustrializing this country—labor must take up the fight for black freedom.

During the strike, Fain avoided the essential question of black oppression and today avoids talking about anything other than economics when it comes to the organizing drive. But ignoring black oppression—the elephant in the room—when trying to organize auto only plays into the bosses' hands and will undermine the campaign, just like it undermined the strike. Fain's narrow perspective of struggling for the crumbs that the capitalists offer means that the fight to improve conditions for black workers is necessarily viewed as coming at the expense of white workers.

By not taking up the fight for black

equality, it leaves the bosses with a mighty weapon to drive down the conditions of all workers and makes black workers believe that they cannot wage a united fight with white workers. Only when it is understood that workers and black struggle go forward together or fall back separately and share common enemies—the bosses and their capitalist system—does it become not only possible but necessary to take up the cause of black liberation.

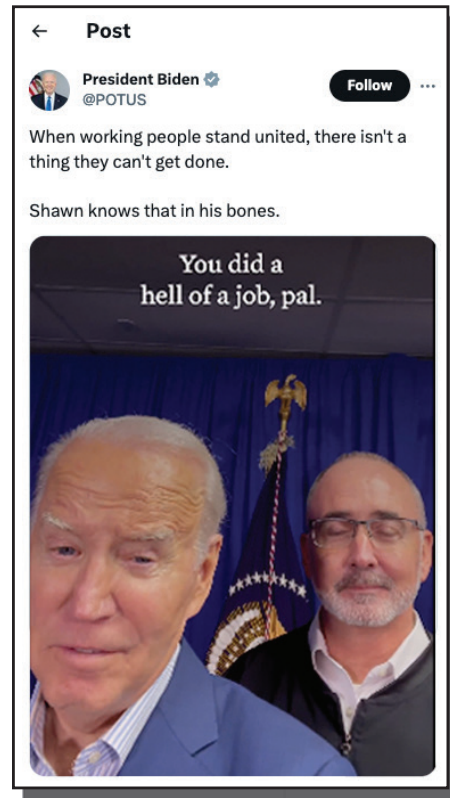
The material basis of black oppression is segregation, which the entire auto industry is built on. The very reason that the South is not unionized is because labor leaders refuse to fight black oppression head on. Anti-union forces in the South make a practice of whipping up racist reaction against the UAW by portraying

than it was before. His strategy, flowing from his political perspective, is an obstacle to the battles ahead.

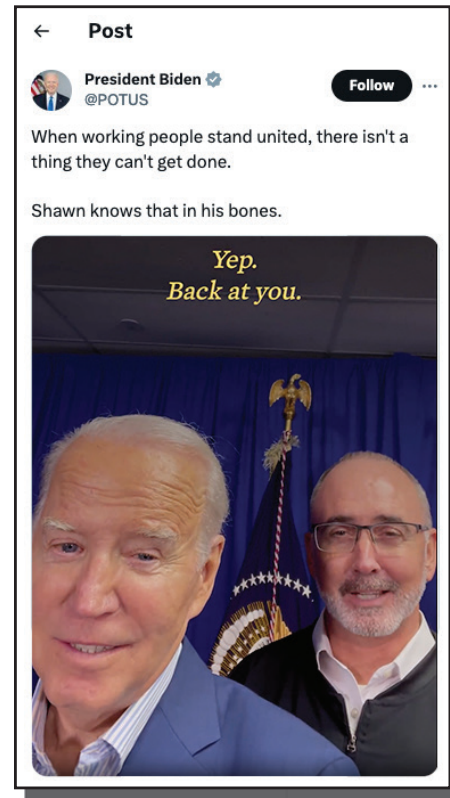
What the working class needs—be it decent wages, quality health care, housing or better conditions on the job—cannot be achieved while trying to avoid disruption of the capitalists and their economy. To defend the current contract and fight back against the bosses' attacks requires a class independent strategy.

## Defend the Gains!

The strike wasn't the slam dunk victory for labor that a lot of the liberal media and the left like to pretend it was. But it wasn't a crushing defeat either. This strike did not change the playing field for the working class, but it did gain some things



November 10: Biden to Fain on X, "You did a hell of a job, pal." Fain to Biden: "Yep. Back at you."



it as a force that will leave white workers worse off. The "open shop" South should be reason enough for any decent trade unionist to fight for black liberation. But there's plenty more.

Fain is not preparing the organizing drive with class-struggle methods but instead looks to the Democratic Party as an ally. He is already sowing illusions in the bosses' government. He begs Congress to be on the union's side and acts like Biden's NLRB is "pro-labor." What's the NLRB done for Starbucks or Amazon workers? Tangled them in endless legal battles and left most unrecognized and all without contracts. Fain presents the bosses' government as a neutral actor instead of a tool of class domination.

Because Fain is pro-capitalist, he wants to help the automakers remain competitive, seeks the help of the "pro-labor" politicians and doesn't think the union has to take up the fight to end black oppression. This is a recipe for defeat and missed opportunities. At bottom, his strategy is the reason the tide was not turned, the strike demands were not met and the working class is not in a better position

for some workers. The contract is better than what came before, but that's a pretty low bar.

For some, strike bonuses made it possible to go from sleeping in their cars to having a roof over their heads or to finally be able to buy a new car. Others saw their wages increase from \$23 to \$34 an hour, which certainly helps when you're just getting by.

On the other hand, for many, the honeymoon Fain promised is over before it even began. Some workers report that, since ratification, everything is worse on the job. In the Flint parts center, GM declared an "emergency situation" requiring everyone to work eight hours a day, seven days a week, with no exceptions. On any day, the company can force a ten-hour shift without notice. Wage increases are good, but the exhausting overwork makes it impossible to have a life or even sleep. In Chicago, workers reported that the exhausting work pace at Ford hasn't improved since the strike. Shifts are so long that they are barely able to see their families. One worker told us that he feels like a boxer who gets to go to the corner after each round, trying to gather himself for the next.

Many senior workers think that the union should have held out longer, perceiving the contract as mostly benefiting new hires. GM workers are angry that Fain gave up on pensions and post-retirement medical coverage for those hired since 2007. All this is a far cry from workers winning back what's been lost.

Furthermore, Stellantis has announced that it will lay off a couple thousand UAW members in Toledo and Detroit. Many temps expecting to be hired into permanent positions were instead fired. Ford has already cut hundreds of jobs at its biggest plant, in Louisville. And GM is promising to increase stock buybacks and dividends for investors by achieving "efficiency," "productivity" and "cost savings" in the plants—i.e., speedup and layoffs. Meanwhile, the world economy teeters on the

brink of recession. You can be sure that the bosses will continue to roll back and undermine every gain.

Fain's only plan is to meet with the bosses to ensure the layoffs comply with the contract. It is necessary for workers to organize a fightback to force them to restore all jobs. A struggle against the bosses' "right" to call the shots would not only stop the layoffs but also make the bosses think twice before further trampling on the contract, while strengthening the union's ability to win more of what workers need. This requires a strategy far broader than Fain's that points the way forward for the working class and oppressed.

## Fight for Class-Struggle Leadership

The bosses have launched their counter-offensive. Workers need a new leadership to prepare a successful defense and push the organizing drive to victory. Militant class-struggle caucuses must be built in the UAW, based on the understanding that the only way out of misery is to defeat the bosses and their government. The aim must be to oust Fain and the other bureaucrats and take leadership of the union. Here are some elements of program to do that:

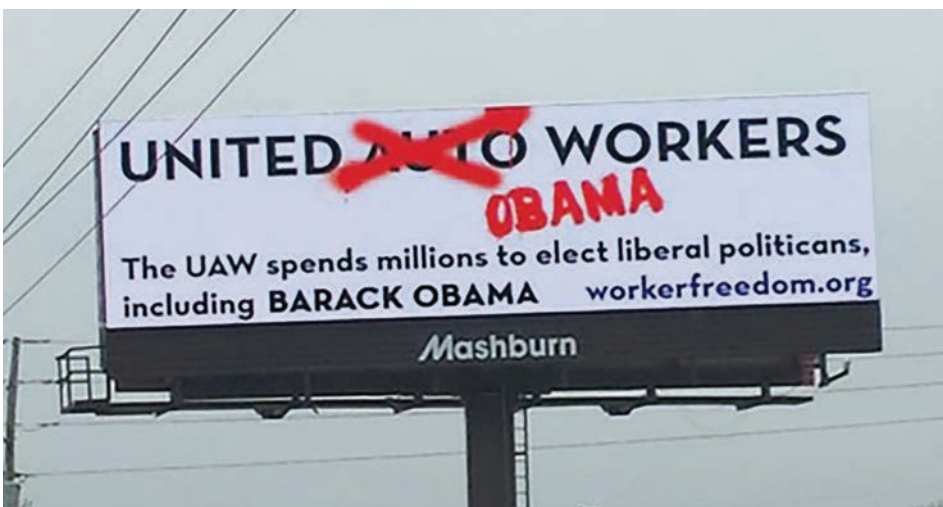
**For union control of hiring and scheduling! No tiers! Full-time work for all who want it at the highest UAW scale!** In order to combat rampant speedup and overtime, workers must fight for control of the workplace. There is absolutely no reason that anyone should be working grueling shifts. The bosses should not have the right to tell the people who actually do all the work, when and how long their shifts should be. There needs to be union programs for hiring and upgrading that extend to the black population of Detroit and beyond, to ensure that black people aren't jobless or left to fill the worse jobs. A union plan to spread out the work with no loss in pay would also reassure white and higher seniority workers that this would not come at their expense. In fact, this fight is a way for the union to cut through the racial divide and strengthen itself.

**Rebuild the strike fund—no more excuses! No layoffs! Organize the unorganized!** Fain said that it was important that the union won the right to strike against plant closures. Well, we need to **strike against the layoffs!** To successfully organize the non-union automakers is also going to require strike action and hard struggle. If Fain's excuse was that bringing out the full force of the UAW during the recent strike would have depleted the fund, start rebuilding it now. Workers should demand an accounting and fight for a massive fund-raising drive to build a big enough fund for an all-out strike. No more six-figure salaries for the bureaucrats, and no more donations to the Democrats!

**For union control of health and safety!** Work in auto is backbreaking, and speedup only makes it more dangerous. Workers know what's safe and what they need. They should shut down production when they think conditions are unsafe.

**For labor action to defend Palestine!** The UAW organizes workers in the military defense industry that is supplying the Gaza genocide. Organize to shut down production! No weapons to Israel! The UAW recently passed a resolution asking for Biden to broker a cease-fire in Gaza. The labor movement has the power to play a crucial role in ending the carnage and advancing the fight for Palestinian liberation. But in order to be effective, actions to do this must be carried out in total opposition to the Democratic Party butchers of the Palestinians and based on the understanding that the only way forward for workers and the oppressed—from Gaza to Detroit—is to defeat the bosses and their government.

To qualitatively improve our situation requires a break from the narrow trade unionism of Fain. **For a revolutionary leadership to fight for the interests of the entire working class on the road to workers power! For a multiracial workers party that fights for a workers government!** ■



Chattanooga, 2014. Racist anti-UAW campaign helped defeat unionization vote at Volkswagen. Southern organizing drive needs leadership dedicated to ending black oppression.



# UAW: Let's Win This Already!

OCTOBER 21—The UAW strike is going into week six. Workers are hurting and struggling to survive on strike pay. Fain's strategy isn't working—it's just dragging this out. We need to take decisive action to wrap this up—and win!

Workers want to fight, and not just in auto. Blue Cross Blue Shield workers have been out for nearly seven weeks. Thousands of casino workers just walked off the job. The black masses in Detroit are fed up with racist abuse from the cops and the bosses. The situation is explosive and would take only a spark to ignite. But the leadership still refuses to broaden the fight and mobilize the power necessary to force the bosses to submit.

We can't keep waiting to see what Fain will do. Workers have to take matters into their own hands. The first step is to organize meetings with co-workers and plan the next steps. Strike com-

mittees must be formed to carry out a winning strategy despite the current course of the leadership. We need to shut down the plants, stop the scabs and wage a battle to unite all the workers and oppressed in Detroit in struggle against our common enemy.

## Spread the Strike!

If you work in a plant that is not struck, organize with your co-workers to *shut it down*. Strike committees must send groups of workers to *other plants* and *other workforces* to set up pickets and get those workers to *join the strike*. Many workers at River Rouge want to join the battle, and a UAW victory would benefit *every* worker in the city. Black people, many unemployed and segregated in the ghetto, have every interest in beating the bosses who for decades have ruined their lives, and everybody

knows it. If this is *actually* going to be a fight for the whole working class, we need to organize *all* the workers and oppressed to fight! *All of Detroit must go out!*

## Stop the Scabs!

This strike can't win if cars keep rolling out of the plants. Delaying scabs for five minutes is a sick joke. Strike committees need to call on *all* workers in the city, students and the unemployed to come out and build *mass* picket lines. Only mobilizing the masses of workers and the oppressed beyond the membership of the UAW will stop the scabs and back down the cops and company goons. If this is really "class warfare" against the "billionaire class," like Fain says, we need to stop playing by the billionaires' rules that screw us. *We need to stop the scabs!*

## Fight Now!

Lots of workers are watching the horrors in Gaza and wondering what they can do. The main thing that workers can do to fight for Palestinian liberation is to *win this strike!* A major blow against the capitalist rulers here will throw a wrench in the plans of the bosses and their government, who are destroying everything from Detroit to Ukraine to Gaza.

The time to act is now! By refusing to unleash the power required to win, Fain is dragging this out and weakening our position. Workers are getting impatient with the games he's playing—it's getting colder, and money is getting tighter. Workers who want to win need to fight and carry out a winning strategy today!

*Build a general strike to end tiers, rebuild Detroit and fight for black liberation!* ■

# UAW: 25% Won't Turn the Tide!

OCTOBER 28—A 25 percent raise, promises of COLA and other items on offer from the Big 3 aren't nothing. But they won't turn the tide for the working class and oppressed in this country or even in Detroit. On October 20, Fain said: "If we stand together, if we have faith, we will win. Not just a good contract. Not just a record contract. But a contract that turns the tide." We all know this is a fight for the whole working class, but what's on offer is just a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed. The deal also leaves tiers in place and temp workers out in the cold. In the beginning, Fain was clear that 40 percent wasn't just a bargaining tactic. It reflected the raises the bosses got and, more importantly, what workers need to be able to survive.

We are being ruined by deindustrialization and inflation. Attacks by the bosses during the COVID-19 pandemic destroyed workers' lives and livelihoods worldwide. Sellout contracts and give-

backs in auto have devastated the whole metro Detroit area. The UAW strike has the potential to turn things around, but to do that requires a fundamentally different perspective and strategy from Fain's.

The situation in Detroit is potentially explosive, despite Fain sending workers back without even having seen the contract. BCBS is still out. The casino workers are still out. Detroit is still the most segregated city in America, and black people are still fed up with the racist abuse they get from the bosses and their cops. Auto workers must *resume* and *escalate* the strike to get what they need—end tiers, rebuild Detroit and fight for black liberation. If auto workers keep up the fight and unite all these struggles against the common enemy, it would rapidly change things.

The bosses and their government are weakened and overextended. They're funding the war in Ukraine and genocide in Gaza to try and maintain their

international standing. A hard fight in auto right now would not only throw a wrench in their destructive plans but could also *quickly win* far more than what's on offer in the current tentative agreement with Ford.

It's possible to turn the tide. The problem is Fain's strategy. Fain has dragged this on, refused to mobilize the masses in Detroit and demoralized workers who have been out since the beginning. Six weeks of reporting to picket duty and being told by the leadership that they can't stop scabs has made some folks question why they have been out there. Now many just want to get back to work. It's not time to settle just because the Ford TA is all Fain's strategy can get. Now is the time for the strategy required to get what we need and advance the cause of the working class and oppressed worldwide! *Don't abandon the picket lines! Vote down this contract! Spread the strike! Stop the scabs!* ■



WV Photo

**September 17, Wayne Ford plant: Spartacists sought to broaden fight, put forward program for strike to win: No tiers! Reindustrialize! Black liberation!**

## South Africa...

(continued from page 4)

profoundly progressive significance, provided it is channelled along the lines of a struggle against imperialism. And yes, it is reactionary to seek to preserve the 1910 borders of South Africa. But using that as a justification to dismiss the strivings of the black African peoples for national unity against their enforced division into bantustans is far more reactionary. The key is to fight for a revolutionary proletarian leadership of the nation-building struggle—which is, of course, impossible if you set yourself against this just struggle.

(c) *Dismissing the contradictions of black nationalism.* While we have frequently acknowledged that the strong hold of nationalism on working-class consciousness is based on the overlap of race and class oppression in South Africa, our

response to this has been to deal only with the reactionary aspects of black nationalism. We have *only* ever dealt with the fact that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists exploit nationalist feeling to subordinate the working class to their leadership while serving as front men for the Randlords and imperialists. This is true, but if you use that to dismiss the progressive aspiration enveloped by black nationalism—the striving to smash the brutal national oppression faced by *all* black people—then you are putting yourself on the side of the oppressor.

Instead, communists must openly and directly take up these contradictions, which are expressed in the nationalists' role of balancing between the black proletariat and white monopoly capital. Only by grasping and sharpening these contradictions is it possible to expose this role and drive a wedge between the black masses and the petty-bourgeois national-

ist tops, which is what it means to fight for revolutionary proletarian leadership of the black majority.

To deny this task simply condemns you to historical irrelevance, or else prepares the ground for a flip-flop over to the nationalist popular front. This is the lesson from the "workerist" trend within the black union movement: when the township revolt of the mid-1980s sharply exposed the bankruptcy of their economist programme, they either faded away or were recruited to the SACP's programme of subordinating the unions to the ANC. Our task, in opposition to a repetition of these dead ends, is to fight for a revolutionary proletarian pole to wrest the leadership of the liberation struggle away from the nationalists. This means being the most resolute champions of the national-democratic and anti-imperialist struggle while simultaneously seeking at every step to accentuate the clash between

the national and social aspirations of the masses and the reactionary restraining role of the nationalists.

With this conference, the SSA is being refounded to fight for this course of genuine Trotskyism. Given that the entire programmatic basis of every article on South Africa that appeared in *Spartacist South Africa* was contrary to Trotskyism, we are ending its publication and launching a new paper, *AmaBolsheviki Amnyama*. As Trotsky stated, "The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*." We are taking this as our new masthead because it powerfully captures the essence of permanent revolution that is central to the revolution in South Africa. This signifies our determination to forge *AmaBolsheviki Amnyama* into the revolutionary lever needed to guide the class struggle to smash through the growing contradictions of neo-apartheid and advance to black liberation and socialism. ■



# WORKERS VANGUARD

## UAW: Strike Sold Short

# How to Prepare for Battles Ahead

When United Auto Workers (UAW) president Shawn Fain settled the 46-day strike against the Big Three automakers in late October, he claimed: “We have begun to turn the tide in that class war—for the American working class.” But every sign tells the opposite story. The reaction of union members to the supposedly “historic” contract was mixed—it was not full of givebacks like every other contract for decades and brought temporary relief for some on the bottom. But it fell far short of a 40 percent pay raise, ending tiers, restoring full pensions and everything else that workers desperately need. The UAW has announced a massive organizing drive, and many non-union auto workers are looking to join. The mood of workers across industries remains full of anxiety over rising costs and the direction things are headed. The bosses, having escaped the strike largely unscathed, have already begun a retaliatory offensive against the union.

Going into the contract battle, the union had the upper hand: with cracks in the U.S.-dominated world order and an extremely unpopular government, the opportunity was ripe for auto workers—who stand at the heart of the economy—to improve the situation for the working class as a whole. Biden and the bosses have been desperately trying to stave off a crisis, while people are being ruined by inflation and massive debt. Given the widespread disgust with Biden, the last thing he wanted was a major labor



Matthew Hatcher/AFP

September 26: Workers sought to stop scabs at Ford assembly plant, but bureaucrats ordered pickets to let them pass, Wayne, Michigan. Fain limited strike to what was acceptable to Democrats and bosses. His losing strategy is to get “fair share” for workers without in any way challenging capitalism.

battle to drop his approval rating even further. It wasn't crazy to think that workers could win their demands. But Fain's strategy was not up to the task. Rather than wage the strike as the fundamental clash of class interests that it was, Fain only sought to get a “fair share” for workers without causing

the bosses or Biden too much trouble, especially in the lead-up to the elections.

So, the strike ran up against the wall of what the bosses were willing to cough up without their hold on the industry and society at large being challenged. And the union remains vulnerable to the current

counterattack. The UAW needed to follow an entirely different course to really win the strike and strengthen its position. We called for a general strike in Detroit to end tiers, reindustrialize the country and fight for black liberation. We aimed

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## For a Fighting ILWU!

# Union Militant Elected in ILWU Local 10

Emily Turnbull was elected to the 35-person ILWU Local 10 executive board on November 10. Turnbull built on support she'd received for opposing the ILWU bureaucracy's surrender to the shipping bosses' contract bribe, brokered by the Biden administration to keep labor peace. Her election program laid out a clear path of struggle for longshore workers to fight for their class interests. Backed by some 25 percent of those who voted, the most voluble support for her campaign came from lower tiers of the workforce, the B-men and casuals. Her call for the abolition of tier segregation had a felt impact among

these workers, who don't even have the right to vote in union elections. She also ran for Caucus and Convention delegate and received over 60 votes, although she was not elected.

We salute Turnbull's election to the Local 10 e-board. This is the first time in many years that ILWU longshore workers have elected a candidate who ran on a fighting class-struggle program. This cuts through the reformists' lie that the most you can hope for in this period are left-talking class-collaborationist bureaucrats like those who run Local 10. We print below Turnbull's platform:

### The ILWU should:

- **Not** have signed the contract and fought for better.
- **Oppose** tiers—bring Bs and Casuals into full union membership and steady men back to the hall—and fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay.
- **Fight** for Black Liberation.
- **Oppose** U.S. military operations, whether involving Ukraine, Israel or China.
- **Oppose** the Democrats and the Republicans.
- **Build** a workers party that aims to put working people in charge of the U.S. from top to bottom.



E. Turnbull

Emily Turnbull

**“This country is going to hell and working people need to fight.”**