



# Europe: Workers Fight Capitalist Austerity



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Left: Demonstration in Lyon against government austerity, 19 October, part of national day of protests that drew 3.5 million. Above: Cops break blockade of striking workers at Grandpuits oil refinery, southeast of Paris, 22 October.

The capitalist rulers worldwide are unleashing savage attacks on jobs, working conditions and social programs amid the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Unlike in Australia and the U.S., where labour struggle remains at a low level, the austerity attacks have precipitated waves of class struggle in Europe. This has been particularly intense in Greece, where the government is headed by the populist PASOK party (see "Greece: Down With PASOK Government's 'Stability Program'!", *ASp* No. 209, Winter 2010), as well as other countries on Europe's southern tier, notably France and Spain.

In early December, the Spanish social-democratic government sent the army to break a walkout by air traffic controllers protesting massive wage cuts. This came just over a week after millions of Portuguese workers joined a countrywide general strike. More than 100,000 protesters marched in Dublin on 27 November against the harshest attacks on workers' living standards in the history of the Irish state. Earlier, millions of workers and students shook the French government with weeks of strikes and mass protests against its attacks on pensions.

For all the workers' combativity, the effectiveness of their struggles has been undermined by their reformist misleaders, who accept the inevitability of capitalist austerity while seeking only to soften the blows. What is needed is the forging of a new, revolutionary leadership of the working class based on the understanding

**— French Strike Wave —  
No to a New Popular Front!  
For a Revolutionary  
Workers Party!**

that there are no common interests between the working class and the capitalist exploiters and their governments.

We reprint below an article on the French strikes by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France, first published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 968, 5 November 2010.

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PARIS, 1 November—The fight by French workers to defend their retirement pensions against government attack has been one of the sharpest class battles this country has seen in years. Strikes by workers at oil refineries and strategic fuel terminals, which were at the core of the struggle, eventually shut down all 12 of the country's refineries before being called off last week. Strikes by railroad, subway and airport workers crippled transportation, while shortages closed gasoline stations across the country and threatened the fuel-needy industrial sector. A 33-day-long strike by

fuel terminal workers in the Marseille area stranded some 80 vessels offshore in the Mediterranean. Sanitation workers struck in at least ten cities. In Marseille, 11,000 tons of uncollected trash piled in the streets.

In protests held in September and October, millions mobilized throughout the country. Yet in the face of overwhelming public opposition to the pension "reform" pushed by right-wing president Nicolas Sarkozy, parliament gave final passage last week to a law increasing the minimum retirement age by two years to 62 and the age to receive a full pension to 67.

Determined to make French capitalism competitive against its imperialist rivals, Sarkozy played hardball with the strikers. Hundreds of riot cops were mobilized to forcibly disperse picket lines blocking refineries, fuel depots and other industrial sites. Near Nantes, the entire town of Donges, which has one of the largest refineries in the country, was placed under a

state of siege by an army of riot cops. Strikers at the Grandpuits refinery near Paris were ordered to return to work in the interests of "national defense" or face six-month prison terms. Since mid October, the government has arrested at least 2,500 people.

These attacks on strikers—and on the very right to strike—coincided with systematic police violence against high school youth, particularly those from working-class trade schools with a strong minority component. Youth joined the protests in large numbers, conscious that extending the retirement age would further increase youth unemployment, which stands at 23 percent for those under 25. The last few years have seen countless protests by high school youth, including against the slashing of jobs in education. Some 50,000 teachers' jobs have been cut since 2007, with the only new spending for education going to "security," police patrols and private security guards. We demand: **Drop all charges against the strikers and high school students! Free the protesters now!**

Across Europe, the capitalist rulers are determined to make workers pay for the world economic crisis by gutting pensions, slashing the wages of public sector workers and taking an ax to what remains of "welfare state" social programs. This has provoked a series of one-day general strikes this year—half a dozen in Greece alone—with another called for later this month in Portugal. However, the workers' combativity runs up against the political

*continued on page 4*



TROTSKY



LENIN

# In Honour of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution

The following is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 968, 5 November), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

November 7 (October 25 by the calendar used in Russia at the time) marks the 93rd anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the workers' seizure of power in Russia gave flesh and blood reality to the Marxist understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Despite the subsequent Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet workers state, culminating in its counterrevolutionary destruction in 1991-92, the October Revolution was and is the international proletariat's greatest victory; its final undoing, a world-historic defeat. The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) fought to the bitter end in defense of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe, while calling for workers political revolutions to oust the parasitic nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies that ruled these states. This is the same program we uphold today for the remaining workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

Having been expelled from the USSR in 1929 by Stalin, Trotsky spent the remainder of his life in exile. In November 1932, he gave a speech to a Danish social-democratic student group in Copenhagen. He outlined the political conditions and the social forces that drove the Russian Revolution, stressing the decisive role of the Bolshevik Party. Illuminating the worldwide impact of the Russian Revolution and its place in history, Trotsky underlined the necessity of sweeping away the decaying capitalist order and replacing it with a scientifically planned international socialist economy that will lay the material basis for human freedom.

The ICL fights to forge workers parties modeled on Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks to lead the struggle for new October Revolutions around the globe.

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Revolution means a change of the social order. It transfers the power from the hands of a class which has exhausted itself into those of another class, which is on the rise....

Without the armed insurrection of November 7, 1917, the Soviet state would not be in existence. But the insurrection



Moscow, 1918: Red Army soldiers celebrate first anniversary of October Revolution under banner reading "Communism."

## For New October Revolutions!

itself did not drop from Heaven. A series of historical prerequisites was necessary for the October Revolution.

1. The rotting away of the old ruling classes—the nobility, the monarchy, the bureaucracy.
  2. The political weakness of the bourgeoisie, which had no roots in the masses of the people.
  3. The revolutionary character of the peasant question.
  4. The revolutionary character of the problem of the oppressed nations.
  5. The significant social weight of the proletariat.
- To these organic pre-conditions we must add certain conjunctural conditions of the highest importance:
6. The Revolution of 1905 was the great school, or in Lenin's words, the "dress rehearsal" of the Revolution of 1917. The Soviets, as the irreplaceable organizational form of the proletarian united front in the revolution, were created for the first time in the year 1905.
  7. The imperialist war sharpened all the contradictions, tore the backward masses

out of their immobility and thereby prepared the grandiose scale of the catastrophe.

But all these conditions, which fully sufficed for the *outbreak of the Revolution*, were insufficient to assure the *victory of the proletariat* in the Revolution. For this victory one condition more was needed:

8. The Bolshevik Party....

In the year 1883 there arose among the emigres the first Marxist group. In the year 1898, at a secret meeting, the foundation of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party was proclaimed (we all called ourselves Social-Democrats in those days). In the year 1903 occurred the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. In the year 1912 the Bolshevik fraction finally became an independent Party.

It learned to recognize the class mechanics of society in struggle, in the grandiose events of twelve years (1905-1917). It educated cadres equally capable of initiative and of subordination. The discipline of its revolutionary action was based on the unity of its doctrine, on the tradition of common struggles and on confidence in its tested leadership.

Thus stood the Party in the year 1917. Despised by the official "public opinion" and the paper thunder of the intelligentsia press, it adapted itself to the movement of the masses. Firmly it kept in hand the control of factories and regiments. More and more the peasant masses turned toward it. If we understand by "nation," not the privileged heads, but the majority of the people, that is, the workers and peasants, then Bolshevism became in the course of the year 1917 a truly national Russian Party.

In September 1917, Lenin, who was compelled to keep in hiding, gave the signal, "The crisis is ripe, the hour of the insurrection has approached." He was right. The ruling classes had landed in a blind alley before the problems of the war, the land and national liberation. The

bourgeoisie finally lost its head. The democratic parties, the Mensheviks and social-revolutionaries, wasted the remains of the confidence of the masses in them by their support of the imperialist war, by their policy of ineffectual compromise and concession to the bourgeois and feudal property-owners. The awakened army no longer wanted to fight for the alien aims of imperialism. Disregarding democratic advice, the peasantry smoked the landowners out of their estates. The oppressed nationalities at the periphery rose up against the bureaucracy of Petrograd. In the most important workers' and soldiers' Soviets the Bolsheviks were dominant. The workers and soldiers demanded action. The ulcer was ripe. It needed a cut of the lancet.

Only under these social and political conditions was the insurrection possible. And thus it also became inevitable. But there is no playing around with the insurrection. Woe to the surgeon who is careless in the use of the lancet! Insurrection is an art. It has its laws and its rules.

The Party carried through the October insurrection with cold calculation and with flaming determination. Thanks to this, it conquered almost without victims. Through the victorious Soviets the Bolsheviks placed themselves at the head of a country which occupies one sixth of the surface of the globe....

Let us now in closing attempt to ascertain the place of the October Revolution, not only in the history of Russia but in the history of the world. During the year 1917, in a period of eight months, two historical curves intersect. The February upheaval—that belated echo of the great struggles which had been carried out in past centuries on the territories of Holland, England, France, almost all of Continental Europe—takes its place in the series of bourgeois revolutions. The October Revolution proclaims and opens the domination of the proletariat. It was world capitalism that suffered its first great defeat on the territory of Russia. The chain broke at its weakest link. But it was the chain that broke, and not only the link.

Capitalism has outlived itself as a world system. It has ceased to fulfill its essential mission, the increase of human power and human wealth. Humanity cannot stand still at the level which it has reached. Only a powerful increase in productive force and a sound, planned, that is, Socialist organization of production and distribution can assure humanity—all humanity—of a decent standard of life and at the same time give it the precious feeling of freedom with respect to its own economy. Freedom in two senses—first of all, man will no longer be compelled to devote the greater part of his life to physical labor. Second, he will no longer be dependent on the laws of the market, that is, on the blind and dark forces which have grown up behind his back. He will build up his economy freely, that is, according to a plan, with compass in hand. This time it is a question of subjecting the anatomy of society to the X-ray through and through, of disclosing all its secrets and subjecting all its functions to the reason and the will of collective humanity. In this sense, Socialism must become a new step in the historical advance of mankind.

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# WikiLeaks Documents: Imperialist Torture Machine in Iraq

DECEMBER 19—Barely one week after WikiLeaks began releasing a mass of leaked cables from U.S. envoys around the world, its founder, Julian Assange, was arrested in London on 7 December to face possible extradition to Sweden over allegations of sexual offences, slammed by his lawyer as politically motivated. Assange has now been released on bail. Extradition could also reportedly open the way to legal action by the vengeful U.S. government. There has been a worldwide outpouring of support for Assange and WikiLeaks in opposition to his arrest and the barrage of threats, including from Labor prime minister, Julia Gillard, who attacked Assange as having acted illegally.

Among the recent leaks are diplomatic cables documenting, unsurprisingly, the commitment of Australian imperialism to the counterrevolutionary U.S./Australia alliance, not least by successive ALP federal governments and the Laborite trade-union misleaders of the working class. Underscoring that this alliance targets in particular the Chinese deformed workers state, cables report on former prime minister Kevin Rudd advising the U.S. secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, to be prepared to use force against China. They confirm that Australian spy agencies target the Chinese military while the ramping up of Australian naval capabilities is aimed at countering China's influence, including in the Asia-Pacific region. The Labor government rules for racist Australian capitalism against the interests of the workers and oppressed. Hands off Julian Assange and WikiLeaks!

The following article is slightly adapted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 968, 5 November), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

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The whistle-blowers at WikiLeaks have struck again. On 22 October, WikiLeaks published the largest leak of classified military material in history—nearly 400,000 military field reports on the Iraq war and occupation. Mostly written by soldiers on the ground, the reports detail more than 109,000 deaths, most of them civilians, in the seven years since the U.S.-led imperialist invasion and occupation of

Iraq. They capture a snapshot of how the U.S., aided by Australia, has pulverised what was once one of the more advanced countries of the Near East. They describe in nightmarish detail the torture of detainees, executions at U.S. checkpoints as well as the sectarian carnage unleashed by the occupation—atrocities started under the Bush administration and continued without respite under the “reduced” occupation force of Barack Obama.

The reports document accounts of torture that rival those at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison. Having been caught out in Abu Ghraib and other American torture

the exposures, the paper sought to minimise their impact by focusing obsessively on the documents' depiction of the role played by Iran in Iraq. The U.S. bourgeoisie's newspaper of record, which dutifully echoed each and every government lie that paved the road for the Iraq invasion, has joined the Obama administration's sabre rattling against Iran, highlighting (22 October), “Iran's military, more than has been generally understood, intervened aggressively in support of Shiite combatants, offering weapons, training and sanctuary and in a few instances directly engaging American

“enemy combatants” who can be subjected to “non-judicial actions,”—i.e., kidnapping, torture, indefinite detention and worse.

Meanwhile, Assange's bid for residence in Sweden has been rejected. With his British visa expiring early next year, Australian government spokesmen have made clear that they will cooperate with the U.S. in going after Assange, who noted that an Australian official ominously informed him, “You play outside the rules, and you will be dealt with outside the rules.” Assange continues to refuse to divulge WikiLeaks' sources. He described Manning as a “political prisoner,” adding: “We have a duty to assist Mr. Manning and other people who are facing legal and other consequences.” Opponents of U.S. imperialism must demand: Free Bradley Manning now! Hands off Julian Assange and WikiLeaks!

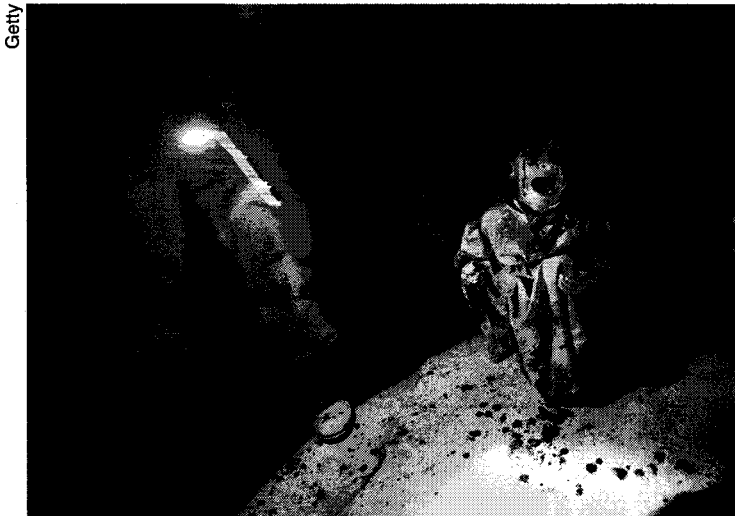
The persecution of Manning and Assange recalls the U.S. government vendetta against Daniel Ellsberg, who in 1971 released the Pentagon Papers. The trove of documents provided an account of over two decades of government lies and cover-ups in the service of a very different war—the dirty, losing war against the revolutionary workers and peasants of Vietnam waged by the U.S. and its Australian jackal imperialist ally. For his efforts, Ellsberg was viciously attacked by the Nixon administration, taken into custody and charged with theft, conspiracy and espionage. Eventually, all charges against him were dropped.

Ellsberg recently noted of Obama: “In no way, in the general defense and homeland security area, is he less opaque, more transparent, than Bush. And as I say, he's being even more aggressive in pursuing prosecution” of whistle-blowers (*Democracy Now!* 22 October). Joining Assange at a London press conference on 23 October, Ellsberg denounced the Pentagon's demand that Assange return any “classified” documents, adding, “Secrecy is essential to empire.”

The capitalist rulers always have gone to great lengths to conceal their crimes, both at home and abroad, through disinformation, legal prosecution and even assassination. We applaud the brave acts of those like Ellsberg and Assange. But unlike the liberals and reformists who seize upon such exposures to pressure imperialism to adopt more “humane” policies, we Marxists seek to impart the understanding that imperialist war, with all its savagery, is inherent to capitalist class rule. As our U.S. comrades noted in “U.S. Imperialism's Torture, Inc.” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 826, 14 May 2004): “Capitalist society was born in blood; modern imperialism continues the brutal practices of mass murder, torture and humiliation that accompany exploitation of labor and the ceaseless struggle between competing imperialist forces to dominate the world.”

Only when the system of capitalism is destroyed root and branch through victorious workers revolution internationally will humanity be rid of such horrors. We look to the model of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, which overthrew capitalist rule in one-sixth of the globe and became a beacon for working people and the oppressed throughout the world. The fight to smash U.S. imperialism, the most dangerous force on the planet, and its venal Australian junior partner requires building revolutionary workers parties independent of all capitalist parties and dedicated to the establishment of working-class rule. ■

**Iraqi child covered in blood of her parents, killed by U.S. troops in Tal Afar, January 2005.**



centres in Iraq, the imperialist occupiers opted to subcontract some of their dirty work to their Iraqi puppet army and police, who tortured their victims through suspension and hanging, beating, whipping, electric shocks, burning, sensory deprivation and rape. Recalling that one of the bogus pretexts of the 2003 Iraq invasion was the “moral imperative” to put an end to the brutal Saddam Hussein regime, an editorial in the London *Guardian* (26 October) noted, “One can reasonably conclude that one set of torturers and thugs has been replaced by another.”

The latest WikiLeaks release was made available to the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel* and *Al Jazeera*. When the *New York Times* printed

troops.” It is vital for the international working class, not least in Australia, to oppose the imperialists' military threats against Iran and any other semicolonial country. U.S. hands off Iran! All U.S., Australian and other allied troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan!

WikiLeaks' release of nearly 400,000 documents this October follows their August release of 76,000 classified military field reports from the Afghanistan occupation documenting the brutality inflicted upon civilians, including by CIA-led forces operating out of a string of bases along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. In April, the WikiLeaks website posted a video showing a U.S. Apache helicopter in Baghdad in 2007 gunning down and killing at least 12 people, including two Reuters journalists. All this has put WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange, in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism.

Assange and whoever helped him obtain and release the documentation of these war crimes have performed courageous and useful acts on behalf of the victims of U.S. and Australian imperialism. While WikiLeaks has not divulged any of its sources, U.S. Army Private Bradley Manning, who was stationed in Iraq, was arrested last autumn, shipped to solitary confinement in a military prison in Kuwait and then to the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia. He faces a court martial next year, having been charged with leaking various materials, including the cockpit video of the Apache helicopter gunship killing in Baghdad. Manning could face up to 52 years in prison.

As for Assange, an Australian citizen, he is on the run, reportedly in hiding in London. Pentagon and Justice Department officials, according to the *New York Times* (23 October), “are weighing his actions under the 1917 Espionage Act,” under which Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs was imprisoned for his opposition to the First World War. Former State Department official Christian Whiton has attacked Assange for conducting “political warfare against the US” and has called for him and his associates to be declared

Before our ancestor, who first armed himself with a stone axe, the whole of *nature* represented a conspiracy of secret and hostile forces. Since then, the natural sciences, hand in hand with practical technology, have illuminated nature down to its most secret depths. By means of electrical energy, the physicist passes judgment on the nucleus of the atom. The hour is not far when science will easily solve the task of the alchemists, and turn manure into gold and gold into manure. Where the demons and furies of nature once raged, now rules ever more courageously the industrial will of man.

But while he wrestled victoriously with nature, man built up his relations to other men blindly, almost like the bee or the ant. Belatedly and most undecidedly he approached the problems of human society. He began with religion, and passed on to politics. The Reformation represented the first victory of bourgeois individualism and rationalism in a domain which had been ruled by dead tradition. From the church, critical thought went on to the state. Born in the struggle with absolutism and the medieval estates, the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people and of the rights of man and the citizen grew stronger. Thus arose the system of parliamentarism. Critical thought pene-

trated into the domain of government administration. The political rationalism of democracy was the highest achievement of the revolutionary bourgeoisie.

But between nature and the state stands economic life. Technology liberated man from the tyranny of the old elements—earth, water, fire and air—only to subject him to its own tyranny. Man ceased to be a slave to nature, to become a slave to the machine, and, still worse, a slave to supply and demand. The present world crisis testifies in especially tragic fashion how man, who dives to the bottom of the ocean, who rises up to the stratosphere, who converses on invisible waves with the Antipodes, how this proud and daring ruler of nature remains a slave to the blind forces of his own economy. The historical task of our epoch consists in replacing the uncontrolled play of the market by reasonable planning, in disciplining the forces of production, compelling them to work together in harmony and obediently serve the needs of mankind. Only on this new social basis will man be able to stretch his weary limbs and—every man and every woman, not only a selected few—become a full citizen in the realm of thought.

—“Leon Trotsky Defends the October Revolution” (*Militant*, 21 January 1933) ■



# France...

(continued from page 1)

program of the labor bureaucracies, which seek only to soften the "excesses" of capitalist austerity.

In France, the union movement is broken up into various federations under the influence of one or more reformist parties. For these reformists, the workers struggle against the attack on pensions should serve to "weaken" Sarkozy and lay the basis for the election of a "left" government in 2012, when presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled. This was expressed by the spokesman of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), Olivier Besancenot, who declared in August that "much of the outcome of 2012 is playing out over the fight on pensions. It's now that we must weaken the government and the right."

The workers' militancy has been undercut by the servility of the trade-union leaders. Committed to defending the interests of French capitalism, these bureaucrats accept the necessity of "reforming" the public pension system in order to cut costs—they simply demanded a seat at the negotiating table. For months, the trade-union tops have insisted that they would accept an increase in the number of years of work needed to qualify for a full pension (the position of the CFDT union federation) or an increase in the pension taxes that are deducted from workers' wages (the position of the CGT federation). An aide for CFDT head François Chérèque told the Paris daily *Libération*: "Secretly, several leaders of the confederation wouldn't look unfavorably on a petering-out of the movement."

From the outset of the fight over pensions, the *intersyndicale*—a coalition of bureaucrats representing the various trade-union federations that has been supported by the left-wing organizations including the NPA and Lutte Ouvrière (LO)—centered the mobilization around a series of single "days of action." These events were largely staggered according to the rhythm of the parliamentary debate on the pension "reform" bill—as the National Assembly debated the bill, as the Senate voted, etc.—with the aim of wringing some concessions on the wording of the law.

After this bitterly fought wave of strikes, many returned to work angrily cursing Sarkozy and pledging that he will be out of a job when the next presidential election rolls around. But the question is: in what direction will this anger be focused? Will it be channeled into supporting a new popular-front government in which the reformist workers parties manage the affairs of the bourgeois state in alliance



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with the parties of the capitalist class enemy? Will the bourgeoisie and union bureaucrats channel the workers' anger into anti-immigrant racism and national chauvinism? Or will the proletariat mobilize independently in defense of its class interests? At bottom, what is posed is the question of leadership. This underlines the need to forge a revolutionary workers party grounded in the Marxist understanding that the capitalist system must be overthrown through socialist revolution.

Particularly since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the reformist workers' leaders and the "far left" have imbibed the capitalists' "death of communism" crusade that falsely portrays communism as, at best, a "failed experiment." In our interventions in the recent strike movement, as in all our work, the Ligue Trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League, has sought to reassert the revolutionary program of Bolshevism and the liberating ideals of communism.

The capitalist rulers have time and again demonstrated that they are enemies of human progress. Against the reformists who uphold the inviolability of the capitalist order, our aim is the building of a revolutionary multiethnic workers party to lead the struggle for socialist revolution. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky underlined in the 1938 Transitional Program, written amid the Great Depression, "If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish."

## The Popular Front: A Deadly Illusion for Workers

The capitalist government, whether administered by parties of the left or right, serves the interests of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the workers and oppressed. To see how a left government would seek to dismantle the gains of the working class, one need only look beyond the Pyrenees to Spain, where the government of José Luis Zapatero's PSOE (Socialist Workers Party) is also seeking to impose austerity measures, including an increased retirement age. The PSOE's new labor law could be characterized as the CPE—but for everyone, not just youth. (The CPE was a 2006 French law, withdrawn after protests, that stipulated that new workers under 26 years of age be subject to a two-year probationary period, during which they could be fired without cause.) When workers staged a one-day general strike in September against the new labor law, Zapatero sent cops to smash the picket lines (they went so far as to use firearms against picketing workers at the CASA aircraft plant near Madrid).

Yet the Spanish union tops preach to workers that the PSOE in power represents "their" government. When Zapatero announced his labor law in June, Spain's union officials called for a one-day general strike to be held...three months later, which amounted to seeking the govern-

ment's permission for the strike. The government responded to the September 29 general strike by appointing a representative of the UGT union federation, Valeriano Gómez, as the new labor minister in charge of pension "reform"!

In France, left bourgeois governments take the form of "popular fronts"—i.e., coalitions between the reformist working-class parties and outright representatives of the bourgeoisie. Revolutionaries are unconditionally opposed to these alliances, which chain the workers to the capitalist class enemy through the open class collaboration of their leaders. Historically, the popular front has served to short-circuit workers struggles, including by heading off the prospect of workers revolution, and set the workers up for often bloody defeat. In the French general strike of June 1936, the popular front—a coalition of the social democrats, the Stalinist Communist Party (PCF) and the bourgeois Radical Party—stifled a pre-revolutionary situation by channeling the upsurge onto the parliamentary plane, ultimately leading to the 1940 granting of full powers to the pro-Nazi Marshal Pétain.

The destruction of the Soviet Union has led to a profound, though uneven, regression in political consciousness internationally, with even the more advanced workers no longer identifying their struggles with the ultimate goal of socialism. Today, though the West European bourgeoisies have no immediate fear of Red Revolution, popular-front governments have nonetheless often proven themselves more effective than right-wing regimes in pushing through anti-working-class measures. It was a 1991 "white paper" published by the popular-front government of François Mitterrand/Michel Rocard that two years later served as the basis for an increase—from 37 and a half years to 40 years—in the number of years of work needed to qualify for a full pension in the private sector. In December 1995, a wave of militant strikes forced the right-wing government to back down on plans to pare back public sector pensions. But the misleaders of the working class betrayed the workers' militancy and self-sacrifice. The result was new elections that in 1997 brought into power a popular-front government under Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin, which included PCF ministers in the government. It was under Jospin that the "Charpin Report"—which, among other things, effectively called to raise the retirement age to 65—was published, providing the framework for today's attacks on pensions.

## The Fight for a Revolutionary Leadership of the Proletariat

In the face of Sarkozy's determined attack on pensions, many militant workers clearly understood that isolated "days of action" were not sufficient. Small locally based and generally brief initiatives mushroomed, including by rail workers, like an anarchic ferment lacking a plan. However, unlike December 1995, when rail and



Left: High school students in Montpellier march against pension "reform" scheme, 14 October. Above: Riot cops brutalise youth during protest in Lyon, 19 October.

transit workers were in the vanguard of the struggle that effectively spelled the end of the right-wing government of Jacques Chirac/Alain Juppé by shutting down public transportation for over three weeks, the situation today is far more difficult for railroad workers. In line with the 2007 law on "social dialogue," the union bureaucrats have negotiated with the bosses the maintenance of a minimum level of rail service during strikes.

The union bureaucrats accept the framework of capitalism and only dare to demand what they consider to be compatible with the maintenance and prosperity of their own national ruling class, from whom they hope to gain a few crumbs. Thus by its nature, trade-union opportunism is narrowly national. And the bureaucrats themselves contribute to the spreading of chauvinist poison within the working class.

This directly undercuts the struggles of the working class, such as the recent strikes by refinery workers who, while in the forefront of the struggle to defend pensions, were also combating threats to their own jobs. From the capitalists' viewpoint, with fuel exports to the U.S. having collapsed due to the recession, there are a dozen too many refineries in Europe. French courts recently authorized the shutting down of the Dunkirk refinery, and Petroplus has announced the closure of the Reichstett refinery, near the eastern city of Strasbourg.

It was necessary for French refinery workers to appeal to their class brothers in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and elsewhere to stop delivery of refined products to France intended to break the strike. According to *Le Monde* online (26 October), Belgian trade unionists picketed a Total-owned fuel depot at Feluy, Belgium in order to stop deliveries destined for France. But the possibility of internationalist class struggle is undercut by the nationalist perspective of the trade-union bureaucrats, whose view is: if there must be plant closures and job losses in Europe, let them be in other countries (in opposition to this, see the joint statement by the ICL's British, French and German sections, "For United International Class Struggle Against Airbus Bosses!" WV No. 889, 30 March 2007).

The situation cries out for a new, revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. Forging such a leadership requires a political struggle against the workers' present leadership, and in particular against those like the NPA and LO, which work within the unions to provide a left cover for the bureaucracy.

A revolutionary leadership would fight for a series of transitional demands that start from the current consciousness of wide layers of the working class, addressing their daily struggles against the capitalists, and lead to the necessity of proletarian revolution. It is essential to fight to eliminate the myriad differences in contractual status among workers—temporary employees, trainees, those with

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Women Workers and the Contradictions of China Today

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fixed contracts—as well as opening up full-time jobs for all those, especially women, who can now only find part-time work. That means fighting for free, quality childcare, open 24 hours a day. Faced with mass unemployment, which has disproportionately hit older workers and youth, it is necessary to share the work among all available workers, with no loss in pay.

There must be a struggle against racist discrimination in hiring and for an end to all work restrictions imposed on workers from East Europe (which notably target Roma from Romania). More broadly, this means a fight for **full citizenship rights for all those who are in this country**, whether they are documented or not, employed or not, wear the veil or not. The government-led racist “war on terror” targets those of Muslim origin in the first place and ultimately the entire working class. On September 14, the French parliament passed a law forbidding women, including French citizens, from wearing the face-covering Muslim *niqab* or *burqa* in public. In the name of defending the “equality” of women, the government is stigmatizing Muslim minorities as the “enemy within.” **Down with the racist law on the burqa!**

It is also necessary to put a stop to the attacks on the education and health systems as well as other social programs, which hit working-class and minority neighborhoods hardest. This requires a program of major public works to build or rebuild housing, transport infrastructure, schools and high schools, hospitals and health centers that the capitalists are in the process of shutting down. The goal of the capitalist production system is to pocket profits rather than address the needs of the population, meaning that the capitalists are incapable of responding to such a set of demands. But for the working class, what is ultimately posed is the question of survival, which is why the workers must understand that the capitalist system must be overthrown by workers revolution.

### For the Independence of the Trade Unions from the Bosses and Their State!

In one of his final writings, Leon Trotsky observed that a common feature of modern trade unions “is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power” (“Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay,” 1940). Trotsky emphasized that to “turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy” requires the “complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state.”

France has one of the lowest rates of unionization of any industrialized country, with as few as 5 percent of private sector workers organized. Furthermore, it is the norm for this small minority of organized workers to be divided up among several competing unions in the same workplace, which often scab on each other during strikes. The unions depend more on subsidies from the capitalist state and the bosses than on their own members’ dues. How those subsidies are distributed depends largely on the various unions’ relative vote totals in workplace elections, in which all workers—not just the small minority who are unionized—can vote. This means that the bureaucrats do not have the perspective of organizing the unorganized, but rather of maximizing their vote totals in workplace elections—which are run by the bosses and the state—in order to obtain a larger slice of the pie than their union competitors.

A key part of the struggle to overcome the divisions between competing union federations is the fight to forge industrial unions that unite all workers from the same industry into a single trade union, regardless of their political affiliation and work status. This is inseparable from the

struggle to build a revolutionary leadership of the working class.

All the union federations—particularly the CGT, FO and UNSA (but also the SUD and CFDT)—have cops, customs officials and/or prison guards in their ranks. These bodies of armed men, who have a monopoly of armed power to enforce the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, constitute the core of the bourgeois state, an instrument of class oppression against workers and oppressed. The cop terror that has been meted out against strike pickets and youth in the *banlieues* (suburban ghettos) provides very tangible proof of the fact that police are on the other side of the class line. The bourgeois state and its armed gangs must be destroyed through a workers revolution that replaces the rule of capital with the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will have its own armed bodies. These will come from the workers militias and other red guards forged in the struggle to defend the working class against police strike-breaking and fascist terror. **Foremen, cops, prison and security guards out of the unions!**

### Reforge the Fourth International! For New October Revolutions!

The *intersyndicale* coalition of union bureaucrats was seen by many workers as a guarantee of working-class unity. In fact, it has served as a means for the bureaucrats to coordinate their actions on the basis of the lowest common denominator and to mask their treachery behind the facade of “unity.” The role of the “far left” in the recent strikes has been to sell the



Coal miners march in northern Spain to protest working conditions and unpaid wages, 28 September.

line of the *intersyndicale* bureaucrats to restive workers. Thus *Lutte Ouvrière* (22 October), writing about the union bureaucracy at SNCF (the nationalized railroad system), declared:

“The attitude of the union leaders has also reassured the strikers. So far they have all pushed for strengthening, if not broadening the movement. This is contrary to the policy they held in 2003 and 2007 when they opposed rallies bringing different services together, visits by strikers to other sectors and even jointly held demonstrations. The movement has thus refound the tones of 1995 with the famous ‘All together, all together.’”

What LO leaves out is that the “All together” unity of 1995 was channeled into electing the Jospin popular-front regime—indeed, what the reformists are angling for today is another popular front.

LO has lately been fond of repeating that the elections won’t change a thing and that what matters is struggle. But this is belied by their practice, which helps tie the workers to the popular front. For the past two years, LO has helped administer capitalism as part of municipal governments, including by voting for local budgets. When the Communist Party mayor of Bagnolet—a municipality in the Paris suburbs where LO is in a governing coalition with its senior partners in the



Charles de Gaulle Airport, 20 August: French police expel Romanian gypsies during mass anti-Roma deportation campaign.

PCF—forcibly evicted the tenants of an apartment building partly occupied by African workers last winter, LO condemned this racist action. But they treacherously remained in the coalition, providing a left cover for their municipal partners (see “Lutte Ouvrière’s Municipal Antics,” WV No. 960, 4 June).

LO recently signed on to the popular-front slate for the December municipal election in Corbeil-Essonnes, south of Paris, in order to “fight the right.” Alongside the PCF, the PS and the Greens, LO has set out to locally manage capitalism on a program that denounces the right-

implementation [of progressive measures] if the voters give us such a responsibility.” During the 2007 elections, Besancenot stated his willingness to join a bourgeois government coalition, provided it called itself “anti-capitalist,” declaring, “the LCR will assume its responsibilities in such a government.”

For decades, the LCR voted for the candidates of successive popular-front coalitions, from Mitterrand to Jospin to Ségolène Royal in 2007. They also voted in the 2008 Marseille municipal elections for the slate led by Socialists that included right-wing bourgeois politicians—these same Socialists recently called on the state to crush the Marseille port workers strike. The NPA, whose forebears in the LCR voted for the right-wing Jacques Chirac in 2002, when he was opposed by the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen, should hardly have a problem stomaching a vote for a Socialist candidate—including current IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who openly supported Sarkozy’s attacks on pensions.

LO, NPA, et al. have something fundamental in common: They reject the 1917 October Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. They all supported the various counterrevolutionary forces that destroyed the Soviet Union and deformed workers states of East Europe in the late 1980s-early 1990s. To the extent of their limited forces, they thus contributed to the victory of capitalist counterrevolution. The working class must reappropriate Marxism and the lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution. The International Communist League, of which the LTF is a section, represents the programmatic continuity of the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky. We fight to build the internationalist revolutionary workers party that is indispensable for leading the next revolutionary uprisings of the proletariat to victory. ■

wing municipality’s “failure regarding security” and pledges to “put in the resources” to change this situation—in other words, more racist cops to terrorize the ghetto. At the national level, the next alliance of class collaboration being planned for the 2012 elections between bourgeois parties and workers parties looks set to take on a pink-green hue, with reformist workers parties like the PS, the PCF and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Left Party joined by the Green Party and some other bourgeois forces (like the Left Radicals and supporters of capitalist politician Jean-Pierre Chevènement).

This class-collaborationist lash-up can be certain of receiving the electoral support of Besancenot’s NPA. The NPA was founded in 2009 out of the thoroughly social-democratic Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR). In founding the NPA, the LCR openly renounced Trotskyism, revolution and communism—after having done so in practice for decades—in a rare mark of honesty demonstrating the extent to which they imbibe the bourgeoisie’s “death of communism” myth. They also inscribed in the NPA’s “founding principles” their openness to participating in a bourgeois government, declaring: “We will contribute to their

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# Thailand...

(continued from page 8)

he kept under martial law. The ferocity of the repression is captured by the events in Tak Bai on 25 October 2004. After firing on a demonstration in the town, killing at least seven people and wounding many more, Thai security forces then rounded up over 1,300 Muslims. With their hands bound behind their backs, the detainees were stacked on top of one another like cordwood in the back of trucks and driven to a military detention camp six hours away. By the end of the journey up to 85 prisoners had died of beatings, suffocation and kidney damage. Thaksin Shinawatra responded to this slaughter by praising the "good work" of the security forces.

While Thailand was never colonised by the imperialist powers, its borders nevertheless reflect the struggles between British and French colonialism in Southeast Asia. Thailand, or Siam as it was formerly known, emerged as an independent state in the late 19th century mainly as a buffer between French and British imperialism. The 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty handed several Malay states to the British while allowing Siam to retain the four states that it still holds today. The Malay state of Patani, which had been largely self-governing while paying tribute to Buddhist Siam, was forcibly incorporated into the state of Siam in the early 20th century. Once under Thai suzerainty the Malay Muslims suffered national and religious oppression and violent clashes occurred. In the period following the Second World War thousands migrated to the newly formed Federation of Malaya.

For decades Malay Muslims remaining in Southern Thailand have waged a sporadic insurgency against the Thai military and police. Making up about four percent of Thailand's population, but comprising the overwhelming majority in the four southern provinces, the Malay Muslims are largely denied education in their native tongue (Yawi, a Malay dialect), and suffer religious oppression at the hands of the state and Buddhist elite. The Thai working class must defend the Muslim minority against state repression without giving one iota of political support to the Islamists. Fighting for full democratic and national rights, it must demand that the Thai military and security forces get out of the southern provinces.

Revolutionaries would seek to unite all nationalities behind the proletarian fight to overthrow the Thai capitalist rulers. This requires a sharp struggle against the monarchy, which acts as both symbol and purveyor of Thai nationalism. While the arch-monarchist PAD Yellow Shirts seek to paint Thaksin as eroding the authority of the king, Thaksin of course well understands the monarchy's historical role and has no intention of undermining this important institution for capitalist class rule. The bourgeoisie has spent decades deify-

ing the monarchy as a rallying point for capitalist reaction and national unity, codifying in the Thai constitution that "The King shall be enthroned in a position of revered worship and shall not be violated."

Despite their best efforts, today the Thai rulers are increasingly fearful the country will fall apart when the aged and ailing King Bhumibol dies, particularly as his successor, the Crown Prince, is widely despised. In order to "protect the monarchy," the Abhisit government seized on the April-May demonstrations to establish a new "Bureau of Prevention and Eradication of Computer Crime." Two hundred people, including Giles Ji Ungpakorn, a leader of the Thai leftist group Turn Left/Workers Democracy which is linked to the Cliffite British Socialist Workers Party, have been blacklisted from posting to the Internet. In February 2009, Ungpakorn left Thailand to avoid facing a charge of

control of monarchy and religion as part of the struggle to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system as a whole, the only road to the liberation of women.

The Thai proletariat needs a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party to bring to the working class the understanding of its historic role as the leader of the dispossessed masses and gravedigger of the system of capitalist exploitation. Such a party must fight as a *tribune of the people*, combating all forms of discrimination and raising the banner of internationalist working-class struggle.

## The Fight For Permanent Revolution

Thailand is a classic example of combined and uneven development, where modern capitalist industry coexists with deep backwardness. The workings of international capitalism since World War II



**Tak Bai, 25 October 2004: Security forces rounded up 1,300 Muslims as part of Thaksin's bloody campaign against Malay Muslim minority. Beaten, bound and stacked into trucks, 85 detainees died.**

Patani Malay Human Rights Organisation

*lèse-majesté* over criticisms of the monarchy expressed in his book on the 2006 anti-Thaksin coup, *A Coup for the Rich*. The draconian *lèse-majesté* law is defined by Article 112 of the Thai criminal code, which states that defamatory, insulting or threatening comments about the king, queen and regent are punishable by three to fifteen years in prison. Down with the blacklists! Drop the charges against Ungpakorn! Down with the *lèse-majesté* law! Abolish the monarchy!

Opposition to the monarchy is intertwined with the struggle against religion, which deeply oppresses women and minorities. The overwhelming hold of Buddhism has a strong conservatising effect on the masses. Men are expected to join the monkhood for a period in order to "purify" their minds and become morally upright family leaders. For the rural poor, getting their sons into the monastery can be a means to ensure access to food, shelter and education. Barred from the monkhood, women are treated by the Buddhist elite as potentially greedy temptresses whose attractiveness is seen as a potential source of anarchy.

While women now represent close to 50 percent of the labour force they are locked into the informal economy, heavily exploited as home-workers, or toil long hours in low-paying factory jobs with virtually no rights. In the 1993 fire at the Kader toy factory just outside Bangkok, most of the 188 people killed were women workers, trapped because exits were locked as an "anti-theft measure." Domestic violence against women is also rife. Thai women face sharp restrictions on abortion, which serves to keep them chained to the patriarchal family. In the poverty-stricken north and northeast rural areas many women have no choice but to join the thriving sex industry where unsafe practices abound and HIV can be a death sentence. We fight for the separation of religion and state, for full legal equality for women, and for free abortion on demand as part of the struggle for free quality healthcare for all. Thai women workers will be in the forefront of the revolutionary struggle to shatter the stifling

have transformed Thailand from a predominantly agricultural country to an industrial one with manufacturing such as vehicle assembly, electronics and food processing. In particular, industrial growth came on the back of the massive shift of production to Thailand by Japanese corporations first in the 1980s and then again under Thaksin following 2001. These developments have created a modern industrial proletariat with immense potential social power. This was demonstrated in 2004 when over 200,000 workers rallied on the streets of Bangkok, thwarting Thaksin's attempted anti-union privatisation of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand.

The recent mass plebeian Red Shirt protests reflect the deep inequalities of Thai society. Millions of Thai workers eke out an existence often at below subsistence wage levels, with Burmese, Laotian and Cambodian unskilled and semi-skilled migrant workers having the worst conditions and pay. The sizable and deeply exploited internal migratory labour force, consisting largely of peasants seeking to escape impoverishment on the land, are a living link between urban workers and the countryside where over a third of Thailand's labour force continues to toil in back-breaking labour-intensive agriculture.

While the oppressed Thai masses chafe under repressive capitalist rule, various fake-left and petty-bourgeois nationalist groups internationally have avidly promoted the bourgeois Red Shirts whose demands are limited to the dissolution of parliament and new bourgeois elections. The maximum demand of a 14 April 2010 statement by the reformist United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) was for solidarity with the "fight for social justice and democracy of the 'Red Shirts'" (*International Viewpoint*, online). A 10 April joint statement by various outfits in Asia, including the Socialist Party of Malaysia, Partido Lakas ng Masa of the Philippines, Turn Left Thailand and the Australian Socialist Alliance (to name a few), declares that the crisis in Thailand "only can be resolved through genuine democracy and people's power."

In his "Red Siam Manifesto" (2009), Ungpakorn explicitly promotes similar illusions, fatuously declaring:

"The red, white and blue Thai flag, copied from the West in order to indoctrinate us to be loyal to 'Nation, Religion and King', the same slogan which was recently last used by the PAD protesters who blocked the airports. Yet during the French revolution, the red white and blue meant, 'Liberty Equality and Fraternity'. This is the slogan we must use to free Thailand from the 'New Order' which the PAD and the army have installed."

Military rule and repression is the norm and necessary means by which the small bourgeois class in neocolonial countries, as agents of imperialist domination, keep the democratic and social aspirations of the masses in check. In stark contrast to Ungpakorn's faith in bourgeois democracy, history has shown that in backward countries like Thailand, where economic and social development has been stunted by the global domination of the imperialist powers, basic democratic rights can only be achieved when the proletariat takes power through workers revolution and begins to carry out the tasks of socialist construction. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution with V.I. Lenin, outlined in his "Basic Postulates" in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

"The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfilment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution."

In further developing this point Trotsky stressed that the conquest of power did not complete the socialist revolution but only opened it by changing the direction of social development. Such social development can only be consolidated through the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced imperialist centres. Defence of those subjugated by imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in the imperialist centres pointing toward a proletarian struggle for power.

Our model is the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. Indeed it was the program of *permanent revolution* first developed by Trotsky for the Russian Revolution that points the way to national and social liberation in countries like Thailand. The October Revolution proved in life that only the proletariat, led by a revolutionary internationalist vanguard party like Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks and winning the support of the peasant and urban plebeian masses, can liberate societies in countries of belated capitalist development. In the imperialist epoch of decaying capitalism that began more than a century ago, all wings of the bourgeoisie in such countries are too dependent on their multiple ties to the imperialists, too fearful of independent working-class action to play any progressive role. They are incapable of solving bourgeois-democratic tasks, such as agrarian revolution and national independence, associated with the European revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The revolutionary internationalist perspective of permanent revolution is counterposed to Ungpakorn's bourgeois-democratic musings and grovelling reliance on the capitalist state. In his article "Class Struggle between the Coloured T-Shirts in Thailand" (*Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Vol 1. No. 1, 2009), Ungpakorn argues, "We need to cut down the military's influence in society, reform the judiciary and the police and to expand freedom and democracy from the grassroots movement." In contrast, Lenin explained that the capitalist state cannot be reformed or pressured to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed. Consisting at its core of armed bodies of men—the police, military and their auxiliaries—this state exists to defend the private property and rule of the bourgeoisie.

**AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST**

International Communist League Pamphlet

**The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution**

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There can be no overcoming the desperate plight of the working class and oppressed rural masses without overthrowing the capitalist social order and smashing its state, thus laying the basis, through a series of proletarian revolutions internationally, for a classless society of material abundance in which all forms of exploitation and oppression have been eliminated.

The proletariat is the only social force that can successfully lead such a struggle. It has vast potential power due to its central role in production—where its collective labour in industry is exploited by the bourgeoisie for profit. The peasants are incapable of cohering an independent social policy. They are part of a heterogeneous intermediate layer, the petty bourgeoisie. Their immediate felt interests are for the defence or acquisition of land. There are only two decisive classes in capitalist society: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In countries like Thailand, the working class must win the support of the masses of poor and/or landless peasants, including through demands to expropriate the large landlords and for land to the tiller. A workers and peasants government in Thailand would give full, equal rights to women, immigrants and all oppressed minorities. It would seize the vast holdings of the imperialists and all the blood-sucking domestic capitalists, including Thaksin and Abhisit, and lay the basis for a centrally planned economy under workers rule.

Socialist revolution in Thailand would reverberate throughout the region and beyond. In the bureaucratically deformed workers states of Laos, Vietnam and China, the spark of proletarian internationalism could inspire workers political revolutions against the nationalist Stalinist misrulers, whose futile pursuit of “peaceful coexistence” with world imperialism undermines defence of these workers states. The road to the emancipation of Thai workers, and with them the peasantry and oppressed minorities, lies in the fight for a socialist federation of Southeast Asia, linked to the struggle for proletarian revolution in the imperialist heartlands. An insurgent Thai proletariat would find no shortage of allies in the imperialist centres such as Australia, Japan, and the U.S. where today the various capitalist rulers seek to make working people pay for the deepening slump of the world economic crisis.

### Down With U.S./Australian Imperialism!

Following World War II and with the advent of Cold War I, which particularly targeted the Soviet degenerated workers state, the U.S. built up the Thai military as a bastion for counterrevolutionary terror within Southeast Asia. The anti-communism of the U.S. and Thai leaders reinforced each other in the face of peasant guerrilla insurgencies throughout the region including social revolutions in North Korea and China. With the defeat of the French colonial power in Indochina in 1954, and following the slaughter of some three million Koreans during the Korean War, the U.S. increasingly used Thailand as a military base and launching pad for imperialist aggression against the revolutionary struggles of the workers and peasants in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. About three quarters of the bomb tonnage dropped on North Vietnam and Laos in 1965-68 alone was flown out of Eastern Thailand. By 1969, there were more than 45,000 U.S.

troops stationed there. Thai troops fought in Laos and some 11,000 fought in South Vietnam as lackeys of the U.S.

The bloody Thai military was also mobilised against the guerrilla forces of the People's Liberation Army of Thailand (PLAT), the military wing of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Founded in 1942, the CPT had increasingly adopted a nationalist, peasant-based guerrilla strategy, not least under the impact of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, shifting its cadre from the cities, where they had some influence in the unions, to the countryside. This anti-Marxist strategy rejects the proletarian struggle for power. Ultimately the CPT/PLAT would fall victim not simply to military repression but also to its own class-collaborationist Stalinist-Maoist politics, compounded by the treachery of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies in Vietnam and China. Committed to the anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country” and seeking peaceful coexistence with imperialism, the Vietnamese and Chinese Stalinists were not interested in fighting for the overthrow of the Thai ruling class.

Thus, following the 1975 victory of the Vietnamese Revolution and the destruction of capitalist class rule in South Vietnam, the Hanoi bureaucracy pledged not to interfere in the “internal affairs” of Thailand. For its part, the Beijing Stalinist regime, having already cemented its treacherous anti-Soviet alliance with U.S. imperialism, had assured the Thai military by late 1974 that “China had stopped supporting insurgents in Thailand” (“Thai Coup Follows Savage Slaughter of Students,” *Young Spartacus* No. 48, November 1976). By the end of the 1970s, the CPT/PLAT, isolated from the proletariat and kept isolated by Stalinist treachery abroad, had begun to collapse, surrendering its arms in 1982-83. Its remnants were arrested when they tried to hold a congress in 1987. The “people's war,” as the CPT called it, was over, as was the CPT.

The collapse of the CPT is a powerful indictment of the nationalist, class-collaborationist Stalinist-Maoist doctrine on which it had always been based and which is hostile to a revolutionary proletarian and internationalist perspective. Following a military coup in late 1947, the CPT called for “a ‘truly democratic’ coalition government of the Communist Party and other democratic, patriotic, and peace-loving political forces,” to be achieved through a common struggle under a “United Front of the Thai nation...consisting of ‘the oppressed classes of workers, peasants, soldiers, students and merchants, including all democracy-oriented organizations, associations and political parties, as well as minorities and patriots’” (Kasian Tejapira, *Commodifying Marxism*, 2001). Seeking to ally with a mythical progressive wing of the Thai bourgeoisie, such calls push the false dogma of “two-stage revolution”—first “democracy” and later, socialism.

This schema was first peddled by the Mensheviks (the pro-capitalist wing of the Russian social democracy who opposed the 1917 Russian Revolution) and later by the Stalinist betrayers and all stripes of petty-bourgeois nationalists. A class-collaborationist trap for the proletariat, it has always meant tying the masses to the capitalist class enemy and has repeatedly resulted in the massacre of the communists and their supporters. This was exemplified in Indonesia, 1965-66.



September 2010: Migrant workers from Burma protest abuses at Thai fishing net factory. Thai working class must defend migrant workers, minorities.

In one of the most savage massacres in modern history, over a million Indonesian Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese were slaughtered. This bloodbath, a holy war against Communism, was the work of an alliance between the Indonesian army and Islamic fanatics directly aided by the American CIA and its Australian counterpart, ASIS. A catastrophe for the Indonesian working class, it was a direct product of the support by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to the capitalist government of then-president Sukarno. The pro-Beijing leadership of the PKI—the largest Communist party in the capitalist world—preached “joint unity” with the “progressive” Sukarno and his Indonesian Nationalist Party to form a “united national front, including the national bourgeoisie” to carry out “not socialist but democratic reforms.” Politically disarmed by this program of “two-stage revolution,” the proletariat was unable to defend itself when the Indonesian generals, led by Suharto and backed by imperialism, struck to behead the PKI (see “Lessons of Indonesia 1965,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999).

The key lesson of Indonesia 1965 is that the proletariat and the bourgeoisie have no common interests. For a proletarian party to proceed otherwise is a betrayal. Against suicidal reliance on the imperialist-dependent bourgeoisie of countries like Indonesia and Thailand, the ICL uniquely stands on Trotsky's program of permanent revolution. As for the class-collaborationist opponents of revolutionary Marxism such as Socialist Alliance in Australia, the USec and Giles Ji Ungpakorn, they reject this program and are thus obstacles to the liberation of the oppressed masses of neo-colonial countries from Thailand to Indonesia, the Philippines and beyond.

Today, the U.S., with the aid of its Australian junior imperialist partner, continues to back the blood-drenched Thai generals. The U.S. has used the Utapao air base as one of its global “anti-terror” interrogation centres. Supporting Australia's economic interests in Thailand, its eighth largest trading partner, the Australian government has maintained formal ties with the Royal Thai police since 2003. Alongside enforcing exploitation in Thailand and the region,

imperialist cooperation with the Thai military is part of a broader strategy to foment capitalist counterrevolution in the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state and a return to the untrammelled imperialist exploitation that existed prior to the 1949 Revolution. This they hope to achieve through a combination of economic penetration and military pressure.

Following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, U.S. imperialism and its allies have increased pressure against the remaining deformed workers states. In particular, they have been surrounding China with military bases from South Korea to Central Asia. The growing U.S./Australian imperialist military presence in the region is also a profound threat to the North Korean, Laotian and Vietnamese deformed workers states where millions lost their lives in heroic struggles against imperialist terror. U.S./Australian troops/cops get out of Southeast Asia! We stand for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian and Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution and fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist misleaders whose bureaucratic mismanagement and appeasement of imperialism paves the way for capitalist restoration.

Genuine communists, intransigent in their struggle for the political independence of the proletariat from all wings of the capitalist class, seek to unite workers everywhere around their historic class interests in sweeping away this system of imperialist war, exploitation and repression. The Thai proletariat and their class brothers and sisters throughout the region must look to the example of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution if they are to throw off the oppression and poverty enforced by the capitalist rulers and their imperialist patrons. Foremost is the need to build internationalist revolutionary workers parties committed to the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. The International Communist League fights to build such Leninist-Trotskyist parties to lead the struggles for new October Revolutions from Australia to Indonesia and Thailand, to Japan and the U.S. ■

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Down With Bloody Repression of "Red Shirts," Minorities!

# For a Workers and Peasants Government in Thailand!

## Abolish the Monarchy!

On 9 January, up to 40,000 demonstrators led by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD—more popularly known as the Red Shirts) rallied in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, to commemorate supporters killed in the bloody crackdown on anti-government protests in mid-May. For weeks during April-May, tens of thousands had rallied behind the UDD, supporters of exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, in protests demanding new elections. Drawing in masses of urban and rural poor, demonstrators sustained repeated attacks by state forces against their occupation centred on Ratchaprasong intersection in the commercial heart of the capital. Then on 19 May, under the orders of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Thai military mobilised armoured vehicles and thousands of troops to brutally disperse the protest. Ninety-one people were killed and up to 1,900 injured in the bloody repression against the weeks-long demonstration. The slingshots, bamboo spears, Molotov cocktails and other more conventional weapons of the demonstrators were no match for the tanks and live ammunition of the Thai army, which, along with the police, has a long history of murderous suppression of worker and student protests, separatist and leftist insurgencies.

Following the crackdown, a pall of terror fell over Thailand. Hundreds of Red Shirt protesters were rounded up and imprisoned, many detained under an Emergency Decree imposed in early April. The government froze bank accounts of suspected Red Shirt supporters, raided and closed down radio stations and blocked over 100,000 websites. Twenty-five people, including the exiled Thaksin and other leaders were charged with terrorism-related offences that can carry the death penalty.

As revolutionary Marxists, the International Communist League (ICL) defends the Red Shirt protesters against ongoing bloody state repression while at the same time standing in political opposition to this bourgeois-populist movement, which is defined by its support to, and from, Thaksin, a billionaire telecommunications mogul. Its aims and politics are counterposed to the interests of the workers and rural toilers who have rallied behind it. It is necessary to build a Leninist-Trotskyist party to mobilise the proletariat, standing at the head of all the downtrodden and oppressed, against all wings of the Thai



AP/Wally Santana

"Red Shirt" protester shot in head (above) during brutal 19 May military crackdown (right). Mass plebeian protests reflect deep inequalities of Thai society.



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bourgeoisie in the struggle to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system through socialist revolution.

Thaksin, who was ousted from government in a military coup in 2006, was the first Thai bourgeois political leader whose wealth and base of support lay outside the Bangkok elite. Describing themselves as *phrai* (serf), and sneeringly referred to as "savages" and "buffalos" by sections of the elite, many Red Shirt supporters are disenfranchised peasants from Thailand's poverty stricken north and northeast. Thaksin garnered his broad support among the urban and rural poor following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which hit Thailand particularly hard. The crash saw real wages plummet by up to 40 percent and over two million workers lose their jobs in just a few months. Many were forced back to rural villages or into sweatshops and informal or casual work to survive. Before the year ended, the prime minister resigned in the face of the continuing economic turmoil and burgeoning street protests by workers, peasants and the middle classes. The following year Thaksin founded his *Thai Rak Thai* (Thais Love Thais) party. It put forward a nationalist, populist program that promised to ameliorate conditions for the masses, particularly in the rural areas. Elected prime minister in 2001, Thaksin delivered on many of his reform pledges, including a debt moratorium for peasants and a heavily subsidised universal healthcare system.

For Thaksin, these reforms served to co-opt and contain plebeian discontent within the framework of capitalism, ensuring the necessary social and economic stability to attract imperialist investment back to Thailand, and with it a smooth flow of profits for himself and his cronies. Corruption, nepotism and authoritarian-

ism prospered while Thaksin was in power. A former police officer, he undermined the power of the entrenched bureaucracy by centralising management of government affairs in his own hands and that of his *Thai Rak Thai* party. He exercised tight control over the media and embarked on sweeping anti-union privatisations as well as repressive domestic campaigns especially targeting ethnic minorities. These measures were designed to suppress any restiveness among the population while mobilising the majority behind greater Thai nationalism.

Following Thaksin's re-election in a second landslide victory in 2005, bourgeois opposition elements coalesced around the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). This included support from Abhisit's Democrat Party, sections of the military and bureaucracy, businessmen and others who felt threatened by Thaksin's government including some public sector trade-union leaders. Known as the Yellow Shirts (the colour associated with the king), PAD seized on a tax scandal involving Thaksin in early 2006 to escalate protests against his regime. In September, while out of the country, Thaksin was deposed in a military coup—the eighteenth in the 60-plus year reign of King Bhumibol.

With the banning of *Thai Rak Thai*, its leaders regrouped as the People's Power Party (PPP) and managed to form a coalition government after junta-approved elections in late 2007. The PAD Yellow Shirts launched a new round of protests, storming Government House and blockading two international airports, while security forces largely refrained from intervening. Clashes occurred with Red Shirts who had mobilised on the streets. In a December 2008 judicial coup, the Thai Constitutional Court dissolved the PPP leading to

the installation of Abhisit as prime minister. Branding the Red Shirt opposition "communists" and "destroyers of Thailand," the government of the Oxford-educated Abhisit has ruled with an iron fist ever since. Abhisit immediately slashed Thaksin's healthcare scheme by 23 percent and bolstered his regime with a paramilitary band of armed thugs, known as the Blue Shirts, who serve to intimidate government opponents.

Without giving any political support to Thaksin, it was necessary for the proletariat to oppose the 2006 military coup—which threatened the ability of the working class to organise in its own interests and struck a blow at all the oppressed—and to defend the reforms gained under Thaksin. Concretely this would have meant *militarily* siding with Thaksin and his supporters against the coup, and with the masses on the streets, while fighting for the proletariat to emerge under its own banner.

### Thaksin Shinawatra: Blood-Drenched Bourgeois Nationalist

Bourgeois nationalists such as Thaksin are committed to defence of the capitalist order, which necessarily means enforcing the exploitation of the masses and the plunder of resources to enhance the power and the profits of the bourgeoisie and their imperialist masters. As prime minister, Thaksin launched two savage domestic campaigns. His "war on drugs" resulted in some 3,000 extrajudicial killings by the police and military. Many were also slaughtered in his bloody campaign against the Malay Muslim minority in the southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and parts of Songkhla, which

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