

Victory Day and the struggle for abortion rights today

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Bans Off Our Bodies march for abortion rights in Brooklyn, New York, May 14. SLL

photo: Greg Butterfield

Presentation at the international webinar "Marxists Speak Out: Victory Day, Against Nazism and Imperialism, Yesterday and Today" on May 14.

I've just come from a march of many thousands here in New York to defend the right to abortion. As you probably know, a draft ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court was leaked earlier this month, which would reverse the right to abortion granted in the Roe vs. Wade case almost 50 years ago.

If the decision goes through, the legal precedent will also endanger many other hard-won civil rights, including same-sex marriage, the right to access contraception, protection from so-called sodomy laws used to criminalize queer people, even interracial marriage. It truly is an attack on the whole working class.

The vicious ruling class attack on reproductive rights made me think about the essential role of women and other oppressed-gender people in our movements and in the Soviet victory over fascism in World War II. We know the names of heroes like the Red Army sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko, air fighter Lidya Litvyak and saboteur Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. But Soviet women also held down the homefront, kept the factories running, and waged guerrilla warfare when their cities and villages were occupied by the Nazis.

On May 9, 2016, I had the great fortune to attend the Victory Day march in Lugansk, capital of the Lugansk People's Republic. It was one of the most moving experiences of my life as a revolutionary. The people of the city poured into the streets to honor not only their ancestors who fought fascism decades before, but also those who fought and died to stop Ukraine's attack on the city in 2014-15. And women were at the center of this mobilization. They were the organizers and leaders, as they are in so many of our organizations, movements, unions and communities.

In this spirit, the Socialist Unity Party is seeking ways to connect the struggle against the U.S./NATO proxy war in Ukraine with the emerging mass movement to fight for abortion rights and other struggles of the working class here at home. There is enormous and growing anger and distrust of the Democratic Party, which poses as the friend of workers and oppressed communities to get elected, while fundamentally serving the interests of the capitalist class just like the Republican Party.

In recent weeks, we have seen the spectacle of Democrats in Congress voting unanimously for an additional \$40 billion for the proxy war in Ukraine, while at the same time failing in a rushed vote to codify abortion rights into law, despite having control of both the House and Senate. At the same time, every member of the Senate, Democrat and Republican, voted to add extra security for the Supreme Court justices who are poised to strip a basic human right from more than half the population.

The imperialist regime of the U.S. wants to mandate forced pregnancy and birth at a time when the cost of food and rent is skyrocketing, there is a frightening shortage of infant formula, and the public health measures of the pandemic have been repealed. And the money that could be used to mitigate some of these life-and-death crises is being spent on weapons and aid to prolong a war on the other side of the world.

The capitalists, in their insatiable drive for profits, can't stop themselves from pushing too far. They are making the contradictions of their system so glaring that it gives us, their enemies, an opportunity to educate and organize the many, many workers whose lives are on the line - especially the most downtrodden, including Black and Brown people, women, trans people and immigrants.

As we mark the 77th Victory Day, our great task is to help our class make the connections between the struggle against imperialist war abroad and the war on

workers at home.

