

## **DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION FOR THE OCT. 6, 2019 NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM**

*Submitted by eight National Committee members and alternates of the Permanent Revolution to the Oct. 6 National Committee plenum of Socialist Action. This resolution reflects the general views of the PRF.*

### **A world in rebellion**

In recent years, working people worldwide have mobilized on numerous occasions against undemocratic governments and neoliberal austerity. This was manifested explosively a few years ago in the Arab Spring revolts, the Occupy movement in the U.S., and the indignados movement in the Spanish state.

More recently, in Algeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Iran, Hong Kong, and Nicaragua, there have been mass outbreaks of varying intensities and levels of success. Mass demonstrations have recently broken out in Egypt and Lebanon, with demands of “Down with the regime!” These mobilizations have been met with repression, but in Algeria, where the process is ongoing, and in Sudan, protesters managed to bring down heads of state who had been in power for decades. In both Algeria and Sudan, corrupt presidents were forced out by elements of their own regimes in an attempt at self-preservation by the existing state apparatus. These mass mobilizations often have had a multi-class character and have lacked clear proletarian leadership.

In Europe, the failure of the reformist left—of the “official” Communist and Social Democratic variety—to stand fast against neoliberalism and in defense of the working class has helped spur the growth of populist, anti-immigrant far-right parties. The failure of the traditional left parties also sparked illusions in neo-reformist parties (SYRIZA, PODEMOS) and Bonapartist-type movements in Latin America (Chavez, Morales, Ortega, and other “pink tide” figures and movements). These formations similarly failed to appreciate and decisively deal with the crisis of the capitalist system.

The reformist and neo-reformist left’s inability to explain the sources of the crisis in the capitalist system’s long-term crisis of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and to organize a generalized fightback against capitalist

austerity has eroded the former base of reformist parties. Worse still, reformists have enforced austerity time and again. As the working-class base of the traditional mass reformist parties has been eroded, some in our movement have argued that space to the left of the Stalinists and Social Democrats has opened up, making room for “broad” left parties. This has led to a steady liquidation of program and organization in the Fourth International.

The explosive Yellow Vest movement in France had its origins in the rural areas and small towns, but quickly caught the attention of an alienated urban working class. Although the movement speaks to sectors of the working class and petit bourgeoisie who are frustrated with the years of increasing austerity, it is a mixed-class mass movement without a clear political direction or program.

### **A new recession is looming**

Despite Trump’s claims to the contrary, a recession is on the horizon. The manufacturing sector has slowed in the U.S., Japan, and the Eurozone. U.S. housing sales are slow, and wages remain stagnant. The fastest growing job categories are in low-wage sectors. In early September, the Federal Reserve headed off a banking crisis by pumping at least \$275 billion in temporary cash into the repurchase agreements market or repo market when lenders could not meet demand for short-term money.

CNN explains the repo market like this: “In the repo market, financial institutions such as hedge funds and investment banks borrow cheap money from large investors such as mutual banks to fund their operations. The borrower (hedge fund) or the dealer sells securities such as the U.S. Treasury bills as a form of collateral for the short-term loan. The counterparty or the buyer (mutual banks) takes the collateral and earns a small interest once the borrower repurchases the security.”

Why does this matter? The U.S. repo market melted down in September 2008, a crucial part of that year’s financial panic. This and the Fed decision to cut interest rates twice points to efforts to fight off a recession.

A recession can only deepen and exacerbate the effects of an economy that already has shown itself incapable of meeting the needs of the vast majority. The homeless crisis in the United States has grown worse as gentrification and rising housing prices drive working people out of neighborhoods. Trump has recently touted “solutions” to homelessness that stigmatize and criminalize the homeless.

The solution to homelessness is not through punishing the homeless. The homelessness crisis is a symptom of the capitalist system's inability to meet the needs of working people. We should demand an emergency public works program to build public housing, with all workers paid top union wages. The solution requires a national health service, free education through college, and the cancellation of college debt.

### **Radicalizing youth; rise in labor struggles**

In the United States, a layer of youth have begun to question the legitimacy of the political and economic setup; their voices were heard in movements beginning with Occupy and Black Lives Matter. A continuing youth radicalization around the basic idea of socialism as an alternative to capitalism has taken root in the past few years. It's clear that the openness to socialist and communist ideas is greater than at any time in decades.

Concurrently, an increased combativity among workers is manifested in an uptick in strike activity and organizing. The teachers' strikes in various states a year ago caused increased excitement and awareness of working people around union-led actions.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "In 2018, there were 20 major work stoppages involving 485,000 workers. ... The number of major work stoppages beginning in 2018 was the highest since 2007 (21 major work stoppages). The number of workers involved was the highest since 1986. ... Educational services and health care and social assistance industry groups accounted for over 90 percent" of idled workers.

In July, coal miners in Kentucky protested their former employer, Blackjewel LLC, by blocking a railroad track that carries coal trains, demanding back pay after being laid off. Blackjewel had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on July 1. Many of these nonunion workers had voted for Trump because of his promise to revitalize the coal industry. These workers' decision to take collective action, and the support given by the surrounding community, helps to show the potential for the mobilization and self-organization of workers.

In September, 50,000 autoworkers at GM downed tools and walked off the job. During the last recession, the UAW and its members had agreed to deep concessions to keep GM from going under. Now, GM is prospering and CEO Mary Barra is one of the highest paid executives in the U.S., with a total compensation package of almost \$22 million annually—281 times the median salary of a GM employee. Meanwhile, workers are subjected to two-tier wages and threats to their pensions and health care. One GM worker in

Langhorne, Pa., commented, “How can people live like this? It’s wrong.” The solidarity between more established workers and newer hires against the two-tier system is a sign of a shift in class consciousness. The GM strike reportedly caused workers at Ford and Fiat-Chrysler to advocate a walkout in solidarity with GM workers.

### **Inter-imperialist rivalries**

Marxists of all stripes are struggling to understand new developments within inter-imperialist rivalries. The power jostling of the U.S. and E.U. alongside the emergence of new imperialist powers China and Russia is altering the dynamics of world politics. These changing dynamics have caused debates and even deep confusion for the revolutionary left in examining this question.

Our Trotskyist program starts from an understanding of international political developments. It starts with the question of what the capitalist class is doing on a global scale and how it affects the working class. The answers we derive from our exploration of these questions have serious programmatic significance when considering imperialist advances on places like Kashmir, Venezuela, Iran, Syria, etc.

When we talk about world imperialism there is no question that the U.S. ranks at the top of the list. Revolutionary socialists are explicitly for the defeat of U.S. imperialism everywhere in the world. At the same time, revolutionary socialists don’t play the lesser-evil game when it comes to imperialism. We don’t believe that one imperialist nation is perhaps more progressive than another and that it should therefore be defended. We understand that the aim of imperialist nations, among other nefarious projects, is the extraction of wealth from weaker nations.

At our Convention in 2018, Socialist Action voted that China and Russia are imperialist nations. Despite curtailed discussion on each topic, the adoption of this position is a vital and historic shift in the party’s program. By utilizing our analysis of Russia and China, Socialist Action should have been in the leadership of this discussion. Yet crucial steps have not been taken following the convention votes and have left the party with a weakened program.

First, the China and Russia resolutions have not been published. Second, the vote on Russia was contingent upon a discussion about the nature of Russian imperialism; yet there has been no discussion for well over a year.

The Majority Faction has never clarified their views on imperialism today. Comrade Mackler has introduced ideas of “sub-imperialisms” or “regional

imperialisms” in regard to Russia and even Brazil! This discussion has never once been broached in the party ranks or even in the leadership. Furthermore, it has been used to justify Chinese and Russian imperialist interventions in countries like Syria, Iran, and Venezuela.

### **Anti-worker actions by Chinese and Russian imperialisms**

How has Socialist Action’s program been weakened by the lack of political clarity? Despite the unclear and not fully discussed positions of the party on key international questions, the Majority Faction has already implemented its perspectives in unprincipled and undemocratic ways as expressed in our party’s press. Moreover, it has led to the gradual acceptance of “campism” (which we will define more fully below) in the party’s orientation to the antiwar movement.

A recent example includes the Majority Faction’s outright rejection of the article submitted to Socialist Action newspaper, “Chinese Imperialism Backs Pakistan’s Right to Kashmir.” The article stands fully in line with the party position on China, and is also an exploration of current inter-imperialist relations. Yet the Majority Faction voted against its inclusion in the paper because, to quote comrade Mackler, “The article says China is bad.” The only conclusion one could draw is that in some way the Majority Faction views Chinese imperialism as a bulwark against U.S. imperialism. It is not. China is no friend to the world working class.

Any party in the revolutionary movement must follow China’s developments closely. Chinese capital is wreaking havoc on workers across the globe. This includes deeper military incursions in Mali, Iran, Balochistan, and elsewhere. Anywhere that Chinese companies own mines or build infrastructure there are strikes and push-backs by the workers. Just this past May, a sit-down strike took place in the Orkney gold mine in South Africa over work conditions and pay. The mine is operated by Chinese capitalists.

Currently, China is deploying 5000 security personnel to Iran and has invested \$600 billion in petrochemicals and infrastructure building, including the Chabahar port. The end result of this investment will likely have the same outcome as Sri Lanka’s experience with its Hambantota Port. Chinese capital financed the port construction and Sri Lanka defaulted on its payments. Today the port is under Chinese ownership.

Similarly, Russian imperialism has made a stunning impression on the world stage with its intervention into Syria. Following the Russian bombing of neighborhoods and hospitals in support of the murderous Assad regime, Russian companies were granted billions of dollars in contracts to rebuild

Damascus, Aleppo, and other devastated cities. The reconstruction efforts were part of Assad's larger gentrification plan to clear the cities of the working poor and open up areas to international financial institutions.

The Russian intervention was not a progressive alternative to U.S. imperialist intervention. Both had the *same* end goals, to exploit the Syrian working class and extract their resources. Yet the Majority Faction defends to this day the Russian imperialist intervention in Syria. Today, Russian soldiers are murdering Syrian workers who are protesting working conditions and pay. The position of the Majority Faction puts us on the side of Russian capitalists instead of the international working class.

More broadly, the method employed by the Majority Faction is affecting other areas of our analysis. Another recent article on Kashmir, which did appear in *Socialist Action* newspaper, was scrapped of its more precise political character because the author dared to quote Trotskyists in India and Pakistan who called for Kashmiri self-determination and for the occupying powers (both India and Pakistan) to get out now. The only conclusion that we can draw is that the Majority Faction concludes that Pakistani intervention represents a progressive alternative for Kashmir. This flies in the face of all other evidence that suggests that the most advanced Kashmiri, Pakistani, and Indian working-class and peasant groups, like the JKLF or the Awami Workers Party or the Lahore Left Front, call for *both* occupying countries to get out of Kashmir now. (We will take this up in detail below).

The abandonment of our Trotskyist tradition and the move toward campism has disarmed our program and isolated us even more from the workers of the world. At almost every turn, the Majority Faction has run from full democratic discussion of these developments. It has led the Majority Faction to see revolutionary upsurges through a colored lens, distrust working-class movements, and to put their faith in the national bourgeoisie of countries under attack by imperialism.

### **Some responses to the Majority Faction's Draft Political Resolution**

In the context of the opportunities to build a revolutionary socialist organization and to contribute to the regroupment of a revolutionary socialist international, the perspectives contained in the DPR authored by Jeff M. for the Oct. 6 NC plenum are an obstacle to progress. The document, representing the views of the Majority Faction, is a manifestation of all that is wrong in the political outlook and organizational functioning of those who hold the majority of seats in the Political Committee.

It begins, for example, in its earliest paragraphs, by asserting that it is written in defense of “SA positions” on 2019 events in Iran, Kashmir, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Presumably, the MF would like the NC and the ranks to believe that such “positions” were the result of a process of analysis based on written texts—full of facts about current events and the concrete application of our historic interpretive framework—as preparation for full discussions of how the class struggle unfolded since our Convention. However, no such texts were produced; no such discussions and votes were fully prepared.

The method of functioning of the majority of the PC has been to avoid, if at all possible, well-prepared discussions on international or national issues as they have unfolded since October 2018. Instead, the MF document begins on the supposition that the National Committee should agree that votes on the Syria question at the 2016 and 2018 SA Conventions have set “the line” on all events involving imperialist interventions into the semi-colonial world on every continent for now and the foreseeable future, no matter how different the circumstances and the relationship of class forces might be.

In addition, the NC has been asked to agree that such “analysis” as might occur should be drafted by Majority Faction supporters in one form—the form of a newspaper article—and that any analysis that does not fit into this limited frame or package designed for the world outside of Socialist Action would be unnecessary, and an obstacle to “our work.”

More ominously, since no PC discussions were prepared, the “analysis” now emanates from the brain of only one or two comrades and always in relationship to previous debates on Syria! It has been repeatedly proposed that this line can even “exist” prior to its being put into an article or document or presented in an oral report to the leadership. Thus, one Permanent Revolution Faction member was accused in the DPR of violating the “party line” on Venezuela for merely sharing articles for information online from Latin American Trotskyists (with whom we have repeatedly voted to explore fusion) before any discussion of “the line” had actually occurred. The so-called “Syria line” really stands in as shorthand for a significant turn away from our Trotskyist program.

## **Syria**

The long Syria section of the Majority Faction’s DPR is filled with false assertions about the views of the comrades of the Permanent Revolution Faction—including the ridiculous claims that the PRF believes that the right of oppressed nations to self-determination “does not apply to Syria,” that the

PRF believes the Syrian conflict was *merely* a rebellion of the “people” against the Assad regime, and that we do not acknowledge the murderous intervention of the United States into the war. Unfortunately, the distortions of our views in the DPR are far too numerous to document for this Oct. 6 plenum discussion.

But to understand what the PRF has *really* stood for in Syria, comrades can read the 2016 and 2018 discussion bulletins containing the Convention resolutions on Syria written by the *SA* newspaper editor and supported by comrades who later formed the PRF. These resolutions clearly demonstrate a commitment to the principle of self-determination, the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Syria, and a revolutionary road forward for the beleaguered, often exiled, workers and farmers of that nation. It should be recognized in addition that PRF comrades were among the most successful people in UNAC in bringing new activists into motion against U.S. intervention in Syria.

Finally, the PRF believes that the predictions in these Syrian resolutions and other contributions regarding the impact on the working classes of Syria of new Russian and Iranian capitalist penetration and the aid of these regimes to a rebuilding designed to carry out a “cleansing” of the Sunni poor from Syrian cities have been borne out and documented.

### **What is “campism”?**

The Syria section of the MF document contains a most curious section on the United National Antiwar Coalition. It asserts that Socialist Action is with the “U.S. Out Now! camp.” We can only guess that this phraseology is an attempt to obscure the meaning of “campism” as used in today’s antiwar movement and to introduce a more benign meaning to the term.

Let’s be clear on what the PRF means when they describe the majority of the UNAC Administrative Committee as “campist.” Based on articles posted to the UNAC list, blog, and the videos of UNAC speakers, it is reasonable to say that the UNAC leadership majority has the following view: The world is polarized between two great forces or camps. One is U.S. imperialism, which is trying to actively foment regime change almost everywhere in the world. The other great force is an “Axis of Resistance,” anchored by Russia, and maybe China, and this alliance includes the governments of Venezuela, Nicaragua, Iran, and Syria, as well as organizations like ALBA. They implicitly and explicitly give political support to capitalist regimes. Key figures in the UNAC Administrative Committee and very visible members of the Coordinating Committee articulate this line on listserves, in interviews, and in speeches.

Despite these facts, the PRF has never proposed that SA leave UNAC—as the DPR falsely charges. What PRF comrades have pleaded for, over and over, is that SA oppose this analysis inside the UNAC coalition and put forward an alternative one that those coming around UNAC can easily find. Socialist Action should fight to be sure that key figures who do NOT give political support to these capitalist regimes, and are both anti-imperialist and involved in radical opposition groupings within subjected nations, are allowed on the platform at antiwar rallies and are made to feel comfortable inside the coalition.

Historically, we have stood for building broad coalitions in which all left tendencies were welcome. But without any visibility for those who do not give political support to regimes in the “Axis of Resistance,” UNAC cannot become that. A full and well-prepared discussion of the experiences of all comrades in the antiwar movement is necessary to draw a real balance sheet on what is the most effective way to mobilize opposition to U.S. intervention. Unfortunately, such a balance sheet is unlikely to be drawn.

### **Conspiracy theory and right-left alliances**

The DPR for this plenum that is authored by Jeff discounts the attendance by UNAC representatives at a Moscow conference sponsored by the Anti-Globalization Movement (AGM), an outfit that regularly makes common cause with ultra-right chauvinists and anti-Semitic elements, as well as a few leftist groupings. Jeff writes that UNAC leaders reported they were unaware of the nature of the conference, and that the matter “is now closed.”

However, even before the appearance of white supremacists from the United States in the December 2014 AGM conference in Russia was confirmed, the politics of this event had become quite plain. One only had to look at the organizational affiliation and background of the organizers, the background of the organization, its funding, or even the organization’s name. Alexander Ionov, the head of the AGM, has spoken on the same platform as the anti-Semitic and self-declared “red fascist” Alexander Dugin. Ionov is also closely connected to the right-wing Russian chauvinist party Rodina (Motherland) and to the Putin government. Holocaust denier and anti-Semite Israel Shamir also spoke at the conference. Another conference, in August 2016, also attended by U.S. white supremacists, was partly funded by the Russian government, Ionov admits.

There was no public repudiation of the 2014 conference or the AGM after the presence of white-supremacists and neo-Confederates from the Texas Nationalist Movement had been made known to the leadership of UNAC. Any

apology that organizers of the AGM gave to UNAC leaders was entirely private. And yet, documents from this visit are still available online, such as the glowing UNAC reports (here: <http://nepajac.org/rusrpt1.html> ) and the Workers' World report (here: <https://www.workers.org/2015/01/18/moscow-conference-stands-novorossiya-palestine-black-america/> ) and the conference declaration (here: <https://truthout.org/articles/declaration-the-right-of-peoples-to-self-determination-and-building-a-multipolar-world/> ).

What is more, Workers World Party members and UNAC leader Joe Iosbaker traveled to Moscow for a demonstration backed by the AGM in February 2015. The report is still available on the Workers World website: (<https://www.workers.org/2015/03/21/youths-visit-to-moscow-exposes-u-s-imperialisms-lies-about-russia/> ) The article concludes with: "We hope to further cultivate a relationship among the Anti-Globalization Movement, the Russian people and ourselves. To stop U.S. leaders from plunging humanity into a nuclear armageddon, we will be vocally on the side of those defending themselves from reckless imperialist aggression."

Public UNAC involvement in red-brown alliances has not ended there. In May 2016, the AGM reported on a UNAC visit to Odessa and said that Joe Lombardo was reporting to the AGM on the delegation's visit (see: <http://anti-global.ru/?p=18889&lang=en> ). And in May 2018, the red-brown Molotov Club posted a video identifying Phil Wilayto as representing UNAC at its meeting (see: [https://m.facebook.com/pg/intnatMolotovClub/videos/?ref=page\\_internal&mt\\_nav=0](https://m.facebook.com/pg/intnatMolotovClub/videos/?ref=page_internal&mt_nav=0) ). We know of no public repudiation of either action by UNAC.

As the Socialist Action representative in UNAC, Jeff has failed to try to educate leaders of this coalition in the dangers of red-brown alliances. The Majority Faction's Draft Political Resolution essentially attributes the inability of Jeff and his faction of taking any effective action in UNAC against red-brown alliances to their fear that any such action would isolate Jeff within UNAC. And so, instead of subordinating his antiwar work to Socialist Action's overall program, Jeff and his faction have spent several years shaping Socialist Action's program to fit what Jeff views as the needs of his antiwar work.

Meanwhile, Jeff has toured Eva Bartlett, an editor of the extreme lunatic fringe conspiracy website, SOTT.net and frequent contributor to other right-

wing and conspiracist media sites. This tour was followed by a growing codification of conspiracist methodology in Socialist Action.

### **“Revolutionary skepticism”?**

On Jan. 10, 2019, the Political Committee of Socialist Action voted in favor of two documents written by a Majority Faction member that support and defend the use of conspiracist methodology by our party. The documents call on Socialist Action “to take note of any facts and partial evidence of nefarious plots on the part of the ruling rich that may come to light.” What kinds of nefarious plots does this document call on our party to discuss in our press? Plots “such as deep state involvement in the Kennedy assassination” for example.

These documents claim that capitalism “operates by conspiracy,” and to counter this, the MF member introduced the notion of “revolutionary skepticism.” In practice, this doctrine effectively puts forward the idea that any bourgeois source that contradicts our line should be assumed to be false “until proven otherwise by concrete, verifiable facts,” while any sources which affirm our line should be assumed to be true.

Moreover, it now seems that the modifier “bourgeois” is unnecessary, since articles written by other socialist tendencies (even those so close to us that we have considered fusion with them!) can also contradict our line (even if that line is not yet known to anyone in the party but perhaps one or two members of the Majority Faction).

When this doctrine was first codified by the Majority Faction’s members, it appeared so outlandish that it seemed likely that most MF members were simply supporting it to shield the author of the documents from criticism. However, it has been cited several times since to justify the use of questionable evidence in articles that are taken from sources that are considered compatible with Socialist Action’s “line” without reference to available contradicting evidence. The doctrine has even been used to prevent *Socialist Action* newspaper’s editor from bringing an article with such issues into the PC for discussion.

The PC passed such a motion on June 12, 2019, which was motivated by Jeff as follows: “In the PC, we debated and voted on an approach to sources, so-called conspiracy theories and the need for revolutionary skepticism in evaluating imperial propaganda. Those questions are settled. My article was fully in line with those positions that have been debated, voted on and decided. In fact, the last paragraph in my article is virtually identical to the first paragraph in the document, ‘Beyond Bourgeois Propaganda: The

Socialist Approach to Seeing Through the Haze,' which was approved by the PC last January."

The notion that capitalism "operates by conspiracy" also poses a serious threat to Marxist methodology. Capitalism is based upon social relations, state power, ideology. The working class can discern its operation through observation, experience in action, history, and theory. It does not need to unmask "deep state" conspiracies any more than it needs myth or religion to end its enslavement by capitalism. Indeed, the latter are obstacles to the development of revolutionary consciousness.

Conspiracy theories make sense of those phenomena that an inadequate political perspective cannot explain. Liberals who cannot understand how their government and their society can do such terrible things turn to conspiracy theories to explain the Iraq War and the curtailment of civil liberties. They look to an imaginary cabal within the government that is the real problem. Reveal and remove the cabal, and American capitalism can fight for freedom and democracy once again! Conspiracies also help to explain the world to those who believe that American imperialism is essentially unchallenged, if not invincible, and thus, who cannot make sense of the growing inter-imperialist rivalries wracking the world.

Likewise, right-wingers who claim that trans people are products of an evil political movement, rather than a spontaneously emerging part of human society, have a difficult time explaining how so many children and adults decide that they are trans when every single person around them persecutes them for this identification. These theorists find their answer in conspiracies hatched by Soros, Hollywood, and academic cultural-Marxists.

The introduction and normalization of "revolutionary skepticism" and conspiracism represent a radical departure from Marxist methodology and scientific thought altogether. It opens Socialist Action up to a host of right-wing ideas. Notably, in the same two documents approved by the PC majority on Jan.10, there are a number of formulations that open Socialist Action to the type of right-left alliances sought by organizations that some leaders of UNAC have already made connections with (see the above section).

These documents approved by the Political Committee majority reduce the united-front strategy to nothing more than the formulation of "principled demands," rejecting any orientation that seeks to mobilize specific social forces. The documents state, "Once a principled united front is formed, all are welcome to join who agree with the chosen demands. No one is screened

based on who they voted for in the last election, whether or not they support socialism or their opinions on other unrelated issues.”

Once they have revised the united-front tactic so fundamentally that it allows for the participation of right-wing forces, they defend actual proponents of right-left alliances, Kevin Zeese and Caitlin Johnstone, as simply a little naïve for having a strategic orientation towards involving the right wing. But the documents themselves suggest that the involvement of right-wing forces is imminently necessary when they state, “We know that if capitalism is to be overturned, *many* of today’s Trump supporters will *necessarily be the revolutionary fighters of tomorrow*” (emphasis added). One would think that the average age and class-composition alone of Trump’s supporters would cause PC members to think twice before voting for such a significant strategic orientation (which has never appeared in a single convention resolution!).

Rather than educate UNAC members on the dangers of right-left alliances, the majority of the PC seems to think it important to educate Socialist Action’s membership on their harmlessness.

After voting up these conspiracy documents, the PC majority voted *down* the following motions:

**1.** Socialist Action should not, with a method of analysis at odds with Marxist understanding of the motive forces of history, promote or lend credibility to conspiracy theories which single out a special person, or small group of persons, within capitalist ruling circles as the special agents of some special calamity under capitalism.

**2.** Socialist Action will not promote or lend credibility to George Soros conspiracy theories or “Globalist” conspiracy theories.

**3.** The leadership of Socialist Action should not post material to Socialist Action News from right-wing sources with introductions that suggest we may approve of, support, or be influenced by right-wing personalities, organizations, and forces. If a member of the leadership feels it is helpful or necessary to share something from a right-wing source, that person will include an introduction to the post that makes it clear that the post’s purpose is informational only and not an effort to promote the right-wing source, organization, or personality.

**4.** Socialist Action will continue to oppose right-left alliances in the united-front-type coalitions we participate in.

The third motion was in response to the Majority Faction member’s posting of a video-clip of the rapidly anti-immigrant Tucker Carlson, favorite

of alt-right and white supremacist leaders everywhere. The MF member justified this post because, following the logic of “revolutionary skepticism,” Carlson opposed U.S. intervention in Syria in the clip, and so it should be presented to our members. Today in Socialist Action, the same comrade supports the basis of an anti-trans lawsuit promoted by Tucker Carlson, and the PC majority joins him in suppressing an article written by a trans member of Socialist Action, and against expressing our party’s long-held line in opposition to such attacks on trans people’s rights.

We in the PRF are proud of our opposition to conspiracism and right-left alliances inside and outside of Socialist Action.

### **Venezuela**

In the last few weeks, all of Venezuela has been focused on a photo that has surfaced showing Guaidó with his arm on the shoulders of members of the Colombian drug gang Los Rastrojos. It reaffirms, the Argentine PTS daily says, the rot in the high circles of the right-wing opposition to Maduro. It was this gang that facilitated Guaidó’s crossing of the border during the coup and gave the lie to Guaidó’s posturing as a spokesperson for Venezuelan democracy and an opponent of the paramilitaries that do the dirty work of Maduro inside Venezuela proper. This reminder of the events of April comes at a time when the U.S.-backed Colombian government lead by Duque is upping its border threats against Venezuela, moving military equipment and personnel to border zones—all, ironically, to counter the threat of Maduro’s supposed harboring of the wing of the FARC that recently broke with the peace negotiations.

Even more ominous was the agreement of 19 governments in the Americas, led by the U.S., of a 1947 pact known as the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, or the Rio Treaty. The treaty was set up as a mutual defense pact against a foreign invader and is now activated to counter the threat that is supposedly in place because Maduro is said to be hosting guerrillas set to begin bombing key sites in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. The U.S. and Colombia also claim that Russia is likely upgrading the Venezuelan missile defense system it earlier provided. In addition, the Russians are said to have provided thousands of portable surface to air missiles to Maduro.

The Rio Treaty pact was invoked soon after Trump’s firing of John Bolton, whom the president said was “holding me back on Venezuela.” The Rio Treaty potentially sets in motion collaboration on joint actions ranging from economic sanctions to the use of military force and cutting transport and

communications links. A meeting in October is set to determine exactly which actions are to be taken. According to *The New York Times*, administration officials said their immediate goal was to escalate sanctions—including the possible interdiction at sea of ships carrying Venezuelan oil or closing airspace—and to provide a legal framework for other countries in the hemisphere to join them.

There is no guarantee that Washington will get exactly what it wants from this body. Mexico is on an offensive against the escalation to military enforcement of interdiction on the continent and *The Times* reports unease among the Rio Treaty partners about U.S. aims. Left commentators argue that while nothing can be ruled out in terms of U.S.-led military action, the political hesitancy and the failure of the US so far to win significant sections of the military officer corps away from Maduro in the eight months since the failure of their coup effort has demonstrated the invocation of the Rio Treaty and increased sanctions are more likely aimed at pressuring Maduro in the framework of the Norway negotiations underway in Barbados.

While Maduro dramatically “froze” the negotiations in August when the U.S. announced the plan to blockade, they are not dead, and Maduro admitted that his regime is carrying on “secret” meetings with the U.S., some in Washington, D.C., itself. In these negotiations, there are open rifts within the Maduro team and within the Guaido opposition and the whole process is reportedly wracked by suspicion and fear about breaks within each team. The opposition has been divided on whether or not they would accept a deal in which Maduro remains in power for six months or so while national elections are being prepared. Meanwhile the US, which opposes that scenario, keeps publicly guaranteeing Maduro’s security and safety should he agree to step down immediately and leave the country.

Most recently, Maduro moved a chess piece in this game by announcing that the PSUV was forming a national dialogue with minor opposition parties in Venezuela. (They are not the major opposition parties of Guaidó and Capriles.) The pact would include delegates returning to the National Assembly and taking their seats, the re-activation of the electoral authorities, the release of some prisoners who come from the minor opposition, and support of an oil for food program. Maduro is clearly moving to shape a situation in which the regime would be more prepared politically for national elections. This could be in conjunction with some settlement or secret negotiations, although without direct collaboration with the big right-opposition parties.

Sitting in the heart of the imperialist beast, it is not our role to criticize concessions that the Venezuelan government must make to imperialism while under the gun. However, we do not ask the same of the revolutionary socialist left inside the country—small groups that are trying to forge an independent working-class front to fight the crushing of the class in the wake of horrific sanctions and previous concessions to imperialism and new anti-working class measure by Chavismo.

It is true that the revolutionary socialist left in Venezuela is relatively small but that does not render their struggle and analysis useless to us, anymore that the fact that we are small renders our analysis of U.S. politics useless. We want to know how they speak to the working class about the negotiations and if they are putting forward critiques of which we should be cognizant. Reports indicate that, in general, they see the move to rejoin the National Assembly and ally with some small opposition parties as being for foreign consumption only, and fairly meaningless in terms of resolving the crisis or slowing the pauperization of the working class.

They tell us that right now, the daily life of working people in Venezuela is unimaginable. August marked the end of the first year of the neoliberal monetary conversion protecting those among the elites who had dollars—a move leading to hyper-inflation and falling purchasing power for workers. And that was accompanied by Memorandum 2792, which suspended the labor and social rights previously established.

During this year, the monthly wage of workers has fallen to a historic low of \$2.76 month, initiating extreme poverty and pauperization. If one adds in the government basket of food, the monthly income reaches \$4.20 a month. A year ago, the minimum wage was set at \$30 a month but has been reduced by over 90%. The current monthly salary can buy 2 1/2 dozen eggs. Government efforts at price control have been abandoned.

In the midst of this situation, the League of Workers for Socialism (LTS) wrote in a recent statement: “In the face of this urgent situation for the working class, workers have to have a clear policy to deal with it. They want to convince us that we only have to live off the government's misery bonds and their food box, or an alleged ‘humanitarian aid’ of the main capitalist powers: they want us with the moral of the needy and not of a producing class that fights against the capitalists and the governments for the fruit of their work. It is about preserving the working class from decay and ruin. It is about the life and death of the only creative and progressive class that can cope with this prevailing catastrophe. We need the broadest unity of action

and fight for our most basic interests and needs and to defend ourselves so as not to end up falling into inaction.”

The small revolutionary socialist groups have been calling for a united front, involving both public and private workers, around wages, but they are in a tricky situation. On the one hand, the PSUV unions and the *collectivos* are involved in attacking mobilizations and protests fighting for a better wage. On the other, a number of the reformist unions have been organizing protests of only public workers with the larger political goal of discrediting the Maduro regime because they have thrown their political support behind Guaidó. To maintain principled anti-imperialist and politically independent workers’ mobilizations in which revolutionaries can point the way toward a working-class resolution of the crisis seems to be mostly on the level of propaganda at this point.

From afar it is difficult to know exactly who is who in the workers’ movement. Scanning *Aporrea*, one sees all kinds of working-class sectors in motion. Clearly, there are critical Chavista organizations demanding that the government abandon these anti-working-class measures. There are oil refinery strikes that may be led by the C-CURA front of the Socialist Liberty Party of Simon Rodriguez Porras. There are transport workers’ actions, and the school year opened with a major strike of Caracas teachers. Other stories reveal small groups of unionists protesting new privatizations in the cement industry.

Finally, the opposition to imperialist investment—Russian, Chinese, and Western European—in the environmentally sensitive Orinoco basin continues to grow. All this ferment keeps the revolutionary socialist comrades searching for ways to intervene effectively. We can learn from their experiences if we follow the situation closely.

It remains the case that our main task here in the U.S. is to continue to educate and build opposition to U.S. intervention. We must do everything possible in opposition to the political calculations of the U.S. ruling class regarding their decisions to maintain sanctions and intervene militarily. On Sept. 20, when on the rally platform one of our comrades condemned U.S. imperialism as a linchpin of climate chaos and got cheers from the high school, college, and other climate activists in Connecticut—part of the biggest movement mobilization since the protest to stop the Iraq war—we saw the potential for mobilizing opposition to U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

We are currently hobbled in our efforts to build a viable movement in opposition to U.S. intervention by the subjective factor, as the current

antiwar movement has not proven very capable of connecting with the youth in motion. But new mobilizations of radical youth who understand the evil of oil wars are clearly part of the solution.

If comrades read the full Venezuela amendment supported by Tendency One at the April 13 National Committee plenum, a document quoted only selectively by the Majority Faction, they will see a continuation of Socialist Action's approach to Chavismo throughout the years that is well documented in articles by Gerry Foley and others in our press. In this resolution the challenge to build opposition to U.S. intervention in Venezuela is front and center, and the need for independent workers' action to stop the U.S. effectively is contextualized historically in several ways.

U.S. workers, our immediate audience, connect to working-class struggles abroad, and deepening their knowledge of the class struggle inside Venezuela can only enhance their understanding of why and how the U.S. intervention must be opposed. This was the whole logic of USLAW during the Iraq war. This was the reason that Socialist Workers Party unionists (including some who are now in Socialist Action) toured Nicaragua during the Contra war and came back to tell stories of the workers' struggles to force the Sandinistas to move to nationalize and place companies under workers' control.

The story of independent working-class action and the fight to build a movement against U.S. intervention are not at odds but dialectically intertwined, and they both are part of our efforts to connect with revolutionaries on the ground as part of the challenge of a global regroupment of revolutionary socialist forces.

The hysteria that appears in the Majority Faction's DPR over our sharing of an article by the Venezuelan section of the Trotskyist Faction, the international grouping associated with the PST in Argentina and Left Voice in the U.S., shows just how far their adaptation has gone toward the "Axis of Resistance" advocates among the leadership in UNAC. The article was shared on an internal UNAC discussion list after numerous articles had been sent in that gave clear political support to Maduro. The article was instead offered, for informational purposes only, as one view from the ground by part of the Venezuelan left.

### **"Focus"**

And what about the strange emphasis on *focus* in the charges that Jeff and his faction have hurled against the Permanent Revolution Faction? The PRF and the PRT before it has been carrying out a campaign to get Socialist

Action to provide richer and more socialist coverage of the struggle against imperialism in the semi-colonial world. Nevertheless, we agree that the action tasks facing revolutionaries in the U.S. center on trying to mobilize opposition to U.S. intervention, and we support fully this aspect of the SA propaganda and activity.

A large portion of the material we have submitted, however, is to help supply essential information that up to now has been missing from articles in our press, as it has from our internal discussions.

The April 13 Venezuela amendment and appendices were designed to supply for comrades some consideration of the history, the economic picture, and theoretical considerations that are necessary for an appraisal of the situation in Venezuela today. We pointed out that the example of Chile was very relevant to the fight against imperialism in Venezuela, where the loyalty of the officer corps has been purchased with the gifts of ownership of factories and concessions. The PRF continues to support our historic interpretation of the concept of Permanent Revolution, in which the fight against imperialism and the fight for working class independence and revolution are inextricably intertwined.

One of the differences between the MF and the PRF that has come into focus in the recent months has to do with whether or not the revolutionary socialists and working classes in Venezuela and Iran are “sufficiently anti-imperialist” to warrant our attention and interest—especially if the workers are in the streets protesting against their own bosses or government.

The formula for articles in *Socialist Action* newspaper more and more involves writing a “U.S. Out Now” or “U.S. Hands Off” antiwar piece, and then adding a short paragraph at the end about the need for a revolutionary party that strives for socialism—clearly in the far future. And there is that sentence indicating that the dialectical relationship between the class struggle on the ground and the fight against imperialism is not yet in place due to the lack of a mass revolutionary party. These assertions and implications are made without a close analysis of the class struggle, and they needlessly cast aspersions on local working-class or leftist leaderships, placing barriers to both our knowledge and our ability to regroup revolutionary socialist forces on a world scale.

### **Nicaragua**

In the Nicaragua section of the Majority Faction DPR, the author, Jeff, has certainly not documented the record of any discussion that took place inside the Political Committee. The actual documented record of PC meetings and

published articles demonstrates that although the Nicaragua discussion was going full blast inside UNAC beginning with the first mass actions in April, and despite the fact that the UNAC discussion list was awash with charges that those who did not believe that the demonstrations against the Ortega regime was reducible to a U.S. orchestrated regime change operation were tantamount to being agents of imperialism, the Political Committee majority was unwilling to take up the question until July 2018. When it did take up the question, it approved the publication of two articles, one on the derailing of the Sandinista Revolution and the capitalist character of the Ortega regime by Jeff M. (<https://socialistaction.org/2018/08/07/nicaragua-dynamics-of-an-interrupted-revolution/>) and a supplementary one by Chris G. on the economic causes that propelled workers into the streets (<https://socialistaction.org/2018/08/09/whats-behind-the-protests-rocking-nicaragua/>).

Here is how Jeff summarized his opinion after three months of the upsurge:

*Over the past three months, and following the FSLN's now withdrawn decree lowering pension payments by 5 percent and increasing taxes on the poor, we have witnessed massive mobilizations for and against the FSLN government. Most of the spokespersons for the anti-FSLN forces appear to originate from the right, indeed, in some cases from the most reactionary sections of society that look to the U.S. but who were previously aligned with the FSLN. In the absence of clear revolutionary socialist forces on the scene, this is tragically inevitable.*

*Undoubtedly, however, a huge measure of the mass alienation from the FSLN today is due to its own policies, not only its proposed pensions reductions and tax increases but to its granting of important areas of land to private interests to facilitate an Inter-oceanic Canal, its delay in taking decisive moves to stem a series of raging wildfires, its violent response to initially peaceful demonstrations, as well as the overall grinding poverty of the majority of the Nicaraguan people.*

And here is an excerpt from the article by Christine Marie, PRF member, which Jeff personally approved:

*Since April, hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans have taken to the streets in protest of the policies of the government led by FSLN President Daniel Ortega. The protests at one point escalated to road blocks and occupations and have been fiercely resisted by the government. Undoubtedly, Nicaraguan*

*society is in crisis. Here, we present some important background information as to its origins.*

*It is clear the working class was not in the leadership of the opposition forces involved in the now suspended "National Dialogue" with the government. A mis-leadership composed of the business group COSEP and the Catholic Church seemed to be in the driver's seat in those meetings. Additionally, the United States and other imperialist powers are intervening via the Organization of American States and wooing student groups to demand new elections without any regard for Nicaragua's sovereignty.*

*Given the number of reactionary players attempting to shape Nicaragua's future, it is important to understand how students, the working class, and small business people came to be ready to take to the streets when the regime proposed to implement International Monetary Fund recommendations to cut pensions.*

*Since the 2006 election of Daniel Ortega to the presidency, there has been what the Latin American Studies scholar William I. Robinson called an "intensification of capitalist development." The Nicaraguan government, encouraged by the International Monetary Fund, has facilitated a dramatic growth in imperialist investment in Free Trade Zones, infrastructure, agribusiness, and mining. At the same time, according the Christian Science Monitor (Nov. 7, 2011), large contributions from Venezuela were used to bolster private companies tied to key figures in the ruling FSLN party.*

*The resulting lop-sided economic growth, not unsurprisingly, has led to a series of ecological crises that are threatening peasants and indigenous peoples, and to new inequalities that must be faced by workers, small businesses, and the people making a living in the informal sector. Significant layers of the Nicaraguan population have responded to these indignities over the last decade with protests.*

It is clear that at the time of the major public commentary on the Nicaraguan events, the PC came to an *agreement* that led to the publication of complementary articles in which both the MF and the PTF agreed (1) that the leadership of the struggle was in reactionary hands at the negotiations table and (2) that the workers and farmers had very good reasons for going into the streets that had everything to do with opposing imperialist penetration rather than calling for it. There were never any differences identified in an organized discussion of the Political Committee or National Committee on this question.

Whatever conclusions Jeff and the MF have come to on later events—including the political imprisonment of peasant, working-class, civil libertarian, and environmental leaders and the fight for their release, as well as the fight of the Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica—were never brought into a full leadership meeting.

The narrative in the Majority Faction DPR alludes to positions developed by the MF but kept from the party as a whole until now. Instead, they have substituted misstatements about the political positions of the PRF, whose only effort subsequent to the publication of the major articles in our paper was to ask for an additional discussion as repression against the progressive elements of the mobilizations increased. Unfortunately, the Majority Faction refused to hold any more discussion on Nicaragua in the SA leadership.

It is similarly unfortunate that the method demonstrated in this section—the imaginative recreation from “impressions,” or perhaps just from failing memory, of narratives about positions that were allegedly discussed and taken—is a recurring and surreal feature of life in the leadership bodies of Socialist Action.

### **The interview with Ellie Hamrick**

The same faulty method is used in the Majority’s Draft Political Resolution in regard to a March 2019 interview that comrade John L. conducted with Ellie Hamrick, the member of a small revolutionary collective in Athens, Ohio, (formerly the local branch of the International Socialist Organization, ISO) who has been running as an independent socialist candidate for public office.

We are amazed at the prominence that the Majority Faction’s DPR has given to criticizing this interview. But we should mention, if only in passing, that virtually *none* of the alleged “facts” in the DPR are true regarding the role of the *Socialist Action* editor in this matter—which led to unsubstantiated charges made against him of “indiscipline” and “disloyalty” for agreeing that the interview should be printed. There was no “emergency PC meeting,” as the DPR alleges. Jeff simply ordered the interview removed from our website, and full discussion of the interview, and reprinting it, was then put off for three months, since Jeff kept stating that he needed to acquire more information before making his decision as to the article’s fate.

More could be said about the frequent twisting of facts in the DPR, in which outlandish charges are concocted against members of the Permanent Revolution Faction in place of efforts to obtain clarity on political issues in dispute. We can say right off, however, that the PRF pleads *guilty* to intense

interest in the efforts of the group of young people in Athens, Ohio, to carry on after the ISO dissolution, publicly raise the banner of revolutionary socialism and working-class independence, and attempt to run a revolutionary propaganda campaign for electoral office.

No, the PRF does not have a special “orientation” toward the Democratic Socialists of America or ex-ISOers, as the Majority Faction’s document insists. But unlike the Majority Faction—whose April 2019 Draft Political Resolution was a pessimistic document that viewed the growth of the DSA and the subsequent disenchantment of many youth with it, the breakup of the ISO, and the splits in Socialist Alternative and other organizations as signs of the most difficult of times for revolutionary socialists—we see a youth radicalization in which hundreds of relatively sophisticated socialist youth have left other tendencies and are searching for answers regarding how best to organize for revolution. We are eager to talk to all of them about our program and traditions, and to explore the possibilities of common work.

### **U.S. moves against Iran**

U.S. imperialism is becoming increasingly desperate to retain hegemony over Iran. Ever since the signing of the “Iran Deal” (JCPOA) created space for investment from different imperialist powers into the country, a section of the U.S. ruling class has called for ending the agreement and imposing sanctions and possible military action. The tendency came to a head when Trump unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and began to impose extremely tight sanctions on Iran.

Since that moment, the voice of U.S. capitalism has been growing increasingly bellicose in its discussions on “diplomacy” with the Islamic Republic. Over the summer, escalations in isolating Iran's economy and the possibility that strong words might turn into a hot war have come to a fever pitch. In retaliation for unsubstantiated attacks on U.S. “interests,” missiles have been within hours of hitting Iranian soil and active cyber-warfare has been carried out against important Iranian military facilities.

In September, the United States moved its already stultifying sanction regime to yet more dizzying heights in effectively declaring the Iranian central bank and National Development Fund subject to sanctions and attempting to freeze between \$80 and 100 billion held by the two entities. While saying that not responding immediately with military action is a “sign of strength,” the Trump administration is in actuality responding to the Sept.

14 bombing of Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq oil facility, alleged but by no one proved to be carried out with Iran's blessing, with a militarist response.

Regardless of who is actually behind the oil field and tanker bombings, the U.S. political and military actions are determined by the same economic basis and would take the same general course. U.S. troops and military hardware are being brought into Saudi Arabia specifically as a "defensive" measure against possible Iranian attacks. In war, the line between defense and offense can be almost non-existent. The fact is that the U.S. is setting up itself and its ally to be in a position to carry out their own incursions into Iran.

### **An opening for China and the EU?**

Chinese imperialists are seeing the situation in Iran as a possible opening to make a decisive blow to U.S. influence in the Middle East. In the midst of the U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign, China has updated its 2016 bilateral strategic partnership to include a \$400 billion cash injection into energy, transportation, manufacturing, and infrastructural projects, mostly over the next five years. This goes along with an agreement to sell China oil at a minimum discount of 12%, but the discount may be as high as 35% in some cases. Significantly, the planned \$600 billion of trade over the next 10 years will be carried out largely in renminbi and other "soft" currencies, directly confronting the current universality of the dollar as the currency of world trade. China will also be increasing its military presence in the country with the immediate stationing of at least 5000 Chinese security personnel to protect its investment in Iran.

European Union countries occupy something of a middle space between the two rivals. French President Emmanuel Macron has continuously struggled for diplomatic inclusion for Iran, including inviting top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif to the city where the G7 summit was taking place. The great example of European diplomatic impotence is the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) which is their way "around" U.S. sanctions. INSTEX has only dealt with trade allowed by sanctions, i.e., "humanitarian" offerings like agricultural and medical products, and now that the U.S. has closed off all categories of goods, the EU countries have no choice but to stop even those minimal supplies.

The Iranian economy is almost totally dependent on oil profits, with minimal alternate investment in productive sectors and huge amounts of unemployed or partially employed workers. The central role of the state in ensuring the continued dominance of oil capital is realized on the one hand

through repression and on the other by administering welfare benefits. The struggles of Iranian workers in the last two years have played out to fight against the first and extend the second, but the impossibility of reforming away the reactionary basis of a capitalist economy centered around fossil-fuel production and anti-democratic parliamentarism is always at the surface of the fight.

A national layer of petty lenders, illicit currency exchangers, and various "charity" organizations work with and around the state. A key and completely unproductive pathway for oil profits is the mammoth Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, whose economic presence is equal to the rest of the state and whose ideological presence is a cornerstone of anti-worker and anti-feminist reaction.

While representatives of Iranian capital posture as anti-imperialists, they are incapable of effectively fighting imperialism. On the one hand, they are forced by necessity to look towards imperialist investment in order to maximize their profits from the country's natural oil resources. On the other, their ability to profit, either from state or privately owned enterprises, is directly threatened by workers' struggles. Given these two tendencies, the uprising of Iranian workers has been brutally repressed with arrests, tortures, and the continued illegality of non-state controlled workers' organizations.

Coming into 2018, the workers, farmers, and unemployed in Iran rose up against economic and political attacks from domestic and imperialist capitalists. The mobilization took the form of mass protests in the streets, a continuing strike wave, and in some places the armed takeover of rural towns. Leading the charge has been workers in the Haft Tapeh sugar factory, Ahvaz steel workers, and a national strike of teachers, which has remained active to this day. Demands from the struggle include increasing women's rights, having more representative democracy, payment of back wages, protecting social provisions, and ending corruption. The general thrust has been against imperialist imposition of "democracy" from outside.

The way out of the political and economic crises in Iran is already indicated by the mass movements that have developed in the last two years. The biggest hindrance to the revolutionary potential of the Iranian working class is the absence of a class-conscious party that is capable of taking the struggle to its logical conclusions—overthrowing the Islamic Republic and forming a revolutionary workers' government, with socialist revolution as the goal.

In the United States we must recognize that U.S. intervention, military, economic, and diplomatic, can only hurt the workers' movement in Iran. Our central demands are U.S. Hands Off! No Sanctions on Iran! At the same time, we must recognize that the working class is the only social force that can overturn the old capitalist order while combating imperialism, and fight to the end for democratic rights and economic control for Iranian working people and all the oppressed. It is critical for U.S socialists to educate our co-workers, readers of our press, and the mass movements in this country on the struggles of Iranian workers, how we can help through integrating anti-imperialism into all of our movements, and learning from the inspiring examples of a country in revolt.

### **Pakistan's role in Kashmir**

In its September 2019 issue, *Socialist Action* newspaper reported the following information in an article (presented here in shortened and edited form): On Aug. 4, India moved tens of thousands of troops into what is already the most militarized region on the planet. This came as New Delhi rushed through a presidential decree to revoke Article 370, the part of the constitution that gives Indian-administered Kashmir special status. Also, the Indian parliament pushed through the "Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill," which seeks to bifurcate the area into Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh (which will be ruled over directly by the Indian government via a Lieutenant Governor).

Right-wing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist BJP also want to do away with Article 35A, which permits the local legislature in Indian-administered Kashmir to define its permanent residents and control property rights.

Victoria Schofield, author of "Kashmir in Conflict," explained to *Al Jazeera* recently that this would actually change the demographics of Kashmir. She said, "If article 35A goes, you've got any number of people from the rest of India feeling that they can come up and buy property in Jammu and Kashmir."

During Indian independence and partition, each province or princely state had a referendum on whether they would join India or Pakistan. In the heavily Muslim area of Kashmir this basic method of measuring the popular will was denied. Instead, the leaders of Indian independence—Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohatma Gandhi—left the decision up to the British-backed Hindu leadership.

Following independence, heightened tensions resulted in the Indo-Pakistani war of 1947, which was supposed to end in a referendum regarding whether Kashmir should join India or Pakistan. This referendum never happened. Kashmir was split into territories occupied by neighboring countries (India holds about 45%, Pakistan holds 35%, and China holds 20%).

Pakistan responded to India's recent actions immediately. [Prime Minister] Imran Kahn announced that he will lobby for Kashmir at the United Nations and called for the international community to support him. However, any initiative by Pakistan to mediate this crisis must be rejected. Nor should any faith be placed in the ruling classes of the world to solve the life or death situation faced by Kashmiris. Such an action would be in violation of the right of Kashmiris to determine their own future.

### **Differences with the “party line?”**

Prior to its appearance in the print edition of the newspaper, the Political Committee discussed the Kashmir article. There was broad agreement in the PC that the article had correctly placed its focus on criticism of the recent incursions by India, and that SA is in favor of self-determination for the Kashmiri people. However, the Majority Faction voted to expunge from the article all criticisms of the role of Pakistan in denying Kashmiris their right of self-determination.

The original draft of the article had reported that a Trotskyist group in Pakistan, The Struggle, had raised the call that “all forces must quit Kashmir,” and that a small Trotskyist group in India, Radical Socialist, had put forward a similar call. This was emphasized at the conclusion of the article with the slogan, added by the editor, “All occupying forces out of Kashmir!” All reference to these demands was also removed from the article in accord with the vote by the majority of the PC.

National Secretary Jeff M., in calling for the cuts to the article, said that he did not yet have information about what *other* Trotskyists in the region, such as those in the Awami Workers Party of Pakistan, might be saying in regard to the role of Pakistan in Kashmir, and that he wanted to withhold expressing an opinion in our press at least until he had gathered more information. As for his own views, Jeff indicated that he tended to think that Pakistan had been “aiding” the cause of Kashmiri self-determination, even supplying materiel to some armed liberation groups. He therefore believed that the article should criticize only India, and not Pakistan.

The following day, Jeff dropped his tentativeness on the question, and stated in a communication to the PC that his views on Kashmir and Pakistan were now to be considered an expression of Socialist Action's political "line." He further charged that the Permanent Revolution Tendency had "differences" with the "party line" on Kashmir.

### **Does Pakistan aid Kashmiri self-determination?**

Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has indeed said that his government backs "self-determination" in Kashmir. However, it is absurd to view a country that occupies a substantial portion of Kashmir with police and troops, maintains a puppet government in that territory—and has often expressed the opinion that Kashmir ought to be an integral part of Pakistan itself—to be somehow enabling the territory's self-determination. Pakistan's occupation, no less than India's, has served over the last 72 years to thwart the organization of a popular referendum or constituent assembly to determine Kashmir's future.

Pakistan wishes to remain in Kashmir (and to eventually formally annex the entire territory) not only for ideological reasons but for its own economic reasons as well. Kashmir has an important place in Pakistan's plans as a link in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Beijing has already committed some \$62 billion to the project, which includes highways, railways, fiber-optic cables, and gas and oil pipelines that would run through Kashmir.

Do Kashmiris see Pakistan as an aid in their drive for self-determination? Numerous sources indicate that many, if not most, Muslims in Kashmir are somewhat sympathetic to Pakistan and welcome its pronouncements against India's repression. But the sentiment for re-building Kashmir as a country that is *independent* of both Pakistan and India seems to be widespread.

This was indicated in the essay by Tariq Ali in the 2011 book, "Kashmir: The Case for Freedom" (Verso). Ali states, "Neither Pakistan nor India favours the cause of Kashmiri independence. Nor does Beijing, worried about the ramifications in Tibet. And yet independence is what the Kashmiri people appear to want."

More recently, in late August 2019, a rally for independence was held in Pakistani-occupied Kashmir; a comrade forwarded a description of it to the PC on Sept. 13. The rally was sponsored by the Lahore Left Front (LLF), which is led by the Awami Workers Party and other groups. The demands released at the rally by the LLF included calling upon both "the governments

of India and Pakistan and international community to concede and facilitate the inalienable right of self-determination without pre-conditions..." The rally was attacked by police from Pakistani-administered Kashmir, as well as by police from Pakistan itself.

It is also worth noting that when the Jammu Kashmir Awami Workers Party was founded, in June 2017, it issued a document (printed in *International Viewpoint*) rejecting Pakistani sovereignty over Kashmir and the government's efforts to either negotiate or conduct wars to determine the future of the territory. It also demanded that "Pakistan should accept Azad Kashmir [a western strip of Pakistani-occupied Kashmir] as an autonomous region of [the] state of Jammu Kashmir." At the present time, Azad Kashmir functions as an autonomous state within *Pakistan*, not within Jammu Kashmir.

### **Does Pakistan aid authentic Kashmiri liberation groups?**

After the Indo-Pakistani war of 1947, the two countries waged two more full-scale wars in Kashmir (1965 and 1998-99), but neither of them was fought to guarantee the right of the Kashmiri people to decide their own fate. In 1998, for example, Pakistan invaded the Kargil-Drass region of Kashmir, a mountainous area inhabited mainly by Shiite Muslims and Buddhists. After being set back in the beginning, the more powerful Indian army soon took the initiative. "With China as the main enemy," Tariq Ali comments, Washington had begun to tilt toward India and advised Pakistan to withdraw.

Aside from the three outright wars, Pakistan has participated in numerous exchanges of artillery fire with Indian forces stationed on the other side of the Line of Control. In general over the years, however, Pakistan has relied on support to irregular militias to harass Indian troops.

Has Pakistan given support to authentic Kashmiri liberation forces (i.e., forces advocating self-determination)? Numerous sources report that it *did* aid them in earlier years, but in recent decades it turned toward repression of those groups. Instead, Pakistani aid has flowed to fundamentalist Islamist militias and to militias that favor Kashmir's affiliation with Pakistan.

A case in point is the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), founded by Amanullah Khan in 1977, which operates as both a political group and an armed militia, based in Pakistani-occupied Kashmir (Khan died in 2016). The *Kashmir Observer* in 2016 described the JKLF's goal as achieving the independence of Kashmir in the territory that existed before 1947, rejecting

a merger with Pakistan. The JKLF's own website and other sources give support to that characterization.

According to the *Kashmir Observer* (March 23, 2016), Pakistan initially armed and sheltered the JKLF. The BBC cited Khan as stating in 2016 that Pakistan had initially supported them but that it withdrew support after 1988, instead backing groups advocating Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) set up a rival group, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), in order "to limit the growing influence" of the JKLF. Pakistani arms and money were also sent to other groups that favored Kashmiri affiliation with Pakistan. These groups, in turn, aided in the persecution of JKLF members.

London School of Economics professor Sumantra Bose wrote in the Aug. 2, 2011 edition of *al-Jazeera*, "Starting from 1991, the Pakistani military's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—which had been providing lethal weapons and training to the Kashmir insurgency since its nascent phase in the late 1980s—cut off aid to the JKLF and engineered splits and defections in the pro-independence camp, while building up the HM with a programme of all-out support. The HM then embarked on a campaign of killing pro-independence fighters and assassinating prominent pro-independence political and religious figures."

The 2006 Center for Human Rights report indicated that political groups, such as the JKLF, that did not support merger with Pakistan were denied their right to run in assembly elections in the Pakistani-occupied portion of Kashmir. Earlier, in 2001, when JKLF members tried to participate in the elections, they were arrested and beaten with batons. Khan himself was arrested in February 2006 for protesting the building of a dam in the Gilgit region.

### **The rise of Islamic fundamentalist militias**

In recent years, Islamists have staged many dozens of attacks against Indian police and military forces and facilities in Kashmir. The Pakistani government provided safe harbor and arms for many of them, especially in earlier years, just as it has done for Islamist militias that operate in Afghanistan. Tariq Ali wrote, "If, as is widely agreed, between 25 and 30 per cent of Pakistan's soldiers are Islamists, the army's reluctance to act against the jihadis is understandable: it is afraid of provoking a civil war."

Prime Minister Khan has now claimed that Pakistan will discontinue aid to the Islamic militias. But as recently as February 2019, India made a missile

strike on an alleged Islamist terrorist training camp in Balakot after a suicide bomber had killed 44 Indian paramilitaries in Kashmir.

Over the years, India has responded to the attacks with methods including mass arrests, torture, and executions. Reports state that the brutality of the Indian military spawned some sympathy among Kashmir's Muslim population for the Islamic militias, while Islamic violence correspondingly drove many Hindus toward a growing religious nationalism.

As the Pakistani military renewed somewhat closer relations with the United States after September 2001 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's support to the Islamic groups was reduced. The Pakistani rulers also found that their campaign to sow fundamentalist religious discord was not achieving great success in securing a tilt toward Pakistan among Kashmiris.

At the same time, clashes have arisen between the Shiite population, which has a large presence in the eastern portion of Kashmir (Ladakh and Baltistan), and the Sunni population, which tends to look toward the Pakistani military and central government. Moreover, there have been reports this year of armed clashes between the Islamic groups that support affiliation to Pakistan and those with an orientation toward a pan-Islamic state.

In conclusion, despite the assurances of the current Pakistani Prime Minister that he is for "self-determination" for Kashmir, the historical record shows that Pakistan has systematically worked to repress Kashmiri activists who yearn for an independent country. Pakistan now occupies a substantial portion of Kashmir, and is striving to annex the entire country—countering the efforts of India to do the same.

Socialist Action should back the demand that "all occupying forces withdraw from Kashmir" as a prerequisite to the Kashmiri people's achieving full self-determination. The paragraphs that the Majority Faction voted to delete from the article, which explained that Trotskyist groups in Pakistan and India put forward that demand, should be restored on the *Socialist Action* website.

### **Solving the worldwide crisis of leadership**

In 1938, in the Transitional Program (The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International), Trotsky wrote, "*All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet "ripened" for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only "ripened"; they have begun to get*

*somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. **The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.***

Trotsky's dictum regarding the crisis of revolutionary leadership remains true and relevant. From the semi-colonial countries to the imperialist centers, the task remains the same—to rebuild a revolutionary leadership that is capable of advancing the struggles of workers and the oppressed.

The work ahead of us, even from modest beginnings, is to train and test this proletarian leadership. We have already assembled a small cadre of eager and well-trained youth cadre, ready to push outward into this political world. We can be optimistic about the future of revolutionary socialism in the U.S.

Of course, some of the ranks of the future U.S. socialist movement (such as the majority of the DSA) are not clear on the necessity of working-class independence from the capitalist parties, and have been diverted into the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign. Also, much confusion remains about what socialism means. It's the job of consistent revolutionaries to patiently explain the road forward and what a socialist world can look like.

At a recent AFL-CIO "Workers' Summit" in Philadelphia, Bernie Sanders said that we need "a government of the working-class, by the working-class, for the working-class." Of course, we agree, but we know that such a workers' government can never be won through the mechanisms of the Democratic Party or through electoral means.

The Majority Faction's perspectives, as presented in the political resolution presented to the April 2019 plenum of the National Committee, urged pessimism about revolutionary opportunities coming out of the current ferment among youth, including possibilities for revolutionary regroupments.

As we have shown, the pessimism of the MF is reflected in its adaptation to non-Marxist conspiracism and to a campist interpretation of the dynamics of struggles worldwide. It is likewise reflected in its lack of understanding of the interplay between Western imperialism and the emerging imperialisms of Russia and China. The MF indicates that the class character and the origins of social upheavals are suspect in certain countries—those targeted by Western imperialism. While discounting or diminishing the role of workers in those countries, it tends to simultaneously assign a progressive role to either Chinese or Russian imperialism.

We say something else—the struggles in semi-colonial countries reinforce the strategy of Permanent Revolution. In the semi-colonial world, as well as in the imperialist centers, the only exit from capitalist crisis and imperialist intervention is through workers' revolution and socialism. In the beleaguered semi-colonial countries, U.S. imperialism will try to use every means to hijack or moderate the demands of mass movements that arise. In some cases they will work through regional intermediaries. This has certainly been the case in Sudan And Algeria, where the imperialist powers feared that these movements would go too far.

In Syria, a genuine movement for democracy and against austerity measures of the Assad regime was brutally repressed. This repression resulted in a bloody and destructive civil war. Faced with a gangster regime, which was propped up by Russian imperialism, the Syrian masses fought the best way that they could. Of course, the imperialist U.S. and its allies intervened in the civil war to advance their own interests. The lack of a revolutionary leadership was a decisive factor in the defeat of the Syrian revolution. An authentic revolutionary leadership, with roots in the working class, could have provided the leadership necessary to defeat imperialist intervention and smash the brutal Assadist regime.

Internationally, we see the necessity to rebuild an international. Our work in the FI Platform is just one aspect of this international work. Time and again, the lack of a World Party of Socialist Revolution is sorely felt. The scandalous lack of support for the Algerian section by the FI only reinforces the need for an international party. Imagine how different the results would have been in Sudan, Nicaragua, Venezuela, or Haiti if an effective international leadership were in existence.

The coming years offer possibilities of increased class and social struggle. We have an obligation as revolutionists to build an instrument capable of playing a leading role in these upsurges—simply put, combat parties. Such a party won't be built by one-to-one recruitment alone. Indeed, we must do everything in our power to draw the best fighters into the process of building a revolutionary party worthy of the name.