

Obama’s Hatchet Man Beats “Progressive” Rival

Chicago: Democrats’ Segregation City Elections

We Need a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The Chicago mayoral elections drew national attention after incumbent Rahm Emanuel failed to win re-election on February 24, forcing a runoff. The mere fact that Emanuel, former chief of staff of Barack Obama’s White House, could not get a first-round knockout in Obama’s hometown was, as the *Chicago Tribune* put it, a “national political embarrassment.” Emanuel is widely despised for having pushed through brutal austerity measures in his first term as mayor of “Segregation City,” so named for its entrenched residential and school segregation. Most notoriously, he closed nearly 50 schools, overwhelmingly in black and Latino neighborhoods, as part of carrying out Obama’s “school reform” policies.

The once seemingly invincible Cook County Democratic Party machine has not been so for years and can no longer turn out the living and the dead to the polls as it did in its heyday. More than ever, the city’s Democratic Party electoral apparatus is dependent on the trade-union officialdom. In the face of widespread disaffection with the arrogant labor-hating mayor, many prominent union leaders along with the reformist leftists who tail them rushed to promote Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, who finished second in February. Castigating Emanuel

as “Mayor 1 Percent” and a “corporate Democrat,” they worked overtime to paint Garcia as some kind of alternative. Central to this effort was the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), which had waged a widely popular nine-day strike in 2012.

Many did not buy the idea that Garcia would be any better than Emanuel, who handily won re-election in the April 7 runoff. Despite all the hype, the voter turnout was 40 percent. Garcia’s main qualification was that he was not well known and hence didn’t have so much to live down. But “Chuy” is as much an enemy of working people as his much better funded opponent for mayor or any other Democrat. As floor leader on the Cook County Board of Commissioners, Garcia served as hatchet man in his own right, pushing through attacks on public workers. In the campaign, Garcia vowed that he would wring concessions from the unions more effectively through negotiations rather than Emanuel’s ham-fisted provocations. He also promised to hire 1,000 more cops.

Last summer, there was much ballyhoo about the possibility that CTU president Karen Lewis would run for mayor against Emanuel. But then Lewis became ill, and she persuaded Garcia to

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Reuters photos

Top: President Obama endorses Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel’s re-election bid, February 19. Bottom: Democratic Party hack Jesus “Chuy” Garcia at campaign rally, January 15.

Free Purvi Patel Now!

Imprisoned for Miscarriage in Indiana

Breaking new ground in anti-woman cruelty, on March 30 an Indiana court sentenced Purvi Patel to prison for **20 years** for having a miscarriage. This is the first time anyone in the U.S. has been convicted and sentenced for “feticide,” a bogus crime based on anti-scientific nonsense that a fetus is a human being with a “soul.” Part of the ongoing crusade against abortion rights, Patel’s persecution sets a dangerous precedent for locking up any woman suspected of ending her own pregnancy.

The 33-year-old daughter of immigrants from India, Purvi Patel had the odds stacked against her from the beginning. Already caring for two older generations of her family when she discovered that she was pregnant, Patel, who was unmarried, hid her pregnancy



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March 30: Purvi Patel after sentencing. Capitalist state enforces anti-woman bigotry.

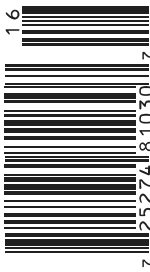
from her religious Hindu parents. Receiving no prenatal care, she experienced a miscarriage at home, discarded the fetal remains in the trash and began bleeding profusely. Checking into a Catholic hos-

pital, she was seen by an anti-abortion obstetrician (a member of a “pro-life” association). Determining that Patel had been pregnant, the doctor abandoned her to help police search for the fetal

remains. After surgery, she was subjected to police interrogation in the recovery room while still suffering the effects of anesthesia and blood loss. She was never read her Miranda rights.

With twisted depravity, Patel was convicted of both child neglect *and* killing a fetus. Every detail of her case is a crime against elementary human decency. Prosecutors manipulated age-old bias to defame the childless Patel as selfish. As for “child neglect,” they got the jury to believe that Patel had delivered a viable fetus. The state used a ludicrous, 17th-century “lung float test” whereby fetal tissue that floats in water is supposedly proof of life—a method that sent countless women to the gallows for infanticide during the European witch trials. To supposedly prove “feticide,” prosecutors accused Patel of trying to end the pregnancy herself based on text messages referring to abortion

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Partisan Defense Committee

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

Medical Crisis

Mumia's Life in Danger— Free Him Now!

The following statement was issued by the Partisan Defense Committee on April 13.

On March 30, class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was rushed from the SCI Mahanoy, Pennsylvania state prison to the Schuylkill Medical Center Intensive Care Unit, verging on a diabetic coma. With consummate cruelty, prison authorities initially not only prevented his wife, Wadiya, and other family members from seeing Mumia but also refused to divulge information about his condition. Pam Africa, Mumia's designated emergency contact, was denied visitation as well. When prison officials relented after numerous protests, Wadiya, Mumia's son Jamal Hart and his older brother Keith were granted just 30 minutes with Mumia. They found him with an insulin drip in one arm and handcuffs on the other, barely able to sit up, shaking and in pain, his breathing labored. Wadiya described being "shocked at his condition." On April 1, a frail Mumia was sent back to the same Mahanoy prison where the contempt and medical neglect of his jailers had brought him to the threshold of death.

It is no secret that leading government officials, not just in Pennsylvania but across the country, want Mumia dead. This latest emergency highlights that Mumia's life is in danger every day he remains in the clutches of the state authorities that for 30 years sought his legal lynching. With the overturning of his frame-up death sentence in 2011, they are determined that Mumia's prison cot be his deathbed.

Three months ago, Mumia reported a full-body outbreak of eczema with bloody sores and blisters. Mumia's skin erupted in reaction to treatment by prison doctors. Since then, Mumia has lost over 50 pounds. Results of three blood tests performed in February were reportedly withheld from him. Even the most incompetent medical personnel would have recognized something was awry—but Mumia was left to waste away while his blood sugar hit the roof. Not passing up any opportunity, prison authorities disciplined Mumia for missing roll call in early January because he had fallen into a trance-like sleep induced by his condition.

The shroud that prison authorities placed over Mumia's condition recalls the mysterious death of his comrade Phil Africa at the State Correctional Institution in Dallas, Pennsylvania, on January 10. Phil was held in total isolation in the hospital for five days, during which time his wife of 44 years, Janine, was denied the right to speak to him until two days before he died. To this day, prison officials have never revealed the cause of Phil's death.

We have long championed freedom for Mumia, an innocent man. Now the elementary demand for adequate medical treatment requires his immediate release. *Free Mumia now!*



Johanna Fernandez

Mumia Abu-Jamal, April 6.

Mumia has been in the crosshairs of the capitalist state since his days as a teenage Black Panther Party spokesman in the 1960s. That enmity toward him grew in the 1970s when, as a journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless," Mumia exposed the racist Philly police vendetta against MOVE, the largely black back-to-nature group he came to support. Mumia was framed up for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer, Daniel Faulkner. Police and prosecutors manufactured evidence to convict him, including by terrorizing witnesses and concocting a fake confession two months after his arrest. Following a 1982 trial in which Mumia was denied the right to represent himself and was repeatedly ejected from the courtroom, he was sentenced to death explicitly for his political views, primarily his Black Panther membership. Federal and state courts have time and again refused to consider evidence proving Mumia's innocence, especially the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner.

Mumia's unwavering dedication to the cause of the oppressed can be seen in his delivering, despite his debilitated condition, a radio commentary on April 10 about the cold-blooded racist cop killing of 50-year-old black man Walter Scott by a white cop in South Carolina six days earlier. In their vendetta against Mumia, the forces of racist "law and order," led by the Fraternal Order of Police, have fought to silence Mumia and vilify just about anyone—from union and student activists to liberal celebrities and an occasional politician—who in any way expresses support for Mumia's rights. The same day Mumia was rushed to the hospital, hearings opened in a Pennsylvania court on his lawsuit challenging the

"Revictimization Relief Act" enacted last October with the express aim of shutting down Mumia's prison commentaries and suppressing his books.

Following an outcry in the bourgeois press, Marilyn Zuniga, a third-grade teacher in Orange, New Jersey, was suspended on April 10 without pay for the honorable act of encouraging students to send "get well" messages to Mumia. The PDC has sent a protest letter demanding Zuniga's immediate reinstatement with no loss in pay.

Medical neglect of those incarcerated in America's dungeons is epidemic. While the absence of care for those suffering from severe psychiatric problems has drawn some attention, most recently thanks to the torture chambers of New York City's Rikers Island detention center, the denial of necessary medical attention to those, largely black and Latino, behind bars has been overwhelmingly ignored.

The medical neglect of those in prison hell has been exacerbated by the privatization of prison health care to penny-pinching concerns such as Corizon Health Inc., which alone covers nearly 350,000 inmates in 27 states. Corizon is the subject of numerous lawsuits, including one filed by the family of Javon Frazier, who was an inmate in a county jail in Florida. After four months of complaints of left shoulder pain, which were answered only with Tylenol, Frazier was ultimately hospitalized and diagnosed with bone cancer and his arm amputated. Frazier died just months after his release, at the age of 21.

The grotesque treatment of prisoners is exacerbated many times over for those, like Mumia, locked away for fighting against this racist capitalist order. The PDC has contributed to Mumia's medical care, and urges union militants, fighters for black freedom and student activists to demand freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Readers who want to help defray Mumia's expenses can make contributions at www.indiegogo.com/projects/mumia-abu-jamal-needs-medical-care-now. To correspond with Mumia, write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM 8335, SCI Mahanoy, 301 Morea Road, Frackville, PA 17932. ■

Book Launch and Discussion

The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929

by Jacob Zumoff

New York City

Saturday, April 18, 3 p.m.

322 West 48th St.,
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(Between 8th and 9th Ave.—
Take A, C, or E train to 42nd St.)

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Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

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For the Materialist Conception of History Marxism and the Fight Against Native Oppression in Canada

We reprint below a presentation by comrade Nevin Morrison at a Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste Central Committee plenum and national educational gathering in July 2014. It was first published in edited form in *Spartacist Canada* No. 184 (Spring 2015).

In their introduction to the presentation, our Canadian comrades observed:

“The federal government recently fêted the bicentennial of the birth of John A. Macdonald, Canada’s first prime minister. Macdonald once boasted of keeping the Native population on the Prairies on the ‘verge of actual starvation’: as his government deliberately withheld food from the aboriginal peoples, thousands died. In 1885, he suppressed the Northwest Rebellion and hanged its Métis [people of mixed Native-European descent] leader Louis Riel. It is entirely fitting that today’s rulers of capitalist Canada, who continue to preside over the brutal oppression of Native people, would honour such a man.”

* * *

SPARTACIST CANADA

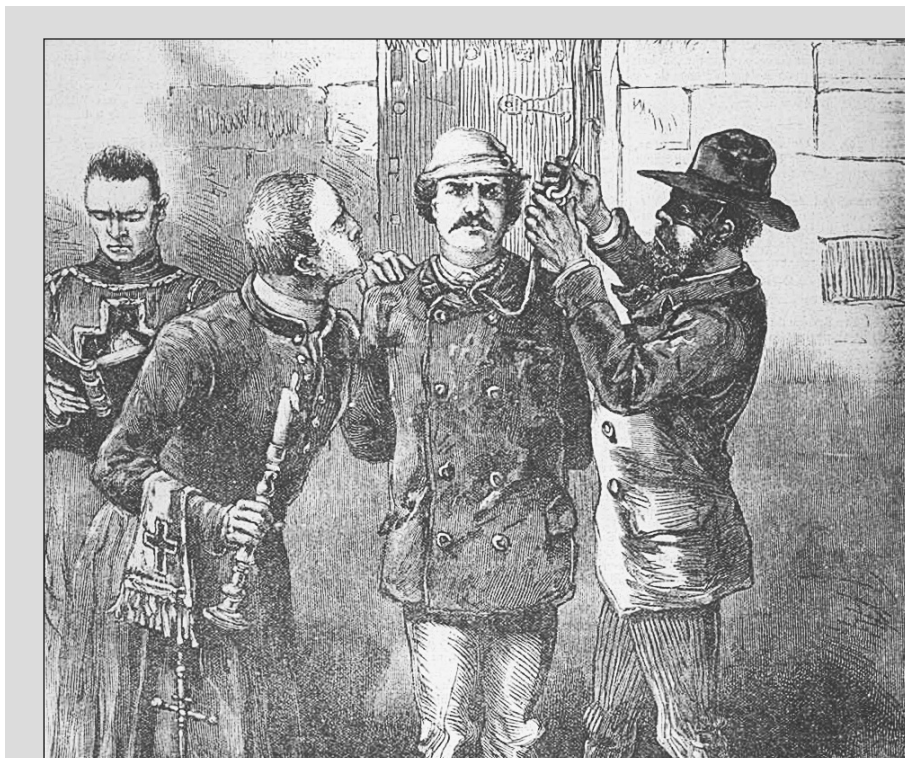
We have frequently exposed in the pages of *Spartacist Canada* the misery and brutality that are daily life for Native peoples. Our article “Canada: Racist Hell for Native Peoples” (SC No. 176, Spring 2013) [reprinted in WV No. 1021, 5 April 2013], for example, dealt with the Idle No More protests that began about two years ago with a hunger strike by chief Theresa Spence of the Attawapiskat band in northern Ontario. These countrywide protests publicized the squalid poverty on reserves that lack even basic housing, clean water and sanitation. In the cities, Natives are ghettoized, disproportionately unemployed, subject to police violence and almost as likely to be imprisoned as to finish high school.

It’s not complicated to figure out how to improve conditions. There is a burning need for jobs, housing, education and infrastructure. An end to racist policies and redress for past mistreatment shouldn’t be controversial either (though they often are). But the capitalist class for whose benefit this society is organized cannot and will never provide these necessities.

To understand why, to address the roots of Native oppression and develop a program to defeat it, requires a Marxist worldview: historical materialism. At its core is the proposition that production of the means to support human life—food, clothing and shelter—and the exchange of things produced are the basis of all social systems. It is the struggle between those who own the means of production and those who don’t—the class struggle—that is the motor force of history.

For example, feudalism, based on the ownership of land and the exploitation of serfs, was replaced by capitalism, based on the ownership of manufactures and the exploitation of wage labour. A tiny minority, the bourgeoisie, owns the factories, mines and other industries, while the working class—the proletariat—owns essentially nothing and has to sell its ability to work to the capitalists in order to survive.

It is the historic task of today’s exploited class to sweep away the capitalist system and forge an egalitarian socialist society where production is based on human needs, and not on profit. The liberation of the working class is thus also necessarily



Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
Execution of Métis leader Louis Riel in 1885. Canadian prime minister John A. Macdonald forced starving families to witness hangings to “convince the Red Man that the White Man rules.”

the liberation of all of the oppressed. Only such a truly human society can guarantee Native rights and finally redress centuries of abuse and degradation at the hands of a truly venal ruling class.

Our political tendency has always emphasized the need to combat the *special* oppression of Natives, blacks, women and others. Such oppression is intimately connected with the “normal” capitalist exploitation of the workers and must be

and Danielle Irving entitled *The Tragedy of Progress: Marxism, Modernity and the Aboriginal Question* (2001), which criticizes various leftist organizations (including ours) for not having “embraced more enthusiastically the Aboriginal struggle.” The source of this supposed lack of enthusiasm is, they claim, a reading of Marxism as a “variant of modernity” that flows from “the enlightenment idea of unceasing progress through the application of



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Toronto, January 2013: Protesters from Idle No More campaign against racist oppression of Native peoples.

fought by means of the class struggle. The revolutionary party must, in the words of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, act as a “tribune of the people,” educating and mobilizing workers against the racism and other backwardness instilled by their capitalist rulers which can only divide and weaken them.

Most of our opponents on the left these days reject historical materialism, just as they reject the perspective of working-class revolution and instead push variants of Native cultural nationalism and “ecosocialism.” An example of this trend is found in a short book by David Bedford

and Danielle Irving entitled *The Tragedy of Progress: Marxism, Modernity and the Aboriginal Question* (2001), which criticizes various leftist organizations (including ours) for not having “embraced more enthusiastically the Aboriginal struggle.” The source of this supposed lack of enthusiasm is, they claim, a reading of Marxism as a “variant of modernity” that flows from “the enlightenment idea of unceasing progress through the application of

Bedford and Irving try to strip Marxism of its materialist underpinnings and working-class centrality and twist it into a utopian worldview that can encompass Native “traditionalism.” This requires idealizing Native customs and cultures as somehow standing outside and apart from productive developments and immune to

change. Having done this, they conclude that workers revolution cannot address the issues facing Native people.

“Human societies which exist without individual property ownership and without industrialization experience no alienation,” wrote Bedford in a 1994 article in the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, asking rhetorically: “What do we say to those people who have yet to experience the alienation for which socialism is the answer...?” By this logic, the Marxist program for the emancipation of the proletariat is inapplicable to indigenous peoples *today* because *500 years ago* their cultures and pre-colonial development did not include alienated labour!

Naturally we have something to say about this caricature of Marxism. More broadly, Bedford’s polemic provides an opportunity to explore just what has changed in the last 500 years or so—the historical and anthropological roots of Native oppression and our Marxist program to address it. Of course the diversity of the pre-colonial cultures of North America cannot be captured in one presentation and I won’t try to do so, but I will discuss some specific examples in what is now the Canadian state. I will not talk at much length about some current issues impacting Natives—resource development and land claims, for example—which are dealt with in the pages of SC.

Bedford and Irving write of the “silence of the left” on Native oppression, asserting: “For parties on the left, the fate of Aboriginal peoples and the fate of a traditional culture confronted by a capitalist economy is of little interest.” Even a cursory look at our press gives the lie to this ridiculous assertion. Our very first issue, published in October 1975, includes an article headlined “Defend the B.C. Native Militants!” What Bedford really objects to is our Marxist worldview. This is captured succinctly in a passage he quotes from our press that sharply denounces those whose concern for “traditional culture” is a mask for liberal anti-communism:

“The options for Native people are often presented as a choice between ‘traditional culture’ and racist capitalist society. But this is a false choice, not least because the vibrant pre-European culture is irreparably lost. The real choice is between the perpetuation of the crimes of the past—centuries of racist genocide and wholesale destruction of the Natives’ way of life—or the creation of a future in a society not based on brutal exploitation and all-sided racism. “[W]e reject the idealization of ‘traditional culture’ as liberal racism and a patronizing glorification of backwardness.”

—“Torture of Native Women in Canada,” *Women and Revolution* No. 42, Spring/Summer 1993

Morgan, Marx and Engels

Native oppression is a product of capitalist society that can only be finally defeated with its overthrow. It is rooted in history: in the rise of the Canadian state from its colonial origins and the consequent undermining and destruction of the indigenous societies and economies. Our *Programmatic Theses*, published in 1998, concisely summarized this process:

“Canadian capitalism was founded on the destruction of the pre-existing aboriginal societies, beginning under French and, later, English colonialism. The possibility of independent development of Indian nations was foreclosed by the expropriation of these peoples through fraud and military conquest, combined with the devastating impact of disease following European contact.”

WORKERS VANGUARD

One cannot understand the development of indigenous peoples by an idealized study of their culture and values. It is essential to understand what they did to survive and adapt their environments to their needs—the material basis for culture—as well as the material forces that were at play in the displacement of these societies.

Historical materialism holds that a superstructure of ideas, politics and culture and so on fundamentally derives from the ways in which humans work on nature to produce the means of subsistence. This method was applied independently by the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan to sketch the history and anthropology of the Iroquois people. Morgan’s 1877 book *Ancient Society* was the basis for Karl Marx’s ethnological notebooks, and these in turn were elaborated by Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). Engels wrote in his introduction that Morgan “rediscovered in America, in his own way, the materialist conception of history that had been discovered by Marx forty years ago.”

Morgan was influenced by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution to view human societies in the process of their development. He described the different technologies, i.e., tools and practices, associated with different levels of development. Morgan used the anthropological categories of savagery, barbarism and civilization to describe stages of social development. Given the pejorative use today of the terms “savagery” and “barbarism,” I should note that his writings contain no hint of any ethnocentric prejudice. To the contrary, he viewed social progress always from the point of view of the fundamental unity of our species.

In examining the different forms of social development, Morgan (like Marx, Engels and ourselves) placed value on the technologies associated with progressively higher forms of production. He wrote that humans “worked their way up from savagery to civilization through the slow accumulations of experimental knowledge.” The acquisition of agriculture, metal tools, domesticated animals, language and writing allowed human societies to live better with less labour, to settle in centres with larger populations, to grow stronger with a stable supply of protein. These advances in our mastery of nature made social and cultural developments possible.

Morgan’s survey of ancient societies began with the successive developments in technology that increased the means of subsistence. He then traced the impact of these developments on forms of social organization, systems of family and the establishment of political organizations based on territory and private property.

Marx and Engels used the phrase “primitive communism” to describe aboriginal societies which had relative equality between men and women and did not have private property, classes or a coercive state. The ability to produce more than the bare necessities, mainly through agriculture, would lead to a social division of labour and hierarchy as the surplus production came to be divided. Those who appropriated a greater share would eventually require the means to defend this property against the less privileged and to pass it down to their children. Private property, classes, the state and the monogamous family therefore emerged. This is also the origin of women’s oppression, what Engels called “the world historic defeat of the female sex.”

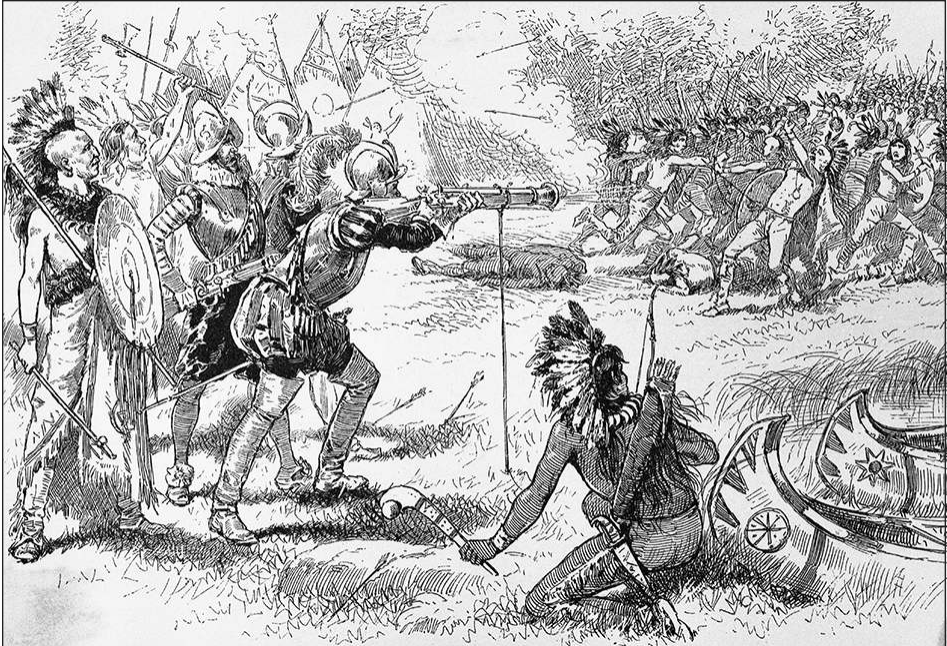
Early Aboriginal Societies

Before European settlement, the population of what is now Canada numbered perhaps two million, concentrated in regions where sedentary life was possible: Iroquois farmers in southern Ontario and fishermen on the Northwest coast. The continent then was fully populated. As historian Olive Dickason writes in *Canada’s First Nations* (2009): “The lands that appeared ‘vacant’ to the new arrivals were either hunting areas or else had been recently depopulated because of introduced epidemics.”

The tribal mode of life was based on what Marx called production for use. This appropriation of nature for the maintenance and reproduction of the community did not provide for the personal accumulation of capital through the private ownership and hired labour that drove the capitalist economies. The concept of private property in land was a foreign one. Where an economic surplus was produced, as in the rich fishing economies of the Northwest, goods were frequently redistributed in potlatch ceremonies to increase the prestige of a tribe and its leaders and perhaps to attract free labour.

Starting roughly 10,000 years ago in Central and South America, agriculture had slowly spread into the less hospitable climate of North America over several millennia. Morgan notes that grain cultivation allowed a more settled village existence, as in the Iroquois region, tending to supplant fish and game and making possible for the first time an abundance of food. Agriculture made permanent settlement both possible and necessary in such regions.

Morgan identified two plans of government: the ancient social organization based on kinship links; and the modern, political organization based on territory and property. “The plan of government of the American aborigines,” he wrote, “commenced with the gens [a group of families] and ended with the confederacy, the latter being the highest point to which their governmental institutions attained.” A confederacy was an alliance of tribes whose members spoke dialects of the same language. The social organization was essentially democratic. The tribes of the Iroquois confederacy were linked through common descent through the female line. In the Iroquois matriarchate, property remained within the clan, so mother-daughter ties were more important



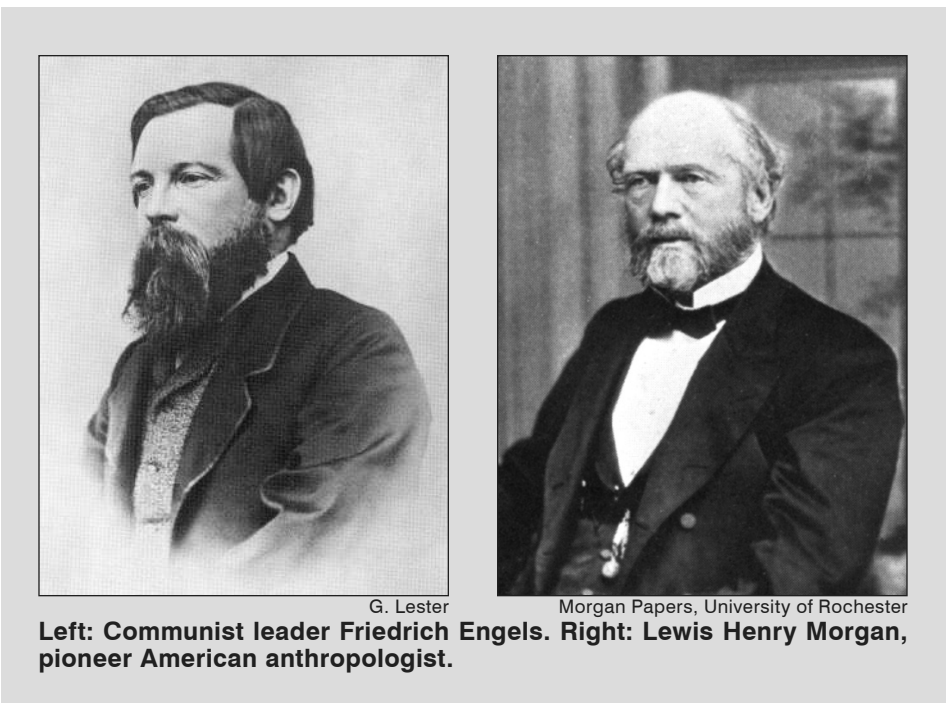
French forces under Samuel de Champlain ally with Algonquins to defeat Iroquois in 1609.

than spousal ties. Morgan noted that there was no political society, citizenship or state in this kinship-based society.

Like Morgan, who was adopted as an honorary member of the Seneca tribe after helping them retain land that had been taken by fraud, Marx admired the egalitarianism of many primitive societies based on pre-class communal property forms. At the same time, he would denounce as foolish utopianism all schemes of somehow returning to a romanticized traditional culture based on scarcity. He emphasized that the development of means of production was the engine of history, which allowed us to overcome scarcity but was also the basis for class divisions and the alienation of labour from its products. Given the uneven development of capitalism, it was inevitable that many pre-capitalist societies would be the victims of the ruthless expansion of the profit system.

Disease, Death and Devastation

The settlement of North America by Europeans is sometimes depicted as a simple slaughter and military conquest. This did occur in some areas but it is also an overgeneralization. One example is the



Left: Communist leader Friedrich Engels. Right: Lewis Henry Morgan, pioneer American anthropologist.

Beothuk who encountered Europeans in Newfoundland. Early on, Basque fishermen who came to the island could leave gear and boats undisturbed in Beothuk areas over the winters. But no common interests developed between them and the indigenous population. As the fishermen began to interfere with the Beothuk seasonal hunting rounds by using their shore sites, the latter in turn began raiding European gear. When permanent European settlement began, conflicts escalated into bloody slaughter: the French and English attacked the Beothuk, driving them away from the coast and into the barren interior, where they faced isolation and starvation and were hunted down. After 300 years none were left.

By far the biggest killers of the aboriginal population were the diseases carried by European settlers that quickly spread

were incompatible with the fur trading economies would become dependent on Europeans, relying on the trading posts to fill many of their needs. Proximity to European trading posts and missionaries exacerbated the effects of epidemic diseases such as smallpox and the use of alcohol and indebtedness to manipulate Natives.

The Huron and Iroquois are a case study in the divisions created by the fur trade. As the French established themselves in Quebec in 1608, they secured an alliance with the Huron, fighting beside them against their Iroquois rivals. The French plugged into the Huron trade network and flotillas of canoes carrying thousands of furs came down the Ottawa River to Quebec annually for decades.

The Iroquois in turn opened up trade with the Dutch and English but soon exhausted their own beaver supplies. By the 1640s, with guns from the Dutch, the Iroquois Five Nations attacked Huron control of the rivers, routing them and annihilating their villages. The Huron scattered, starved, or were captured and adopted into Iroquois tribes. By 1700 the Five Nations expanded to become the dominant force in the Northeast, controlling trade routes from the English colonies into the interior.

By the mid 17th century, New France was being colonized as an agricultural colony organized on feudal principles. In England, meanwhile, the rising bourgeoisie began to multiply its fleet of ships and pursue an aggressive colonial policy. As the two powers went to war in Europe, they and their Native allies also fought in North America, combining trade competition with military objectives. As Marxist historian Stanley Ryerson observed, “The forces that impelled New England forward were those that brought on and carried through the English bourgeois revolution. The roadblocks in the way of New France were such as the Cromwellian revolution cleared away” (*The Founding of Canada: Beginnings to 1815* [1960]).

With the British victory in the Seven Years War [known in the U.S. as the French and Indian War], the 1763 Treaty of Paris transferred to the British Crown one of the largest territories covered by any treaty before or since. Native peoples naturally disputed the transfer of land they had never ceded, taking the position that it was not they but the French who had been defeated, so their lands were not at stake. On top of this, the vacuum left by the French spurred settlers to take land through “sharp dealing” or outright theft.

At the same time, decreased leverage for Natives to bargain between the feuding powers was reflected in the rising prices demanded by British traders. Seething discontent erupted in a Native uprising which took several British forts in the Old Northwest in 1763, killing hundreds of settlers. British commander-in-chief Jeffrey Amherst’s infamous reaction was to propose the distribution of smallpox-laden blankets. The rising was unsuccessful, failing to receive help from France as hoped, and tribes were played off against each other in negotiations which allowed

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(continued from page 5)

The American Revolution

Britain's attempts to reverse the verdict of the American Revolution culminated in the War of 1812. The so-called United Empire Loyalists—wealthy counterrevolutionaries who took Britain's side—flowed north to what is now Canada. These reactionaries were no friends of Native peoples, but for several reasons the British side posed fewer direct threats to tribes struggling to resist colonial expansion. Settlements were smaller, and agriculture and industry slower to develop in Canada than to the south. Moreover, the continued preoccupation with trade actually required a degree of Native participation. Thus there was less *immediate* pressure to expropriate land.

Dispossession of Land: Fraud and Conquest

A black and white photograph showing a large group of approximately 20 men, likely sailors or shipbuilders, posing on the deck of a large sailing ship. The men are arranged in several rows, some standing and some kneeling or sitting in the front. They are wearing various types of hats, including wide-brimmed straw hats, bowlers, and flat caps, along with work clothes like jackets, shirts, and trousers. In the foreground, a large white sack sits on the wooden deck. The background is filled with the complex rigging, masts, and sails of the ship, with other crew members visible working on different levels of the vessel. The scene is set outdoors, with bright lighting creating strong shadows.

since time immemorial.

Britain used the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to codify its mercantile interests in the territory acquired with the defeat of the French. This document recognized some kind of aboriginal title—not out of any supposed generosity toward the aboriginal peoples, but as a way of securing peace so the fur trade would remain profitable. But this all changed with the triumph of industrial capitalism over the mercantile system in the decades following the American Revolution.

As trade turned to more intensive settlement, communal aboriginal hunting and gathering grounds became an obstacle to exploitation of the continent's natural resources through agriculture, lumbering and mining. The colonial state moved to "extinguish" the Native title and squeeze them into paltry reserves. Over several decades, treaties took land covering most of Canada's habitable area in return for trivial annuities and hunting and fishing rights that have since been eroded. As Stanley Ryerson wrote, "The fact of the matter is that the Indians were dispossessed of their lands by a colossal operation of fraud, misrepresentation and legalized theft."

The much later settlement of British Columbia provides an example of capitalist so-called primitive accumulation at its rawest. In B.C. there had been as dense a pre-industrial, non-agrarian population as anywhere: perhaps 200,000 to 300,000 inhabitants, with sophisticated, wealthy, hierarchical societies, a rich economy focused on the salmon harvest and thriving trade networks. An underclass of slaves comprised up to a third of the population. Contact with Europeans brought disease which resulted in a radical depopulation of 90 to 95 percent, a blow from which the Natives did not recover. Indeed, B.C.'s aboriginal population continued to drop until it reached a low of about 20,000 in 1929.

and Natives remained a majority through the 1880s. Europeans really began to establish themselves in the mid 19th century as the British formed a proprietary Hudson's Bay Company colony and gold was discovered on the Fraser and Thompson rivers.

A black and white photograph of a large group of children and nuns. The children, of various ages, are dressed in early 20th-century clothing, with many girls wearing white aprons over dark dresses. Several nuns in dark habits with white veils are interspersed among the children. They are posed in front of a light-colored wooden building with horizontal siding and a window. A wooden boardwalk or path leads from the foreground towards the building.

declared that “The Indians really have no right to the lands they claim, nor are they of any actual value or utility to them.” Seeing B.C.’s future in large land grants to settlers to develop agriculture, he reduced Native reserves to ten acres or less per family—in contrast to 160 acres for settlers—and made it impossible for Natives to acquire land by pre-emption as settlers did (i.e., by fencing and putting labour into it).

In his book *Landing Native Fisheries* (2008), historian Douglas Harris documents how the government imposed tiny, often barren reserves on the basis that Natives were fishing peoples who didn't need extensive land, while simultaneously devastating the Native fisheries by opening up the industry to all comers. He writes: "The reserve and the food fishery served the same purpose. Their intent and effect were to set aside fragments of traditional territories and fisheries for Native peoples, opening the remainder to immigrants." Dispossession of land together with enforced isolation from the productive forces of capitalist society formed a general pattern of racist abuse, denying Natives both the old world of the tribe, which was destroyed, and the new world of capitalist society, whose doors were closed to them.

tion they can from the ruling class. But the courts, like the glacial treaty process, will never provide a solution to the Native oppression under capitalism. While sometimes running ahead of governments in recognizing specific claims, the courts are bound to uphold capitalist private property and Canada's British colonial constitutional heritage. The deck is necessarily stacked against Natives.

A small historical example: in 1921 the British Privy Council ruled that aboriginal title pre-existed and continued throughout the British Empire unless explicitly extinguished. The Canadian response? The Indian Act was amended, making it illegal for Natives to raise money or retain a lawyer to advance land claims. This continued until 1951, two years after the abolition of Canadian appeals to the Privy Council. Elementary justice demands the end of the entire private property system under a workers government, which alone can guarantee a just and egalitarian future for the Native peoples.

The colonial administrations—and, following Confederation in 1867, the Canadian government—came to regard the aboriginal population as a disappearing people whose remnants were to be forcibly assimilated, refashioned as farmers and Christians. This racist “civilization” program would be run by missionaries and funded by sale of Native land. Native cultural practices were outlawed and languages and culture suppressed, most notoriously through the infamous residential school system run by churches and reli-

gious orders, which stole children from their families. The purpose of this system was captured in 1892 by Richard Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the U.S.: “Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”

At the same time, the remnants of the traditional aboriginal material cultures were destroyed. Today, even in the shrinking areas of production where Natives have a role based on their traditional means of subsistence—the salmon fishery and seal hunt, for example—their products are necessarily largely directed to the capitalist market.

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Over the years, insofar as Native people have been able to find work, this has mostly been in the worst-paid, most insecure jobs. Today, urban Natives are largely either excluded from production altogether or relegated to the “reserve army of labour,” sacrificed to the structural unemployment that the capitalists need to attack wages and working conditions. They are also jailed in massive disproportion to their numbers. On the reserves, aboriginal people are treated as second-class citizens, with separate and unequal systems of education and health care. The integrated working class must stand at the head of all the oppressed: not only defending Native people against oppression and repression, but fighting for their integration into the workforce. We call for the unions to control hiring, with aggressive recruitment and training for those—Natives, women, immigrants—who have historically been discriminated against by the capitalist class.

Bedford and Irving devote a section of their book to the cultural nationalism of Native activists Ward Churchill and Russell Means, who openly denounce Marxism because it is inseparable from “the rest of the European intellectual tradition” in basing itself on industry and production (Ward Churchill [ed.], *Marxism and Native Americans* [1999]).

The Spartacus Youth League, our youth organization in the U.S. in the 1970s, wrote that:

"American Indian 'nationalism'...represents an expression of the oppression and despair which Indians have experienced in urban centers [where they] have organized against particular manifestations of their special oppression beyond tribal lines into pan-Indian organizations. But Indian 'nationalism' has never succeeded in formulating a genuinely nationalist program and perspective for struggle, ultimately because the American Indian tribes were dismembered and destroyed by rising American capitalism before they could enter the historic process of national consolidation."

Today, despair over mass unemployment, racism and social isolation leads many Natives to seek solace in spiritualism and traditional communal values said to be shared by diverse aboriginal cultures, dreaming of a refuge where the virtues of idealized traditional life can be pursued. The stark fact is that none of this can do anything to end their oppression.

Lacking any perspective of a proletarian overturn of the capitalist order, various reformist left organizations have embraced or given cover to such cultural nationalism. For example, a 1970 pamphlet, “Red Power in Canada,” issued by the League for Socialist Action acknowledged that Natives lacked a common territory, language and economic life to serve as the basis for a nation. Yet it concluded: “Regardless of this, or that formal criterion, the key question is how the Indians see themselves—their collective consciousness. In this sense, the Indians are evolving, from a race to a nationality...to a nation” (republished by socialisthistory.ca, 2005).

The flag of "self-determination" can be waved around by all manner of liberals and reformists because they obscure its concrete content: the right to national independence. The cohering of nations is

I would note by way of contrast that the Québécois, descendants of the French settlers, are a fully fledged nation forcibly contained in the Canadian state with their own shared language and culture and a clear basis for an independent political



Calgary, May 2011: Yinka Dene Alliance protesting the Northern Gateway pipeline project threatening to cut across land claimed by Natives.

Movements for Native “self-determination” encompass everything from armed protests to the official process of negotiating treaties and self-government agreements. The former, while often militant and courageous, can ultimately result only in deadly defeat at the hands of a capitalist state possessing far greater force of arms. The latter has produced few results, even as aboriginal peoples become indebted to the government for the costs of treaty negotiations. And any treaty arrangement between the rich, racist rulers and the impoverished aboriginal peoples can only be based on a wildly unequal balance of forces.

Indeed, we have warned against a conception of “self-government” that amounts to offloading the reserves or other settlements onto Native chiefs and bureaucrats so they can assume responsibility for the results of centuries of racist oppression and keep their people in line with their own cops and courts. Under capitalism, the result of such “self-government” will be the same old poverty and social degradation, under a camouflage of Native traditions. Nevertheless, we defend whatever measure of political autonomy Native peoples with a land base are able to attain, including the right to govern their land and control its resources.

I want to say a few words about environmentalism. Bedford has recently rebranded his arguments to take advantage of the popularity of “ecosocialism,” coauthoring with Thomas Cheney an article titled “Labor, Nature, and Spirituality: Human Ecology and a Left-First Nations Politics” (*Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 2013). They argue that aboriginal peoples do not seek to control nature; rather, their animism/spiritualism “engenders an attitude of respect and humility toward the ecology, rather than a will to dominate it.” If this were the case, Native people would be unlike every other group of humans that has ever existed.

It is interesting that Bedford and Cheney choose to develop their argument with reference to Northwest coastal peoples whose hierarchical societies traditionally captured slaves and traded them up and down the coast. One can imagine what kind of

Embracing a traditional lifestyle and culture is not a luxury available to most Natives, who face stark poverty on the reserves and a wall of racism and police brutality in the cities. In terms of the material culture existing before European settlement, which required large areas of land for hunting to support small populations, the continent was, as I noted, already pretty full. With vastly larger numbers today, a hunter-gatherer econ-

omy is far beyond fantasy. Intensive production and a social division of labour are essential not only to produce books, computers, motorized transportation and vaccines, but to adequately feed and house the population.

Environmentalists often see a superficial affinity between their reactionary "back to nature" utopias and the interests of Native peoples. Today, opposition to various pipeline proposals sees Natives and environmentalists conjuncturally on the same side, as the former seek to protect land claims while the latter oppose any oil development. But environmentalism often runs directly against Native interests. The success of "conservation" campaigns against logging, trapping and the seal hunt has reinforced the poverty of many, including Inuit and other aboriginal peoples who depended on these industries for their livelihood. Aboriginal rights to control their resources include the right to seek their development, a right which we defend.

As Marxists, we recognize that rational planning of the use of natural resources and the development of production requires the overturn of the irrational capitalist profit system. Production for use rather than the profit of a wealthy minority opens the possibility for society to plan the

The best historical model for this is the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Under Marxist leadership, the insurgent working class and the new workers state championed the cause of all those oppressed in the former tsarist empire. The experience of the Soviet Union before its Stalinist degeneration gives a taste of what is possible for indigenous tribal peoples under working-class rule. Despite great material poverty, the workers state promoted broad autonomy, language and cultural rights, literacy programs and integration into the economy as well as leading positions in the party and state administrations.

Only the destruction of capitalism can set the conditions for voluntary integration on the basis of full equality for those Native people who desire it, and the fullest possible regional autonomy for those who prefer a different way of life. And where Native rights to land and resources would be affected by socially useful industrial developments, only a workers government will guarantee that any development proceeds on the basis of full consent and generous compensation.

Bedford and Cheney argue that the left must "shed long-held dogmas about religion and alienated consciousness, allowing it to take seriously indigenous spirituality." To the contrary, Marxists defend the scientific progress associated with the Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries, together with its conception of human freedom against all forms of mysticism, superstition, quackery and social reaction. The "liberty, equality and fraternity" of capitalism's progressive epoch has long ceased to be the rallying cry for a bourgeois class firmly ensconced in power. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union two decades ago and the consequent retrogression of working-class consciousness worldwide provide fertile soil for all kinds of backward ideas. Bedford et al.'s idealist and reactionary promise of a return to a pre-modern economy and culture is one of them.

In idealizing societies of the past, Bedford has to distort them beyond any historical or anthropological understanding. Indeed, he takes aim at the Enlightenment itself, attributing the left's supposed "silence" on the Native question to an analysis "grounded on an acceptance of the key concept associated with modernity—the fact and value of progress":

"Modern cultures, the inheritors of the Enlightenment, see history as a development or progress from less advanced to more advanced forms. History is marked by continual improvements in science and technology.... This is especially visible as our capacity to produce and consume is

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Catalonia...

(continued from page 12)

autonomy from the central government and refused to renegotiate the terms under which tax income is distributed between Madrid and Barcelona (Catalonia’s capital) and what share of the national expense is devoted to Catalonia. The PP merchants of homelessness and hunger have hypocritically promoted the chauvinist stereotype of Catalans as greedy and lacking in “solidarity” with the poorer parts of Spain.

The vile chauvinism emanating from Madrid has provoked a strong reaction in Catalonia. A catalyst for this anger was the decision in 2010 by Spain’s Constitutional Court to overturn numerous articles of Catalonia’s 2006 autonomy statute, including the section that recognized Catalonia as a nation. This was the outcome of the PP’s legal challenge against no less than 128 out of 223 articles in the statute. The day after the Constitutional Court decision was announced, over one million people in Catalonia protested, carrying banners reading: “We Are a Nation!”

The Catalan bourgeoisie, represented by the *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union) coalition and its more left-sounding tails in the *Esquerra Republicana* (Republican Left), who together currently dominate Catalonia’s *Generalitat* government, mirrors the Castilian bourgeoisie’s hypocrisy. They have conveniently blamed the economic crisis in Catalonia on the rest of Spain, pointing to unfavorable terms of taxation and lack of infrastructure investment by the central government, which are hurting their profits. Simultaneously, the *Generalitat* has itself shoved austerity down the throats of workers and the poor.

Following the demise of the Franco regime, the Catalan bourgeoisie saw its task as trying to gradually acquire more autonomy from the central government. The Basque and Catalan bourgeois nationalists had extracted concessions by supporting at different points both *PSOE* and *PP* governments when those parties did not win enough votes to form a national government on their own. However, after the economic crisis hit, the *PSOE* government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero initiated the austerity drive. It had also earlier reneged on some of its promises to Catalonia. When the *PP* was elected in 2011, it was able to form a government without the support of any of the regional bourgeois-nationalist parties, enabling it to act with unrestrained hostility against any decentralizing tendencies and thereby pushing more of the Catalan bourgeoisie toward independence.

Also a key factor in the turn toward independence by a section of the Catalan bourgeoisie is Catalonia’s weakening link to the Spanish market—for years it has sold more of its manufactured goods on the international market than domestically, with a large proportion of these exports going to other EU countries. Catalonia’s relative weight in Spain’s economy also declined as the result of a conscious policy by the Castilian bourgeoisie to build up the areas surrounding Madrid as an industrial center in the 1960s and 1970s. This diminished the relative economic dominance of Catalonia and the Basque region and established more of a



Demotix

San Sebastián, Spain, April 2013: Protesters form human wall to prevent arrest of Basque nationalist activists.

direct economic rivalry between the different national bourgeoisies.

EU Fuels National Chauvinism

While the Catalan bourgeoisie remains divided over the question of independence, all sides, including those that favor secession, are committed to the reactionary imperialist EU. The Catalan bourgeoisie has profited from the EU and, despite the devastation wrought by EU-imposed austerity, many working people in Catalonia who support independence favor staying in the EU.

The ICL has stood from the outset in principled opposition to the imperialist EU and its monetary instrument, the euro. The EU is an unstable consortium of rival capitalist states, dominated by the main imperialist powers, principally Germany. These powers seek to increase their competitive edge against their U.S. and Japanese imperialist rivals, exploit the workers throughout Europe and subordinate the weaker European countries like Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland as well as those in East Europe. Through the mechanism of the euro zone, Germany and other creditor states demand that debtor countries become more “competitive” by slashing wages, pensions and social spending. Recognizing that the euro would be an instrument of the EU imperialists, the ICL opposed its introduction. We stated that capitalism is organized on a national basis and that a common European currency was not viable.

For all the Catalan bourgeoisie’s talk of attaining “fiscal sovereignty” and opposing Madrid-imposed austerity, its pledge to stay in the EU means ceding control over interest rates, spending and monetary policy to Frankfurt and Brussels. And the imperialist masters of the EU have made clear that they don’t look kindly upon secessionist moves that could further destabilize the capitalist order in Europe. Thus, German chancellor Angela Merkel last August made a point of conspicuously supporting Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy against any move toward independence by Catalonia.

The EU rulers have whipped up nationalism, pitting workers in countries like Germany, Britain and France against those

in weaker countries. The failure of the reformist workers parties and trade-union bureaucrats to oppose the EU has spurred the growth of reactionary and outright fascist forces that channel discontent over austerity into hatred of immigrants and Muslims in particular. Maintaining vulnerable layers of workers with few legal rights helps the capitalists drive down wages and working conditions for everyone. In opposition to these divide-and-rule schemes we say: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!*

Opposing all forms of nationalism, we seek to lay the programmatic foundations for building revolutionary workers parties as part of a reformed, Trotskyist Fourth



Sipa

Fascists in Barcelona rally against November 9 referendum on independence for Catalonia.

International. Only such parties can lead the working class in seizing the means of production and expropriating the bourgeoisie internationally through a series of socialist revolutions. Instead, reformist leftists promote the fantasy of building a “social Europe” under capitalism. *Down with the imperialist EU! For a Socialist United States of Europe!*

Free All Basque Nationalists Now!

The workers movement in Spain and France must forthrightly oppose the sinister crusade by the Spanish and French states against the petty-bourgeois nationalists of Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA) and their sympathizers. The reformist misleaders of the *PSOE* and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) have instead spent years lining workers up behind the Castilian bourgeoisie and against the Basques. In the campaign against the Basques, Madrid has banned political parties and protests, shut down newspapers and rounded up sympathizers of Basque independence—repressive measures that have been used throughout Spanish history to crush militant workers’ struggles also.

On January 10, more than 75,000 people marched in the streets of Bilbao

to demand an end to the Spanish state’s practice of “dispersing” Basque nationalist prisoners to far-flung locations, with protesters raising chants demanding freedom and “total amnesty” for Basque militants. Two days later, the Spanish state carried out raids in four cities, using charges of money laundering and tax evasion to arrest 16 people dedicated to the legal defense of Basque activists. Those victimized included 12 lawyers, many of whom were due in court in Madrid for the start of a trial of 35 people charged with belonging to a terrorist organization.

As part of this transparent political witchhunt, the Civil Guard searched the offices of organizations including the pro-independence Basque trade union *Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak* (Commissions of Patriotic Workers), which represents tens of thousands of Basque workers. There they seized 90,000 euros in small bills and coins that had been collected at the demonstration two days earlier. We demand the dropping of all charges! *Down with anti-Basque repression!*

While we Marxists oppose ETA’s nationalist outlook as well as the petty-bourgeois strategy of individual terrorism it once practiced (ETA has now renounced armed struggle), we defend ETA against state repression. Acts of retribution against individual representatives of the capitalist state and ruling class are a losing substitute for, and obstacle to, the necessary struggle to replace the entire rotting capitalist system by mobilizing the social power of the working class in socialist revolution. While the acts that Basque militants have carried out against the capitalist state and its agents are not a crime from the standpoint of working people, the reactionary logic of nationalism leads to appalling

acts of indiscriminate terror as well, such as ETA’s criminal bombing of a supermarket in a working-class suburb of Barcelona in 1987. Such crimes have served only to drive Catalan and Spanish workers further into the arms of their own chauvinist bourgeoisies.

The Origins and Character of Catalan Nationalism

Catalonia has long had a strong sense of regional identity, with its own language, Catalan, now spoken by over ten million people in Catalonia as well as the Balearic Islands, northern Catalonia and Valencia. As a feudal principality under the Spanish crown, Catalonia repeatedly came into conflict with the monarchy. It was highly symbolic that the November 9 referendum took place around the time of the 300th anniversary of the defeat of the Catalan principality in the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714. Catalonia had backed the Habsburg claim to the Spanish throne against the Bourbons and was punished by the Bourbon victors with the suppression of its parliament and traditional liberties. (As a result of that war, Louis XIV, a Bourbon himself, consolidated France’s hold on Roussillon, the part of Catalonia north of the Pyrenees.) Known as *la Diada*, the

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day of Catalonia’s surrender, 11 September 1714, is today commemorated as the National Day of Catalonia.

The birth of Catalan nationalism dates not to a war over royal succession but to the era of the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the 19th century. It was through the emergence of textile manufacturing in the 18th century in Barcelona that a nascent bourgeoisie first appeared in Spain. Catalan capitalism developed after the lifting of restrictions on trade with Spain’s colonies in 1780. The Catalan bourgeoisie thrived especially on the colonial rape of Cuba, where slavery was abolished only in 1886.

By the late 19th century, Catalonia and the Basque region had become the main industrial centers of Spain, with Basque industry centered on metallurgy and Catalan industry on light manufacturing. As the Catalan bourgeoisie came together to lobby the central government for protection of its industries, a Catalan intellectual elite increasingly saw itself as the leading voice for modernization in Spain. The 19th-century cultural movement known as the “Renaissance,” which promoted the Catalan language and arts, was a reflection of these economic and political developments.

Outside of the centers of Basque and Catalan industry, most of Spain remained mired in backwardness well into the 20th century. Dating back to the 16th century, the Spanish Habsburg monarchy helped suppress development toward a unified nation-state and encouraged regional divisions. Accumulating gold and silver from the mines in Latin America, the crown was hostile to the growth of trade and manufacturing within the Spanish territories of the Iberian Peninsula. A decadent monarchy and its medieval, obscurantist Catholic church ruled over a huge peasantry, which toiled under a landowning class derived from the old feudal nobility. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky noted: “Spain’s retarded economic development inevitably weakened the centralist tendencies inherent in capitalism.... The meagerness of the national resources and the feeling of restlessness all over the country could not help but foster separatist tendencies” (“The Revolution in Spain,” January 1931).

As large numbers of workers from different parts of Spain flooded into the Basque and Catalan industries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Catalonia became a center of working-class radicalism. Catalan nationalism was therefore characterized from its inception both by a timid fight for regional autonomy and support for the Spanish state’s suppression of workers’ struggle. Early nationalist organizations like the Lliga Regionalista (Regionalist League) stood for the repression of the convulsive wave of struggles that swept Catalonia in the early 20th century, from the Barcelona General Strike of 1902 and the anti-militarist, anti-clerical revolt known as the Tragic Week of 1909 to the General Strike of 1917 and the Barcelona lockout of 1919-20. It was fear of working-class revolt that led the Catalan bourgeoisie to support Miguel Primo de Rivera’s military coup of 1923. His regime proceeded to repress Catalonia’s limited self-rule, suppress the Catalan language and even shut down the Barcelona football club!

In 1930, in the aftermath of the onset of the Great Depression, the Primo de Rivera regime, already rotting from within, fell, ushering in a period of mass workers struggles in Spain. Following the collapse of the monarchy in 1931, a capitalist Repub-



Agusti Centelles

Barcelona, 19 July 1936: Workers man barricade during Spanish Civil War.

lican government was formed, headed by a coalition of bourgeois Republicans with the Socialists. Under this regime, an autonomous Catalan regional government known as the Generalitat was formed, led by the bourgeois-nationalist Esquerra Republicana.

But the spectre of workers revolution drove the bulk of the Catalan bourgeoisie to support Franco’s counterrevolutionary forces in Spain’s Civil War of 1936-39. The Catalan bourgeoisie understood very well that Spain’s workers and peasants, who had been inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, were fighting not merely for a more democratic form of government but for a social revolution to end their exploitation and oppression. So the Catalan capitalists put their class interests ahead of their national aspirations, which were again to be crushed under the boot of Francoist repression.

Reformist Misleaders Betray Workers’ Struggle

Catalan nationalists today hold up Esquerra leader Lluís Companys, the president of the regional government when it fell to Franco, as a hero-martyr. In fact, Companys along with the Stalinist Communists, the Socialists and the anarchists sat in the Generalitat government that bloodily repressed the working-class insurrection of the Barcelona May Days of 1937. The Stalinists led the assault on the workers, but it was the leaders of the anarchists and the centrist Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM, which had earlier been part of the Catalan government) who were instrumental in persuading the workers to take down their barricades. This was a pivotal event in the defeat of the Spanish Revolution.

The betrayal of workers revolution showed vividly that the policy of forming a popular-front alliance with bourgeois parties like the Esquerra in Catalonia was utterly suicidal for the working class. As we wrote about the Barcelona May Days in “Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War” (*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 61, Spring 2009):

“Power was in the grasp of the heroic Barcelona workers. Yet by week’s end, the workers had been disarmed and their barricades dismantled—a result not of military defeat but of sabotage, confusion and defeatism sown by the workers’ misleaders.... Victory in Barcelona could

have led to a workers and peasants Spain and set Europe aflame in revolutionary struggle on the eve of World War II. Defeat opened the way to intense repression, including the suppression of the POUM and the murder or imprisonment of its leaders. Having thus disarmed the proletariat, the popular front opened the gates to Franco’s forces and a bloody reign of rightist reaction.”

While the working class of Spain paid for the popular-front betrayals of its leaders with blood, the reformist misleaders never abandoned the politics of class collaboration. The rapid industrialization of Spain through large foreign investment in the 1960s and early ’70s increased the size and self-confidence of the working class, which heroically challenged the Franco regime in its dying days. Following Franco’s death in 1975, Spain exploded in a wave of protests and strikes against the regime’s brutal suppression of trade unions, leftist parties and national minorities. However, the leaders of the PSOE and the PCE sought to rein in these struggles and channeled them toward a “peaceful” transition to bourgeois democracy. The PSOE and PCE supported the 1978 constitution that recognized Franco’s chosen successor, King Juan Carlos, as head of state of a Spanish “nation.” Today, the PCE sellouts have the audacity to call for a referendum to get rid of Spain’s corrupt monarchy.

The situation today is very different from the period of the Civil War and the workers’ insurgency in the mid-late 1970s. Marxists have to take this into account in dealing with the concretes of the national question. The recognition of the *right* of a given nation to secede does not necessarily mean that one would advocate secession at a particular time. Lenin often used the analogy of the recognition of the right of divorce, which of course does not mean that one demands the dissolution of any and every marriage.

At the time of the Civil War, the Catalan and Basque proletariat stood at the head of their class in a revolutionary situation that posed pointblank the possibility of overcoming national divisions through the workers coming to power. It would have made no sense to advocate independence at that time. But for some years now, it has been evident that relations between the Basque and Spanish workers have been poisoned. And in Catalonia today, discon-

tent within the proletariat is increasingly manifesting itself not in an assimilationist direction—i.e., seeing its fate as joined with that of the Spanish proletariat—but rather in pronounced separatist sentiments.

Rotten Social Democrats and Bourgeois Populists

The PSOE demonstrated its hatred for oppressed nationalities when it unleashed death squads, dubbed “anti-terrorist liberation groups” (GAL), against the Basque people in the 1980s. Today the PSOE is united with the ruling PP in chauvinist opposition to a Catalan referendum. It calls for making Spain a federation, in which Catalonia would supposedly have greater powers. This amounts to minor tinkering with the existing setup of regional autonomy, the essential point being that Catalonia will remain under the thumb of Castilian chauvinism. A similar position for a federated bourgeois state is held by the Izquierda Unida (IU) coalition, led by the PCE.

The post-1978 political order in Spain is unraveling. The parties that have dominated the electoral arena, the PSOE and PP, have both undergone a sharp drop in support, associated with their implementation of widely hated austerity measures. The presumption of a unitary Spain has been challenged in Catalonia and elsewhere.

Stepping into this breach with the mission of refurbishing Spanish bourgeois



AP

Bloody dictator Francisco Franco (right) with his chosen successor, Prince Juan Carlos, January 1971.

democracy is the Podemos party, a formation based on the petty bourgeoisie that issued out of the 2011 Indignados movement. Podemos is totally committed to maintaining the EU. Like the Indignados movement—and like its Greek counterpart Syriza—the populist Podemos claims to represent all classes of people against the political and business elites, which it has dubbed “la casta” (the caste). Podemos’ populism is designed to obscure the understanding that the fundamental division in society is class and that only the proletariat, through the seizure of power and the destruction of capitalism in all countries, can eliminate exploitation. As Marxists, we oppose Podemos on principle as a bourgeois party.

While claiming to uphold Catalonia’s “right to decide,” Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias stated in a 27 December 2014 interview with *El Periódico* that a “unilateral declaration” of independence is not possible and that Podemos therefore proposes a “constitutional process.” This amounts to a negation of the right of Catalan self-determination, which means the right of the *people of Catalonia—not a Spanish constitutional process*—to decide whether or not to secede.

Podemos’ popularity has predictably attracted a gaggle of opportunist pseudo-Marxists to its orbit. Shameless lawyers for Podemos, the En Lucha (In Struggle) group affiliated with the British Socialist Workers Party declared: “Pablo Iglesias is not a Lenin, but it is better for everyone to fight against capitalism in a framework in which Podemos is strong.” While tailing Podemos, which opposes “unilateral” independence for Catalonia, En Lucha in

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Spartacus Youth Club Classes

NEW YORK CITY

Monday, April 20, 7 p.m.

The Cuban Revolution and the Fight for Socialism

CCNY, NAC Room 1/209
138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)
Information and readings:
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

BAY AREA

Thursday, April 23, 7:30 p.m.

The Russian Revolution of 1917: How the Working Class Took Power

San Francisco State University
(Meet in front of the Ethnic Studies Building)
Information and readings:
(510) 839-0851 • sycbayarea@fastmail.net

LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, May 6, 7 p.m.

Labor and the Fight for Immigrant Rights

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Break with the Democratic Party of Racism and War!

UCLA, Ackerman Union, Room 3516
Information and readings:
(213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

Visit the ICL website: icl-fi.org

Chicago...

(continued from page 1)

take her place. Forces from national teachers unions to radical black professor Cornel West and the liberal MoveOn.org quickly jumped on Garcia's bandwagon. In reality, Garcia's campaign platform made clear that his "friend of labor" credentials were just lipstick on a pig. Among other lowlights, he upheld a 2007 state law enacted by Democrats that jacked up transit workers' mandatory retirement contributions by more than 400 percent!

The journal *In These Times* surely spoke for many reformist leftists in painting Lewis's withdrawal from the race as a "huge blow." Encouraged to run as an independent for the mayoral race, Lewis is a Democratic politician with or without the label. In fact, Lewis is a longtime ally of Chicago's own Jesse Jackson and a loyal Democratic Party supporter. The same goes for the leaderships of teachers unions nationally, who have handed over tens of millions of dollars in union dues to Democratic candidates and supplied hundreds of delegates to the last Democratic National Convention.

The labor bureaucracy, including the CTU leadership, represents a conservative, pro-capitalist layer at the top of these workers organizations. This layer is far removed from the militants who built the unions in this country by class-struggle methods, often in defiance of anti-labor laws and court injunctions. For Marxists, independence from the Democrats is not mainly a question of formal affiliation but means organizing the working people in uncompromising opposition to the capitalist class enemy and all bourgeois political formations.

On principle, we never vote for, or otherwise extend political support to, any capitalist politician, Emanuel and Gar-



Reuters



Corbis

Left: Teachers strike against Emanuel's attacks on their union and public schools, September 2012. Right: Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis addresses rally protesting school closings, March 2013.

cia included. In Chicago and beyond, the Democrats have ruled by mastering ethnic "divide and rule" politics to mask the common interests of the working people and oppressed. Our aim is to build a workers party independent of and opposed to the Democrats and Republicans, one that champions the cause of all the exploited and the oppressed in the fight for socialist revolution.

Democratic Party of Massive Cutbacks

All it took was some vague "little guy" rhetoric for Garcia to become a darling of the "anybody but Emanuel" crowd. The "fight the right" refrain usually is the excuse to vote the Democrats into office in order to keep out the Republicans, but here the only contenders were Democrats, reflecting the party's lock on the city. Showing the futility of supporting the "lesser evil" Democrats, in Illinois, as in other Midwest states, workers are facing

an onslaught of union-busting government attacks. From the state legislature in Springfield to City Hall in Chicago, for decades it has been the Democrats who have looted public worker pension funds, while working to hamstring the unions.

Shortly after taking office as mayor in 2011, Emanuel canceled a 4 percent pay hike previously negotiated by the CTU and laid off almost 1,000 teachers. Later that year, Democrats pushed through a new state law dictating more school hours and a longer school year without any additional pay for teachers. The bill, ludicrously supported by the CTU executive board, also required 75 percent of the union membership to authorize teachers strikes. In 2012, the teachers voted overwhelmingly for a strike that succeeded in holding the line against some of Emanuel's demands. However, the union leadership agreed in advance not to make school closings a strike issue.

Now the governor's mansion has been

taken over by a nut job free-market Republican, venture capitalist Bruce Rauner, who has called for *lowering* the minimum wage and slashing social spending, while vowing to hold back union dues collected for the state's public-sector unions. Rauner's aggressive posture is a gift to the Democrats, enabling them to come across as reasonable by comparison. In fact, despite minor policy differences, Republicans and Democrats are fundamentally united around austerity. For example, last month Rauner and Democratic House majority leader Michael Madigan (for decades the real boss of Illinois politics) agreed to a "short-term" service-slashing budget "fix." It is no secret that Madigan, Emanuel and Rauner are all sharpening their knives for a deal to carve up the public employee pension plans to pay off the banks and balance the state and city budgets.

The trademarked response of the labor bureaucracy to union-busting onslaughts was displayed in Wisconsin in 2011, when

Catalonia...

(continued from page 9)

Catalonia works with the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP—Candidacy for Popular Unity), whose goal is an independent Catalan government headed by the two main bourgeois parties there.

The Language Question

The question of language policy has been a major flashpoint for Castilian chauvinist reaction in Spain. The minority languages were officially repressed by the state under Franco. The 1978 constitution imposed Castilian (Spanish) as the official language of the state, which all have the duty to know. If you were to believe the chauvinist hysteria, Spanish is supposedly under threat and Spanish speakers are victims of terrible discrimination in Catalonia. That this is a complete fiction is confirmed by the fact that 99 percent of the population over the age of 15

in Catalonia can speak Spanish (with a literacy level of 95 percent). In Catalonia, most people also have facility in Catalan. Some 80 percent can speak Catalan, and Catalan literacy is at 60 percent.

The Madrid government's sponsorship of a 2012 education reform bill that aims to recentralize education powers, foster religion and "Hispanicize" Catalan pupils prompted mass protests. The Catalan regional High Court ruled in 2014 that 25 percent of a school's curriculum must be taught in Castilian Spanish if a single pupil requests it. This amounts to a naked attempt to impose Spanish-language instruction in schools in Catalonia. Similar policies are being pursued in the Balearic Islands.

The autonomous region's language "normalization" law of 1983 gave Catalan privileged status in education, state administration and the media. In the mid 1990s, Catalonia began to provide primary and secondary school instruction exclusively in Catalan, with a few hours of Spanish language and literature a week. The 2006 statute of autonomy stipulated "the right and obligation to have a sufficient oral and written knowledge of Catalan and Castilian upon completing compulsory education." The same statute asserted that it was a "duty" for people living in Catalonia to know both official languages, Catalan and Castilian.

A major concern of the Catalan Generalitat was to ensure that second-generation immigrants learn Catalan. There were two large waves of immigration to Catalonia in the postwar period—the first in the 1950s and '60s from other areas of Spain and another several decades later from Latin America, East Europe and North Africa.

As Marxists, we warn against those who seek to divide the working class on the pretext of defending a particular "national culture," which as in Catalonia inevitably discriminates against other nationalities. Thus, today an essential condition for getting a job in the public sector in Catalonia is knowledge of Catalan. We are against the imposition of any official languages. We demand equal language rights for all! We are for a public, secular, ethnically



Demotix

Workers in Barcelona during one-day general strike across Spain against capitalist austerity measures, 14 November 2012.

integrated school system with full provisions for instruction in Spanish, Catalan and other languages as needed by the local population. These rights apply to speakers of Arabic and Romanian as much as to those whose native language is Catalan or Castilian.

Forge a Leninist Party!

Lenin stressed that "the national programme of working-class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language; the solution of the problem of the political self-determination of nations, that is, their separation as states by completely free, democratic methods" (*Critical Remarks on the National Question* [1913]). Through adherence to such a program, the Bolsheviks were able to rally the working people—Russians, Jews, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians, etc.—to overthrow the rule of the capitalists and landlords in October 1917.

The national question is today posed with burning intensity in Spain. Championing the independence of Catalonia and

the Basque country provides an acid test of the ability of any workers organization in Spain to oppose its own bourgeoisie. Those parties that have betrayed the proletariat in the past, such as PSOE and PCE/IU, not surprisingly are now lined up behind the Spanish capitalists in seeking to maintain the "unity" of the Spanish bourgeois state, which many times over has had the blood of the workers and oppressed nationalities on its hands.

The terrible economic crisis ravaging workers and the poor in Spain and elsewhere cries out for workers revolution and the establishment of a soviet federation of workers republics in the Iberian peninsula, part of a Socialist United States of Europe. The crucial instrumentality for this is a Leninist-Trotskyist party, which must be built as part of the fight to reforge the Fourth International. Such a party will incorporate dearly purchased lessons from Spain's own history, particularly those laid out by Trotsky and his comrades in the 1930s on the need for proletarian independence from all bourgeois forces. ■

Against Apologists for the Treachery of the PQUM, Then and Now

Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War

SPARTACIST

Spartacist (English edition)
No. 61, Spring 2009 (64 pages) \$1.50

Also available in:
Spartacist (Spanish edition)
No. 36, November 2009 (72 pages) \$1

Order from/pay to: Spartacist Pub. Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

100,000 angry unionists who massed at the state capitol looking for a way to fight back were funneled straight into a campaign to recall the Republican governor. Since then, “right to work” (prohibiting the union shop) has taken root in one Mid-west state after another, including most recently in Wisconsin. Forswearing the mobilization of labor’s social power in strikes and solidarity actions, the union misleaders continue to push the election of Democrats as their only “answer” to capitalist attacks on union rights and to declining standards of living.

Break with the Democrats!

The national attention to the Chicago election reflected broader tensions within the Democratic Party between Wall Street Democrats like Obama and Hillary Clinton and forces favoring more populist candidates such as Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren and New York mayor Bill de Blasio. Seven years ago, it was the relatively unknown Barack Obama who spoke of “hope” and “change.” Now that disillusionment with Obama’s policies has set in, a new cast of Democratic wannabes wants the party to refurbish its image.

In the Chicago mayoral elections, the trade-union misleaders were working over-time to turn out voters for either Emanuel or Garcia, based on who they thought was more likely to win, or more likely to toss loyal supporters a few more bread crumbs off the table. Construction craft unions, many Teamsters locals and the firefighters lined up behind Emanuel, with UNITE HERE Local 1 airing nauseating “Rahm Love” TV ads. Other labor leaders, particularly from unions with a large proportion of black members, lined up behind Garcia, who was endorsed by the ATU transit union, the SEIU health care workers and National Nurses United. The CTU bureaucrats even urged teachers to stay in town during spring break to help get out the vote for “Chuy.”

The reformist left rived the trade-union tops in scrambling to make it seem as though something important was at stake in this election. The Communist Party touted the birth of a “new kind of people’s movement” (peoplesworld.org, 3 April). The Party for Socialism and Liberation enthused over Garcia’s “progressive credentials” and the possibility that he would initiate “badly needed reforms for working and poor people” (liberationnews.org, 1 March). Socialist Alternative cheered that Karen Lewis’s candidacy had opened up “the possibility of a labor backed, combative election campaign to challenge the Democratic Party establishment,” and advised Garcia to mount a “real fighting challenge to the corporate elite and their servants in the political establishment” (March 8). These groups and others like them differed only over whether to be open or backhanded in supporting Garcia.

ISO: Gooley for “Chuy”

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) publicly aired a debate over whether to vote for Garcia. While the ISO has not openly campaigned for Democratic candidates, it makes its preferences clear: when Obama ran for president, the ISO did not actually say workers should vote for him, but ISO spokesman Sharon Smith crowed after the fact that “Obama’s victory also represents a surge in class consciousness and a decisive rejection of neoliberal policies.” The program of these opportunists is to pressure the Democrats but they prefer to express it at one remove,



March 25: Phony “friend of labor” Garcia and, behind him, CTU vice president Jesse Sharkey, long supported by International Socialist Organization.

for example by backing the Greens, a small-time capitalist party whose function is to corral disaffected Democratic voters back into the fold.

Over the Chicago elections, the ISO seemed torn: while trying to reassure its readers who worried that the group’s mild criticisms of Garcia would make them “irrelevant” in the eyes of the masses, the ISO stopped short of following CTU vice president Jesse Sharkey into Garcia’s camp. Sharkey boasted that he was out electioneering for Garcia in the frigid Chicago winter, and rhapsodized about hugging his candidate in celebration of Garcia’s getting into the runoff. The ISO has always strongly supported the CTU caucus led by Karen Lewis and Sharkey, and columns by Sharkey have been featured in the ISO’s paper, so this public divergence represents a dilemma for it. (As for Sharkey’s courtship of Garcia, the only tragedy in the latter’s defeat is that we will not get to see if it would have ended in a wedding or a broken heart.)

Given the disappointment in Obama expressed even by many black workers and others who still support him, the ISO is surely aware that unalloyed enthusiasm for today’s Democrats would be unwise. So an article by Lee Sustar and others in *Socialist Worker* (March 17) duly takes note of Garcia’s shortcomings before offering that “an article on the mayoral runoff can and should also show what we have in common with the militants in the CTU and beyond who are supporting Garcia.” Translation: we too support the lesser evil...for the millionth time.

Chicago: Divide and Rule

Chicago is the quintessential American city, where contradictions of race and class are raw. Historically, the fault line has been between blacks and whites but today the city is nearly a third Latino, adding another element into the mix. Unemployment in black ghettos is four times as high as in white neighborhoods, and black youth unemployment is estimated as high as 92 percent. The black South and West Sides are riddled with boarded-up “zombie” homes and apartment buildings, urban decay exacerbated by the subprime mortgage scams. Today in Chicago, the rate of racist police “stop and frisks” is *three times* the rate at its highest in New York City.

The ethnic constituency politics that the Democratic Party specializes in were much in evidence in these elections. The Mexican-American immigrant Garcia gained over two-thirds of the votes in Latino wards. What clinched the election for Emanuel was winning nearly 60 percent of the black vote; he took every black ward in the city. That fact reflected not

only his ties to Obama, who flew into town to bolster support for his henchman before the February election, but also the rivalries that emerge from competition between ethnic groups in a capitalist society for what is seen as a fixed (or shrinking) pie. One black man was quoted by the *New York Times* (3 April): “I ain’t voting for a Mexican,” adding that he was tired of competing with Latinos for jobs. It is the task of revolutionaries to actively combat such backward attitudes among the oppressed. We seek to win black militants to the defense of immigrants, and Latinos to the understanding that the racist oppression of the black population is the bedrock upon which American capitalism was built.

Garcia and his cheerleaders invoke memories of the 1983 election of Chicago’s first black mayor, Harold Washington, who built a coalition of blacks, a majority of Latinos and liberal whites under the slogan “It’s our turn.” Although Washington’s election was met with a barrage of racist reaction, the reality is that he served as the enforcer of Reaganomics—wholesale attacks on the social services gained through earlier class and social struggles. It didn’t take Washington long to go after the very unions that had supported his election. He pushed a bill looting the ATU pension fund, introducing part-time jobs and tearing up the union contract. In 1988, teachers went out on strike against attacks on education and jobs.

A central demand of Washington’s 1983 campaign was to fire the racist cop commissioner, Richard Brzeczek. And the mayor replaced Brzeczek with a black police commissioner. This made not one whit of difference to racist cop terror in the city; throughout the Washington years, the notorious “midnight crew”

Canada...

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directly linked to technological and scientific progress.” “Acceptance of the Enlightenment project,” he concludes, “infuses the left’s political stands on the Aboriginal question, and it conditions their reading of Marx.”

Of course Marxism does value technological progress, and it is forward-looking, as (I would add) human societies have always been. Modern societies share a great deal with “traditional” ones, which also sought to better understand and master nature—and frequently other humans—in order to survive and thrive. Even spiritualism based on mythological beliefs was an early attempt to better understand the natural world in ways that could help to secure human survival.

Technological progress is necessary but not sufficient to human progress. Workers rule is needed to establish social equality—which today can be achieved only on the basis of material abundance—and lay the basis for the abolition of private property and the eventual withering away of the state. At the end of *Ancient Society*, Morgan paints a vista of the future which I find inspiring:

“The time will come, nevertheless, when human intelligence will rise to the mastery over property, and define the relations of the state to the property it protects, as well as the obligations and the limits of the rights of its owners. The

under police commander Jon Burge continued to extract confessions from black men though such interrogation techniques as battery clamps to the genitals. Washington’s black top cop, Fred Rice, twice promoted Burge even after the allegations of torture began to surface. This February, the London *Guardian* ran a series of articles documenting continued torture of black men by Chicago police to extract confessions, including at a “black site” detention center at Homan Square where arrestees are held, their location unknown to their families or lawyers.

For all the nonsense spouted recently about re-creating Harold Washington’s supposed rainbow coalition, the falling out among Democrats in the mayoral squabble only underscored the black-Latino division (among others) in Chicago. For a taste of the possibility of uniting the working people, one can look back to the 2012 teachers strike, even hamstrung as it was by its leadership. Many black and Latino parents supported the strike, some joining the picket lines. The basis for this cooperation was not mutual affection but common interest: parents along with teachers had everything to gain by fighting to defend public education against further cutbacks and layoffs.

Through class struggle, the different layers of the working people can come to understand their unity of interests, a necessary part of which is rejecting the suicidal illusions of common interests with our exploiters. What is required is a revolutionary workers party based on the program of socialism—the fight to meet the needs of all of society by destroying the capitalist profit system itself. Our reformist opponents endlessly recycle their bankrupt strategy of supporting “progressive” Democrats, who make promises to the working people only to turn around and kick them in the teeth once they are in office. Believing the fight for socialism to be utopian, these fake socialists have nothing to offer except the truly hopeless prospect of reforming the system of brutal capitalist exploitation.

As we said in “Harold Washington Will Betray Black Chicago” (WV No. 328, 22 April 1983), at the time of his first mayoral victory:

“If it is to be ‘our turn’ to rule for blacks, workers, Hispanics and the poor they must break with the Democratic Party and find within their ranks the class-conscious leaders that can forge a fighting workers party determined to wage *class war* for power. Chicago may be the most segregated city in America but it has a powerful working class with an enormous potential for integrated class struggle.” ■

interests of society are paramount to individual interests, and the two must be brought into just and harmonious relations. A mere property career is not the final destiny of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past.... Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges and universal education, foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes.”

Morgan’s vision of a renaissance of “primitive communist” egalitarianism combined with modern technology could easily be dismissed as idealist utopianism. But what Marxism provides is an understanding that the working class, by virtue of its relation to the means of production, can be the necessary instrumentality to make this vision a material reality.

Native people cannot have a decent future under capitalism. Only the destruction of the rulers’ profit system and construction of a socialist society can redress centuries of crimes against the aboriginal peoples of this country. The fight against Native oppression provides a litmus test for those aspiring to lead the working class. A party that does not champion the defense of the most oppressed will never succeed in leading the workers to victory over their class enemies. We seek to build a Marxist vanguard party that champions the cause of all the oppressed in the struggle for socialist revolution. ■

Spartacist Forum

Mexico: Outrage Over Massacre of Ayotzinapa Students

CHICAGO

Saturday, May 16, 1 p.m.

Chicago Public Library, Rudy Lozano Branch, 1805 S. Loomis St.
(Four blocks east of Pink Line 18th St. Stop)
For info: (312) 563-0441 • chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

Spain Independence for Catalonia and for the Basque Country!

Last November, 2.3 million people in Catalonia defied the central government of Spain and voted in an unofficial referendum on independence. More than 80 percent of those who voted answered yes to both questions posed: “Do you want Catalonia to be a State?” and “If so, do you want Catalonia to be an independent State?” The vote was the culmination of years of growing pro-independence sentiment in this region of 7.5 million people in the northeast of Spain. The rabid chauvinism of the Castilian bourgeoisie, coupled with European Union (EU)-imposed economic austerity, has brought to the fore the centuries-old divisions between the central government and Spain’s smaller, oppressed nationalities, such as the Catalans.

The massive participation in the November 9 vote was a powerful riposte to the Spanish parliament’s decision last April to outlaw a referendum on independence. It was also a clear indication that the direction of national sentiment in Catalonia is strongly toward separation from Spain and not toward assimilation. In accordance with this, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) demands: *Independence for Catalonia!*

As revolutionary Marxists, our advocacy of Catalonia’s secession from Spain is aimed at removing the question of national oppression from the agenda in order to bring to the fore the necessity for a fight by the working class against the capitalist class enemy in both Spain and Catalonia. The capitalist rulers, whether Castilian or Catalan, use nationalism to obscure the fact that working people do not share a common interest with their “own” exploiters and to sow divisions between workers of different nationalities. An independent Catalonia would demonstrate more clearly to the workers there that the Catalan bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists are no fighters for liberation from exploitation and social oppression. Independence would also shake up the capitalist order in the rest of Spain as well as give a jolt to the imperialist EU, which would help open the road to class struggle.

We reject the assertion by the Castilian bourgeoisie and Spain’s monarchy of the “indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation.” This was enshrined in the bourgeois-democratic constitution adopted in 1978, three years after the death of General Francisco Franco, whose bonapartist dic-

tatorship held sway for almost 40 years. The Spanish constitution explicitly denies the democratic right of self-determination for Catalans, Basques and Galicians, which are distinct nationalities with their own languages. The ICL has always upheld the right to self-determination of these oppressed nations in Spain.

A central obstacle to working-class unity in Spain in the post-Franco period has been the extreme chauvinism directed at the Basque people. There has been a long struggle for Basque independence. Every “democratic” government, including under the Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), has continued the Franco dictatorship’s bloody campaign of terror against Basque separatism. The profound divisions between workers in the Basque region and those in the rest of Spain are reflected in the predominance of separate, nationalist trade unions in the Basque country. It has been evident for some time that these divisions cannot be overcome except through the struggle for independence for the Basques. While the ICL has long upheld the right of the Basques to secede and vigorously defended Basque victims of capitalist state

repression, we have been remiss in not advocating Basque independence until now. *Independence for the Basque country!*

There does not currently appear to be mass sentiment for independence in the part of the Basque country lying across the northern border of Spain in France, or in northern Catalonia in France, where Catalan is spoken. The Ligue Trotskyste de France, section of the ICL, nonetheless upholds the right to self-determination of the Basques and Catalans, i.e., their right to secede from the French state. This would include the right to join an independent Catalonia or Basque country. The ICL also upholds the right of other Catalan-speaking regions of Spain, such as the Balearic Islands, to join an independent Catalonia. Our call for independence for Catalonia and the Basque country is an application of the Leninist position recognizing the right to self-determination of all nations. As Lenin wrote in his 1916 *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*:

“The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to

free political separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this demand for political democracy implies complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation.”

Only by supporting independence for Catalonia and the Basque country can the proletariat in Spain demonstrate that it opposes the national chauvinism of its own ruling class, enabling it to win the confidence and class solidarity of workers in the oppressed nations and remove suspicion or distrust. At the same time, the workers of the oppressed Catalan and Basque nations must struggle for political independence from their respective national bourgeoisies, which wield the call for “national liberation” as a tool for deceiving and dividing the workers along national lines.

Bourgeois Rivalries in Multinational Spain

The Castilian bourgeoisie’s determination to prevent any prospect of an independent Catalonia or Basque country is in no small part due to the fact that these are among the most industrialized and economically productive regions of Spain, with huge concentrations of finance capital. Today, Catalonia (with 16 percent of the total population) contributes about 20 percent of Spain’s gross domestic product. The second-largest bank in Spain is the Basque Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA), which has extensive investments in Latin America. A retired Spanish army colonel snarled in a 2012 interview: “The independence of Catalonia? Over my dead body and those of many others.” Given Spain’s bloody history, these are not idle threats.

Following the collapse of Spain’s real estate bubble in 2008 and an ensuing financial crisis, part of the world economic depression, the imperialist rulers of the EU and the Spanish bourgeoisie have subjected working people to mass layoffs and savage austerity, with over 5.4 million currently out of work. This situation has fueled bourgeois nationalism on all sides.

The national ruling party, the Popular Party (PP), descends politically from Francoism and embodies pro-monarchy, right-wing Catholic reaction. It has intensified anti-Catalan sentiment in a transparent attempt to distract attention from the bourgeoisie’s responsibility for the ongoing economic crisis. For years, the PP has blocked attempts by Catalonia to gain greater

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Barcelona, 11 September 2014: Mass demonstration on National Day of Catalonia in lead-up to unofficial referendum on independence.

Reuters

Down With the European Union! For a Socialist United States of Europe!