

## Bourgeois Populism in Crisis



Polaris



Reuters

Left: Reactionary anti-government protesters confront National Guard in Caracas, June 5. Right: Government supporters demonstrate on August 14 against Donald Trump after he imposed new sanctions on Venezuela.

# Venezuela: U.S. Hands Off!

Venezuela's bourgeois-nationalist regime has been in the crosshairs of the U.S. imperialists since the late Hugo Chávez took office in 1999. His crime in the eyes of the U.S. rulers? Chávez, a military officer turned populist strongman, used some of the country's oil profits to institute social programs that benefited the poor, while denouncing Washington's barbaric economic and military policies in Latin America and elsewhere. Already in 2002,

the U.S. and its local puppets in the reactionary bourgeois opposition orchestrated a failed coup against Chávez. In 2015, Barack Obama ludicrously declared Venezuela a threat to U.S. national security, imposing sanctions against the government of Nicolás Maduro, who came to power after Chávez died in 2013. Now the racist demagogue Donald Trump is threatening to use the "military option" and has imposed new sanctions against the regime.

The U.S. and European imperialists—who have condemned millions of Venezuelans to dire poverty by looting the country's wealth for more than a century—are today, with consummate hypocrisy, wailing about a "humanitarian crisis" and the trampling of "democracy." We stand against any attempt by the U.S. imperialists to effect "regime change" in Venezuela—whether through direct military intervention or an imperialist-backed coup—while maintain-

ing our political opposition to the Chavista regime. The Venezuelan opposition is a right-wing, motley crew of imperialist-backed forces, which includes parties infamous for their own bloody repression of workers and poor, including the massacre of up to 3,000 people during the 1989 *Caracazo* protests against skyrocketing prices. At the same time, we underline that the government of Maduro, like that

*continued on page 4*

## All U.S./NATO Forces Out Now!

# Trump Escalates Imperialist War in Afghanistan

On August 21, President Trump announced yet another escalation in America's never-ending war in Afghanistan. Speaking at the Fort Myer Army base in Arlington, Virginia, Trump vowed to lift restrictions on "our war fighters" and to expand the authority of commanders in the field. Within days, General John W. Nicholson, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, announced in Kabul that an increase in air power and personnel was already underway.

In his speech, Trump declared that the U.S. would no longer be "nation building" in Afghanistan but "killing terrorists." In fact, killing Afghans in the name of the imperialists' "war on terror" has been the M.O. since the U.S. first bombed Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks. Waged by both Democratic and Republican administrations, the war has racked up a staggering human toll: More than 150,000 civilians have been killed, close to three million people have fled the country and



Reuters

U.S. soldiers at military base in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, July 7.

more than a million have been displaced internally. Over one million U.S. soldiers have left their boot imprints on the country, with 11,000 currently deployed. This figure does not include nearly 30,000

"military contractors" in Afghanistan.

We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO troops, mercenaries and bases from Afghanistan and the Near East. When

the first U.S. missiles rained down on Afghanistan, we declared: "It is the obligation of the proletariat internationally, especially workers and minorities in the U.S., to defend Afghanistan in the face of the imperialist attack" (WV No. 766, 12 October 2001). We also pointed out that the reactionary nature of the Taliban regime then in power "does not in any way diminish the duty of revolutionaries to stand in military defense of small countries like Afghanistan against the most deadly imperialist power on the face of the planet."

As Marxists, our starting point is proletarian class opposition to the U.S. rulers and the capitalist-imperialist system as a whole. The U.S. working class must be won to the understanding that its enemy is its "own" ruling class and that it needs to oppose imperialist aggression abroad as key to the struggle to overturn the capitalist order through socialist revolution.

### Defend North Korea!

Fresh off the Ft. Myer speech, the Trump gang has brazenly upped its military threats against the North Korean

*continued on page 2*

Afghanistan...

(continued from page 1)

bureaucratically deformed workers state, threatening to take the world to the brink of nuclear war. North Korea continues to develop weapons and delivery systems that can provide deterrence against imperialist attack. On September 3, the Pyongyang regime announced the successful testing of a hydrogen bomb. Secretary of Defense James Mattis immediately threatened a “massive military response.”

It is U.S. imperialism that is the real danger to the world’s masses. In “Hands Off North Korea!” (WV No. 1116, 25 August), we noted that “not only is the U.S. the only country to have ever used atomic weapons, it also came close to using nuclear weapons in the 1950-53 Korean War—hindered mainly by the Soviet Union’s own nuclear arsenal.” Our article declared:

“It is vital for the international proletariat, not least in the U.S., to stand for the defense of North Korea and China against the predatory U.S. rulers, their Japanese allies and their South Korean underlings. The overturn and expropriation of capitalism in these countries are historic gains for the international working class. Their unconditional military

defense against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution is integral to the cause of world socialist revolution.”

All U.S. forces out of South Korea and Japan! Down with UN sanctions against North Korea! Down with U.S. imperialism!

Obama-Trump: Imperialist Continuity

Contrary to Trump’s campaign blather that he would pull the U.S. out of Afghanistan—and with no one in the military-political establishment even claiming to have a winning strategy—U.S. imperialism continues to maintain its presence in this strategically located country as an assertion of its global military domination. Echoing the Obama administration, Trump in his speech threatened Pakistan for its “harboring of militants and terrorists.” Pakistan has indeed been a haven for reactionary Islamists—the same forces that were nurtured, funded and armed by the CIA during the Cold War against the Soviet Union.

Trump’s invective against Pakistan and praise of its archrival India as the “world’s largest democracy” were also implicitly directed against China, a deformed workers state that has long been allied with Pakistan. China’s huge investments



Sygma  
February 1989: Demonstration in defense of left-nationalist PDPA government in Kabul. Criminal withdrawal of Soviet troops left women, leftists at mercy of CIA-backed fundamentalist cutthroats.

in Pakistan include a \$62 billion project building a corridor from Xinjiang in northwest China to Gwadar Port, giving

China access by land to the Arabian Sea. The Obama administration had already courted India under Narendra Modi’s Hindu-chauvinist government as part of its “Pivot to Asia”—code for the drive to militarily encircle China. The ultimate aim of this campaign is to throttle the most powerful of the deformed workers states that have survived in the aftermath of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union a quarter-century ago.

Trump’s commitment to beefing up military forces in Afghanistan was generally met with a sigh of relief in U.S. ruling circles. Preceded by the administration’s ouster of “alt-right” enabler Steve Bannon, who had cautioned that involvement in the Afghan quagmire ran counter to the isolationist “America First” credo, Trump’s speech signaled that the generals were in the saddle and that he was finally doing what an imperialist Commander-in-Chief is supposed to do.

Meanwhile, aside from a few outliers like California Congresswoman Barbara Lee who call for a military withdrawal, the Democrats have made clear that any differences they have with Trump over Afghanistan boil down to how to bring the country to heel. Fresh from a trip to

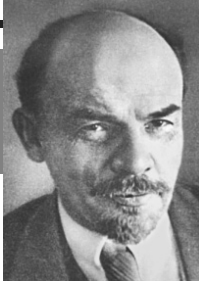
continued on page 7



TROTSKY



The Kornilov Coup and the Bolsheviks’ Fight for Power



LENIN

In August 1917, Russian general Lavr Kornilov launched a military coup to overthrow the bourgeois Provisional Government led by Alexander Kerensky and sweep away the soviets (workers, soldiers and peasants councils). Both the soviets and the Provisional Government emerged following the February Revolution that toppled the tsarist monarchy amid the interimperialist First World War. In a letter to the Bolshevik Central Committee, V.I. Lenin underlined that in mobilizing to stop Kornilov’s forces, the Bolsheviks must not give any political support to the Provisional Government, which included leading members of the Mensheviks and petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionaries. Lenin’s struggle was essential to winning the mass of the proletariat to the fight for soviet power and the victory of the October Revolution.

Even now we must not support Kerensky’s government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren’t we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be carried away by the course of events.

We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, just as Kerensky’s troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and must not be forgotten....

It would be wrong to think that we have moved farther away from the task of the proletariat winning power. No. We have come very close to it, not directly, but from the side. At the moment we must campaign not so much directly against Kerensky, as indirectly against him, namely, by demanding a more and more active, truly revolutionary war against Kornilov.... We must relentlessly fight against phrases about the defence of the country, about a united front of revolutionary democrats, about supporting the Provisional Government, etc., etc., since they are just empty phrases. We must say: now is the time for action; you S.R. and Menshevik gentlemen have long since worn those phrases threadbare. Now is the time for action; the war against Kornilov must be conducted in a revolutionary way, by drawing the masses in, by arousing them, by inflaming them (Kerensky is afraid of the masses, afraid of the people). In the war against the Germans, action is required right now; immediate and unconditional peace must be offered on precise terms. If this is done, either a speedy peace can be attained or the war can be turned into a revolutionary war; if not, all the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries remain lackeys of imperialism.

—V.I. Lenin, “To the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.” (30 August 1917)

# WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: Alan Wilde

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Elizabeth Johnson (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, John Blake, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, Michael Davisson, George Foster, Walter Jennings, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Laura Zamora

The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers Vanguard, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is September 5.

4

No. 1117

8 September 2017

Letter

Black Slaves Aided Union Army

3 August 2017

Dear WV

I read with interest the exchange on whether or not the Civil War was fought over slavery. I think all parties concerned were aware that in fact, it was. Among my family heirlooms is a series of letters from a great-great-great uncle who was in a Heavy Artillery regiment of Connecticut Volunteers. In a letter dated 2 June, 1862, he wrote from his “camp ten miles before Richmond” to his brother:

“...we went out scouting nearly every day ...The third time we went out we would all have been killed or taken prisoner but for the warning of two n-----s. There were two regiments of infantry and one masked battery lying in ambush for us on each side of the road. The n----- met us when we had got within a mile of them and told the Col. We then turned back.”

So it would seem that the Union had a built in spy network among the Black slaves who were keenly aware which side was which.

John H.

WV replies: We thank John H. for his letter, which is referring to the exchange, “Yes, the Civil War Was About Slavery” in WV No. 1115 (28 July). From early on the slaves recognized that the fundamental cause of the war was slavery and that

emancipation would be its most profound outcome.

Many black people, free and slave, were crucial to the Union spy networks. They risked their lives in dangerous missions behind Confederate lines to gather information on troop locations, strength, supplies and movements. Famously among them was Harriet Tubman, who was knowledgeable about the terrain from her days as an Underground Railroad conductor. In 1863, Tubman led troops under Colonel James Montgomery in a daring raid up the Combahee River that disrupted Confederate supply lines and liberated over 700 slaves. Another spy, Mary Elizabeth Bowser, a servant at Jefferson Davis’s house, was able to gain access to lists of troop movements and military strategies and sneak these papers out from under the Confederate president’s nose. Whether through the 200,000 black men who joined the Union Army and Navy or through complex spy operations, black people played a key role in the destruction of the slave order.

John H.’s great-great-great uncle’s use of the “N” word in his letter reflected the contradictions of his era. While the Union troops were fighting to end slavery, many also shared the deeply seated racism prevalent in both North and South. ■

4

Spartacist League Forums

100 Years of the Russian Revolution

For New October Revolutions!

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, October 7, 3 p.m.

322 West 48th Street, First Floor (Between 8th and 9th Avenues—Take A, C or E to 42nd Street)

Information: (212) 267-1025 nysl@tiac.net

BAY AREA

Saturday, October 21, 2 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church of Oakland—Sanctuary 2619 Broadway, Oakland

Information: (510) 839-0851 slbayarea@fastmail.net

# Quebec Trotskyists Launch Newspaper

# For Independence

# and Socialism!

The following article is translated from *République ouvrière* (No. 1, Autumn-Winter 2017-2018), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada.

We are proud to introduce the first issue of *République ouvrière*, French-language newspaper of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada, section of the International Communist League. *République ouvrière* will be the organ of Leninist intervention in Quebec, based on the ICL's proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist program. This is a historic first. Never before in Quebec has a group proclaiming itself Marxist fought to make the struggle against national oppression an integral part of the fight to overthrow capitalism. In fact, whole generations of militants have wasted their energies in groups like the Communist Party of Canada and the Maoist organizations that defended the oppressive federal status quo, or in organizations like Parti pris and the Ligue socialiste ouvrière, which claimed that the venal and reactionary Québécois bourgeoisie can be a “progressive” ally.

We are in favor of Quebec independence, without preconditions. But *République ouvrière* fights above all to give national and social struggles a proletarian, revolutionary leadership. We call for workers councils to power, for expropriation of the bourgeoisie, for a planned economy, for a workers republic of Quebec! With our comrades in English Canada, as well as those of the Spartacist League/U.S. and of the ICL across the world, we fight to build a vanguard party that can lead the world socialist revolution, which is the only hope for humanity's future in the face of imperialist barbarism and the specter of nuclear annihilation.

The fight for national independence can and must serve as a motor force for social revolution. This was demonstrated in Quebec by the postwar [World War II] workers' struggles. The second-class status (or worse) of French-speaking working men and women opened up a period of sharp class struggle against national oppression and against the bosses, whether those bosses were American or English Canadians or even Québécois. These struggles culminated in the May 1972 general strike, which took on semi-insurrectionary proportions.

But in the absence of a party of their own, the workers were sold the idea that the Parti Québécois [PQ] is the only choice to lead to their liberation. The result was that in power the PQ, as a bourgeois party, went to work to stabilize Quebec for the benefit of the bosses, to attain “social peace” and to bring the trade unions into line with the help of the sellout union leaders who politically supported the PQ. What is more, the PQ has increasingly pushed a racist “identity” agenda that cuts against the interests of the working class by trying to divide the class along ethnic and religious lines. With all of this, the PQ has only managed to *reduce* popular support for independence.

Ultimately, the PQ will never be able to achieve the real national liberation of Quebec because it will always be in the pay of the banks, the credit bureaus, Wall Street, etc. And as [another *RO*] article explains [see information above right to

order], Québec solidaire, which is similar to the PQ in its early years, has nothing better to offer than warmed-over left nationalism. *République ouvrière* will dedicate itself to exposing all these political dead ends.

It is high time for our tendency to launch a paper that addresses Quebec workers in their own language. *République ouvrière* is the product of hard debates within our organization that allowed us to break with our anti-Leninist positions on the national question. Our Canadian organization, the Trotskyist League, founded in 1975, was in effect hostile to the national liberation of Quebec and promoted a program of forced assimilation—like most of the Anglo-Canadian left. For example, we opposed independence and the language laws such as Law 101 [which makes French the official language of Quebec], while supporting the “bilingual” policies of Pierre Trudeau [prime minister from 1968-79 and 1980-84].

In the pages of *Spartacist Canada* (the English-language paper of the TLC), we denounced the call for independence and socialism raised by some leftist organizations, such as the Groupe marxiste révolutionnaire and its slogan, “For a Quebec workers republic.” But even though such groups were capitulating to petty-bourgeois nationalism (and not only in Quebec), we were simply and wrongly opposed to the Quebec workers forming a separate state, whether under capitalism or socialism.

“Unlike the left nationalists, we put no stock in the reactionary-utopian strategy



## Subscribe Now!

**Cdn\$5 / US\$8** for 2 issues of *République ouvrière* and 4 of *le Bolchévique*, newspaper of the Ligue trotskyste de France, plus French-language *Spartacist*

**Cdn\$3 / US\$5** for 2 issues of *République ouvrière* and 2 of *Spartacist Canada* plus *Spartacist* (in French or English)

**Order from/pay to:** Spartacist Canada Publishing Association, Box 6867, Stn. A, Toronto ON M5W 1X6 or Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

of fighting for a ‘Quebec workers republic’ or an ‘independent socialist Quebec.’ The achievement of a ‘Quebec workers republic’ is no more conceivable than a ‘California workers republic.’”

— *Spartacist Canada* No. 12, January 1977

On the contrary, the Quebec workers republic could in fact spark revolutions on the scale of the American continent and the world.

After an internal struggle in our party in 1995, we formally called for indepen-

dence. But this change remained within a centrist framework that still considered the fight against national oppression an obstacle to revolution. Thus, it took the recent internal struggle—which started in the Canadian section in 2016 and culminated in the Seventh International Conference of the ICL this spring—for us to break from this false program on the national question. The document of this conference, which deals in depth with this struggle and its programmatic conclusions, has been published in French *Spartacist* No. 43 [English No. 65] (Summer 2017), “The Fight for Leninism on the National Question.”

Our aim in Quebec and in Canada is the creation of two parties in two separate states. Even after the socialist revolution, the right of Quebec workers to form their own separate state must be defended. As the revolutionary leader V. I. Lenin stated:

“In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.”

—“The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (1916)

The International Conference also corrected our organization's position on language laws like Law 101. In the absence of national sovereignty, we support such laws because they represent defensive measures with respect to the very existence of the oppressed nation and a partial expression of self-determination.

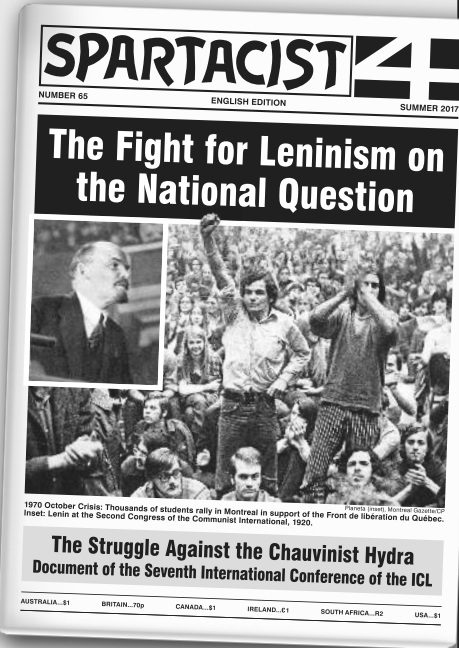
In its articles, *République ouvrière* will draw the fundamental class line between the working class and the bourgeoisie on all political and social questions, exposing the capitalists' hypocrisy and lies. It is also through direct polemical intervention against pseudo-Marxist and “left” organizations, frankly putting forward our political differences, that we can provide the programmatic clarity necessary for the building of a vanguard party. Finally, our paper is committed to having a strong international content, in contrast to the parochial spirit of the dominant media in

*continued on page 7*

## JUST OUT!



**Édition française**  
Numéro 43, été 2017  
**\$1** (32 pages)



**English edition**  
No. 65, Summer 2017  
**\$1** (32 pages)

French and English editions of *Spartacist*, quadrilingual journal of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), containing the main document of the ICL's historic Seventh International Conference. The document codifies a vital struggle in the ICL to re-establish a Leninist framework on the national question, particularly in regard to oppressed nations within multinational states.

English-language *Spartacist* is sent to all WV subscribers.

**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



Venezuela...

(continued from page 1)

of Chávez before him, is a bourgeois government, and therefore the class enemy of the proletariat and oppressed.

As Marxists, we politically oppose both the “Bolivarian” bourgeois nationalists and their neoliberal opponents. The Venezuelan proletariat, centered on the oil workers, must be mobilized as an independent force, championing all of the exploited and impoverished in the fight for workers power. This requires forging a revolutionary vanguard party in opposition to the imperialists and independent of all wings of bourgeois politics.

The right-wing opposition, having gained control of the National Assembly in 2015 for the first time in 16 years, has sought to bring down the Maduro government by means of a recall referendum and early elections. It has also organized street protests replete with murderous assaults against black people and other suspected Chavistas, as well as attacks on buildings providing social services to the poor. In response, Maduro and his government have tightened their bonapartist grip, banning protests, declaring a state of emergency and strengthening the powers of the capitalist state executive and Maduro’s hand-picked Supreme Court. These repressive measures represent a deadly danger to the working class, especially when it raises its head as an independent force.

Trump’s threats were a response to the July 30 elections for a Constituent Assembly convoked by Maduro in an attempt to shore up his rule by supplanting parliament, which he has since stripped of its powers. Maduro is today using the constituent assembly against his bourgeois opponents. Historically, the constituent assembly has been used by bourgeois rulers to derail the struggle for workers revolution. Genuine Marxists oppose, on principle, the call for a constituent assembly, which is a call for a new *capitalist* government, with the parliamentary edifice of bourgeois democracy serving to mask the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Our goal is to mobilize the working class to sweep away the capitalist state and its repressive apparatus (the cops, courts and military) through socialist revolution (see “Why We Reject the ‘Constituent Assembly’ Demand,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 63, Winter 2012-13). As Marxist leader Rosa Luxemburg put it amid the 1918-19 German Revolution:

“So what is gained through this cowardly detour called the national assembly? The bourgeoisie’s position is strengthened, the proletariat is weakened and bewildered with empty illusions, time and energy are dissipated and lost in ‘discussions’ between wolf and lamb. In a word, it plays into the hands of all those elements whose good intention is to cheat the proletarian revolution of its socialist aims and to castrate it into a bourgeois-democratic revolution.



Lynch mob terror in Venezuela: Right-wing opposition sets alleged Chavista on fire at anti-Maduro protest, May 20.

“But the question of the national assembly is not a tactical question, nor a question of what is ‘easier.’ It is a question of principle, of the socialist perception of the revolution....  
“The national assembly is an outdated legacy of the bourgeois revolutions, an empty shell, a stage prop from the time of petty-bourgeois illusions of a ‘united people,’ of the bourgeois state’s ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’.”  
—“The National Assembly,”  
*Die Rote Fahne*, 20 November 1918, reprinted in *The German Revolution and the Debate On Soviet Power* (1986)

U.S. Seeks to Reassert Control of Its “Backyard”

Despite reports of localized actions against the Maduro regime by disgruntled elements in the military, Maduro, for now, seems to have the support of the generals and the police force. The regime also has a Chavista militia, which reportedly has 400,000 members. At the same time, the increasingly untenable economic and political situation has diminished support among the workers and poor for the Maduro regime and its “Bolivarian Revolution.” It is precisely the inability of the bourgeois populists to fulfill the needs of the masses that opens the door for the reactionary opposition forces, who in power would impose fierce repression, savage austerity and a bloody settling of accounts with those presumed to have supported Chávez.

U.S. vice president Mike Pence recently toured Latin America to line up Washington’s neocolonial puppets. The CIA has been working together with the Mexican and Colombian governments toward the ouster of Maduro, while other brutal Latin American regimes have joined the U.S. imperialists in preaching “democracy” to Venezuela. CIA chief Mike Pompeo recently invoked some of the usual international bogeymen to justify U.S. intervention: “The Cubans are there; the Russians are there, the Iranians, Hezbollah are there.” Pompeo left China off his blacklist.

The Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state has replaced the U.S. and its institutions, like the World Bank, as the main provider of loans to Latin America, with Venezuela receiving about half of these. The U.S. imperialists see this as a slap in the face as they seek to reassert control over their “backyard.” Because China is not a capitalist country, its foreign investments are not driven by the need to maximize profit, but by the need to accrue resources for economic development. Venezuela is allowed to repay China through oil shipments that have often been deferred.

Sections of the U.S. bourgeoisie would like to bring Maduro down by cutting off all oil imports from Venezuela. This action has been opposed not only by U.S. refiners who depend on Venezuelan oil, but also by those who do not want to risk a spike in oil prices. Their priority is to keep oil prices low in order to weaken countries like Russia, Iran and Venezuela itself. The U.S. bourgeoisie is also gunning for Maduro because it knows that without the oil Venezuela has been shipping to the Cuban deformed workers state in exchange for medical personnel. Cuba will be further strangled economically. The aim of the imperialists is to foment capitalist counterrevolution in Cuba.

Unlike the fraudulent “Bolivarian Revolution” in Venezuela, the social revolu-

tions in Cuba, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos overturned capitalist rule in these countries. We stand for the unconditional military defense of these deformed workers states against imperialist attack and domestic capitalist counterrevolution. We also recognize that the Stalinist bureaucratic misrulers are parasitic layers sitting on top of proletarian property forms. Their nationalist dogma of building “socialism in one country” and its attendant ideology of “peaceful coexistence” with world imperialism are obstacles to the defense of the workers states and the extension of social revolution to capitalist countries. We fight for proletarian political revolutions to sweep away the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies and establish regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

Fault Lines of Race and Class

Venezuela is in the throes of a profound social crisis stemming from the country’s economic nose dive following the collapse in oil prices, which went from an international peak of \$115 a barrel in 2014 to less than \$35 a barrel by early 2016. Over 95 percent of government revenues comes from the country’s oil industry, especially the nationalized PDVSA oil company. A continuing drop in oil production and prices along with massive debt repayments to the international financial bloodsuckers have led to a severe economic contraction in Venezuela, with widespread shortages of food, basic goods and medicine. Inflation has skyrocketed, leaving the local currency worthless. A U.S.-dollar black market of parasitic hoarders and speculators has bloomed. This is an entirely predictable repetition of the periodic economic crises faced by Venezuela throughout the 20th century due to fluctuating oil prices. It is incumbent on workers in the U.S. to demand: *Cancel the debt!*

Chávez believed that capitalist stability could be purchased by using some of Venezuela’s oil riches to fund social programs that would lift Venezuela’s most downtrodden out of abject misery—a program that was only viable so long as oil prices remained high. Like previous populist rulers in Venezuela and throughout Latin America, Chávez used anti-imperialist rhetoric to cement support for his regime. This enraged a section of Venezuela’s bourgeois, lily-white “oligar-

Workers Vanguard Subscription Drive

| August 17 to October 11 |                      |                        |     |  |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----|--|
| Local                   | Quota<br>(in points) | Week 2<br>(Aug. 24-30) | %   |  |
| Bay Area                | 350                  | 76                     | 22% |  |
| Chicago                 | 250                  | 65.5                   | 26% |  |
| Los Angeles             | 250                  | 22                     | 9%  |  |
| New York                | 650                  | 140                    | 22% |  |
| National Total          | 1,500                | 303.5                  | 20% |  |

**WORKERS VANGUARD**  
No. 1118  
24 August 2017

**Fascist Killers Strike in Charlottesville**

**For Labor/Black Mobilizations to Stop the Fascists!**

Subscribe Now!

☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History* and *the Class Struggle*)  
International rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail    \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

1117

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

**SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.**  
**Local Directory and Public Offices**

**Website:** www.icl-fi.org • **Email address:** vanguard@tiac.net

**National Office:** Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

**Chicago**.....Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680  
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net  
**Public Office:** by appointment, call (312) 563-0441

**Los Angeles** .....Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029  
slsycla@sbcglobal.net  
**Public Office:** by appointment, call (213) 380-8239

**New York** .....Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008  
nysl@tiac.net  
**Public Office:** by appointment, call (212) 267-1025

**Oakland**.....Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604  
slbayarea@fastmail.net  
**Public Office:** by appointment, call (510) 839-0851

**TROTSKYIST LEAGUE IN QUEBEC AND CANADA**

**Montréal**.....CP 83 Succ. Place-d’Armes, Montréal, QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578  
trotskyiste.montreal@gmail.com

**Toronto** .....Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138  
spartcan@on.aibn.com

**Vancouver**.....Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353  
tl.vancouver.bc@gmail.com

chy” who, while continuing to line their pockets under Chávez, abhorred the idea of giving anything to the poor. Even in the midst of the current crisis, the Venezuelan capitalists and wealthy petty bourgeoisie are quite comfortable—with their easy access to U.S. dollars, homes in Miami and heavily guarded country clubs. While thousands of working people line up for food, there is a reported boom in luxury car sales in Caracas.

In a country in which less than half the population identifies as white, vicious racism—a legacy of the country’s history of slavery, which was maintained until the mid 19th century—is inseparable from the class hatred of the bourgeoisie and upper layers of the petty bourgeoisie toward working people. The opposition repugnantly caricatured Chávez, the first non-white president of the country, as an ape, and his supporters as monkeys. More than 20 black and poor people suspected of being Chavistas have been burned alive by anti-Maduro protesters—racist lynchings reminiscent of the Jim Crow American South.

### The Dead End of Bourgeois Populism

Most self-proclaimed Marxists promoted the lie that Venezuela under Chávez was on the road to socialism, and consequently called to complete the “revolution.” Despite cheap “socialist” rhetoric, Chávez made clear over a decade ago that his “Bolivarian Revolution” was “not in contradiction with private property.” Chávez’s main concern was to prop up the country’s faltering oil profits. He moved to discipline the oil workers union and to increase the efficiency of the state-owned oil industry, while pressing the OPEC oil cartel to raise prices. Thanks to such efforts, and in the interest of political stability, he was initially supported by much of the Venezuelan ruling class.

Like Maduro, Chávez was no stranger to repressing protesting workers. In 2007, state police and military forces fired on workers from the Sanitarios Maracay factory who were calling for the nationalization of their company, injuring 14 and arresting 21. Chávez also sought to strengthen the repressive power of the state with his (failed) 2007 constitutional referendum, which would have given Chávez wider powers, such as the right to declare an unlimited state of emergency. We called for a “no” vote in this referendum, based on our principled, Marxist opposition to any measure that strengthens the capitalist state (see “Break with Bourgeois Populism! For Workers Revolution! WV No. 907, 1 February 2008).

The Chavistas’ social programs to ameliorate poverty are entirely defensible, but in no way do they represent a socialist transformation. That the country with the largest known oil reserves in the world is in the grip of such a crisis demonstrates that Venezuela remains subordinated to the imperialist order. The U.S. continues to be the country to which Venezuela exports most of its oil. The country imports an overwhelming amount of its basic food and manufactured goods, with domestic production of rice, corn and coffee having declined by about 60 percent in the last decade.

As we underlined in “Venezuela: Populist Nationalism vs. Proletarian Revolution” (WV No. 860, 9 December 2005): “The recent history of Venezuela amply demonstrates that neoliberalism and populism are nothing but two faces of the same coin, sometimes carried out by the same bourgeois regime in different periods.” In the mid 1970s Democratic Action (AD) president Carlos Andrés Pérez nationalized Exxon, Shell and Mobil’s Venezuelan holdings (with compensation) and invested heavily in social programs, education and health care while oil prices were high. But when the oil market later crashed, Pérez enforced sweeping social cuts and privatizations, while carrying out brutal repression such as the 1989 *Caracazo* massacre.

The nationalist populism espoused by Chávez and Maduro has served to block the struggle against imperialist domina-



Reuters

**Economic collapse in Venezuela has ravaged poor. Women line up outside Caracas pharmacy for diapers, March 2017.**

tion and capitalist exploitation by binding the working class and oppressed more closely to the capitalist state. The national bourgeoisies of countries of belated development are dependent on foreign capital and are tied to the imperialists by a thousand threads—they are incapable of breaking the imperialist yoke. Above all, they are hostile to and fearful of the working class—the only force capable of achieving genuine national emancipation.

### Reformist Opponents of Workers Rule

During the “golden years” of the Chávez regime, the bulk of the pseudo-Trotskyist left jumped on the bandwagon of the “Bolivarian Revolution.” Particularly enthusiastic was Alan Woods’s International Marxist Tendency (IMT, formerly led by the late Ted Grant), who boasted of acting as Chávez’s “Trotskyist” advisers. With the oil bonanza long gone, Chávez dead and his successors tumbling, the IMT’s Vene-

ruing clique.” This is rich coming from an organization that used to take pride in having backed Lt. Colonel Chávez’s failed coup in 1992 and in having given him political support during the 2004 recall referendum orchestrated by Venezuelan reactionaries; the PO also called for a vote to Bolivian bourgeois nationalist Evo Morales in 2005 and supported the Greek bourgeois populists of Syriza in 2012.

In the 2012 elections, the PO refused to support Chávez, voting instead for Orlando Chirino, a Chavista trade-union bureaucrat and pupil of the late pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno, who was at times critical of Chávez. Chirino’s organization, the Partido Socialismo y Libertad (PSL), was—according to the PO itself—seeking rapprochement with the racist, right-wing opposition. Today, the PSL is grotesquely backing the opposition’s mobilizations, claiming that they display “the Venezuelan people and workers’ tremendous will to fight” (uit-ci.org, July 2017).

Committed to the capitalist order, the Latin American pseudo-Trotskyists call for one variant or another of the constituent assembly. The PO calls for “a sovereign Constituent Assembly convoked by a workers government” to “provide a real democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist way out of the crisis” in Venezuela (*Prensa Obrera* online, 18 April). In fact, this would mean a workers government ceding power to a capitalist government. From Buenos Aires, Altamira called for a boycott of Maduro’s Constituent Assembly, which he denounced as a “pseudo-Constituent.” But his Venezuelan cothinkers in Opción Obrera thought differently, and called instead to defend the Constituent Assembly to prevent a “fascist coup” by the bourgeois opposition (*Opción Obrera*, 18 July). In the Constituent Assembly elections, they supported one Julio Polanco, another trade-union bureaucrat who described himself as “loyal to the legacy of *comandante* Chávez.” Be it in Venezuela or Argentina, the Altamiraites’ claims to proletarian “political independence” have as much substance as Chávez/Maduro’s claims to “socialism.”

Like the Altamiraites, the neo-Morenoite Liga de Trabajadores por el Social-



AP

**Leaders of the failed, U.S.-backed military coup against Hugo Chávez in 2002.**

zuelan organization, Lucha de Clases, now complains about the “incompetence” of the “reformist bureaucracy”—i.e., the Maduro *capitalist* regime. Nevertheless, they themselves—as a component part of Maduro’s own bourgeois Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela—strive to reform it from within by vowing to defend “Chávez’ legacy.” As we wrote in our 2005 article:

“In foisting Chávez off as a champion of the poor and oppressed, *the IMT et al. help set workers up for slaughter*. Tying the working class and its organizations to any bourgeois ruler only serves to impede independent working-class struggle. In opposition to groups like the IMT, Marxists seek to prepare the Venezuelan working class to effectively combat the murderous forces of bourgeois reaction, whether led by Chávez or his bourgeois opponents.”

In contrast to the IMT, most pseudo-Trotskyists are defecting from their former Chavista camp as Maduro’s popularity plummets. From Argentina, the Partido Obrero (PO) of Jorge Altamira called to “Defeat the right wing without giving any political support to official Chavismo” (*Prensa Obrera*, 27 July) and argued that “the fight against right-wing reaction can only triumph with the methods of workers’ class struggle, with total political independence from the *de facto*

ismo (LTS), Venezuelan section of the Argentina-based Fracción Trotskista-Cuarta Internacional (FT-CI), calls for “a true Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly,” supposedly as “a bridge for workers and poor people to rise up with their own politics as a class.” No matter how “sovereign,” a constituent assembly is a bourgeois parliament. While the LTS considered Maduro’s Constituent Assembly a “farce” and abstained on it, their Mexican comrades supported Mexico City’s 2016 Constituent Assembly. And they had no scruples about taking money from the capitalist state for their campaign for that body (see “Ciudad de México: El circo antidemocrático de la asamblea constituyente,” *Espartaco* No. 46, October 2016). In this they follow in the footsteps of their Argentinian comrades, who also rake in the cash from the bourgeois state through their election campaigns.

### For Permanent Revolution!

The call for a constituent assembly is counterposed to Leon Trotsky’s perspective of the permanent revolution. The aspirations of working people to national liberation and democratic rights—including land to the peasants—as well as an end to capitalist exploitation can only be realized through socialist revolution. When ostensible Marxists raise the call for a constituent assembly, they are parroting the Menshevik/Stalinist conception of “two-stage” revolution: The first stage consists of a supposed bourgeois-democratic revolution; the second stage, supposedly the fight for socialist revolution, has always consisted of the crushing of the workers by the bourgeois rulers.

In his work *The Permanent Revolution* (1930), Leon Trotsky, who together with V.I. Lenin led the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, described how Lenin summed up that revolution:

“In a bourgeois society with already developed class antagonisms there can only be either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, open or disguised, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. There cannot be any talk of an intermediate regime. Every democracy, every ‘dictatorship of democracy’ (the ironical quotation marks are Lenin’s) is only a veil for the rule of the bourgeoisie, as the experience of the most backward European country, Russia, showed in the epoch of its bourgeois revolution, i.e., the epoch most favorable to the ‘dictatorship of democracy.’”

The working class must fight to replace the dictatorship of capital with the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which workers and peasants will themselves govern through soviets on the basis of a planned and collectivized economy.

Eliminating all forms of exploitation and oppression of the workers, peasants, urban and rural poor requires socialist revolution and its extension internationally, especially to the imperialist centers, to establish an internationally planned and collectivized economy. Following the example of Lenin’s Bolsheviks and the lessons of the 1917 October Revolution, the International Communist League fights to build national sections of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, which will organize and educate the working class in the spirit of uncompromising hostility to the depredations of imperialism and opposition to all forms of bourgeois populism. ■

**ESPARTACO**  
PUBLICACIÓN DEL GRUPO ESPARTAQUISTA DE MÉXICO  
NÚMERO 29  
PRIMAVERA DE 2008  
MÉXICO \$3.00  
USA \$6

**El desarrollo y la extensión de la teoría de la revolución permanente de León Trotsky**  
  
PRIMERA PARTE  
Este mes inicia el 50 aniversario de la Revolución Rusa dirigida por el Partido de los Bolcheviques de V.I. Lenin y León Trotsky. La Revolución de Octubre fue el primer triunfo de la revolución socialista en el mundo. Trotsky, el gran revolucionario y teórico de la revolución permanente, fue el principal teórico de la revolución socialista en el mundo. Trotsky, el gran revolucionario y teórico de la revolución permanente, fue el principal teórico de la revolución socialista en el mundo.

**ESPARTACO**  
PUBLICACIÓN DEL GRUPO ESPARTAQUISTA DE MÉXICO  
NÚMERO 47  
AGOSTO DE 2017  
MÉXICO \$3.00  
USA \$6

**Trump quiere profundizar el saqueo, AML y PRD renegociarlo**  
**¡Abajo el TLCAN, rapiña imperialista contra México!**  
  
Iniciamos este mes con la conmemoración de que hoy tenemos un gran aniversario de importancia para el pueblo de México. El 20 de agosto de 1917, el pueblo de México se levantó en armas contra el gobierno de Victoriano Huerta, dando origen a la Revolución Mexicana. Esta fue una gran victoria para el pueblo mexicano, pero también fue el comienzo de una larga y dura lucha por la independencia y la soberanía del país.

No. 29, Spring 2008: \$.50 (32 pages)

No. 47, August 2017: \$.50 (24 pages)

**Publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México**

**Subscription: \$2 for 4 issues. Includes *Spartacist* (Spanish edition)**

**Order from/make checks payable to:**

**Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116**

# Report from IBEW Militant

*We received the following report on September 2 from a militant in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 6 in the Bay Area.*

Word of the motion passed by the ILWU Local 10 to shut the port on August 26th and lead a march to stop the alt-right Patriot Prayer rally in Crissy Field San Francisco hit our small group of anti-fascists in the IBEW like a bolt of lightning. We had been organizing and educating electrical workers in the construction industry for months on the deadly fascist threat. We immediately began to work to have our local endorse an official contingent of IBEW members to join with the ILWU. We put a call out to our brothers and sisters, attended organizing meetings and had our own. But, at each step the ILWU leadership stepped away from the original motion's intent.

First, we heard that the work stoppage was disavowed, then the start of the march was moved from the ILWU 10 Hall to a new location. Word came that the union leaders in S.F. were having meetings with the mayor who publicly called on people to stay home or to join in diversionary protests "against hate" on the other side of town from where the alt-

right and fascists planned to rally. Two days before the march, our local IBEW leadership was pulling the official status of our contingent because they had been told by the Local 10 president that it wasn't an official ILWU march.

Many IBEW members, particularly black members who rightfully feared they would be particularly targeted, had expressed solidarity with our aims but also the fear of the violence from the fascists and the cops. Our determination to have a disciplined contingent, ready to defend itself from right wing attack as well as ready to retreat as a group in case of any police violence, was convincing many that this was going to be a serious labor mobilization.

Before the canceling of the now unofficial ILWU march, we were looking to see as many as 50 members of the IBEW march. We had heard that the members of HERE 2 [hotel and other service workers union] would also be coming out and that Painters from the Portland union local would be coming as well. When our small group of IBEW members gathered the morning of the 26th we numbered but 14. We talked with members of the Internationalist Group

[IG]. They admitted that at the ILWU hall that morning the dispatch hall was open and workers were told to go to work. There would be no ILWU march, official or otherwise.

Later that night, I read the cynical piece on the Internet by the Internationalist Group claiming that the ILWU was key to running off the fascists. Over our week of organizing we saw firsthand how the labor bureaucracy works to demobilize workers struggle as the ILWU leadership rolled back the motion passed by their members to shut down the port and march as a union to stop the fascists. When we arrived with our small numbers to what had been the announced site of the ILWU-centered rally, we were alone other than a handful of Refuse Fascism members and two supporters of the IG.

The IG confirmed that after the 6 a.m. morning photo op at the ILWU hall that the longshoremen had gone to work or gone home. Later in the day we marched with the IG and members of the Painters Union in Portland chanting about the need for labor action to smash the fascists and for the unity of the workers of the world. We chanted up with the

workers and down with the fascists as we joined those that had come out to try and confront the alt-right at Alamo Square. The crowd was excited to see an organized contingent of labor, even relatively small and unofficial. Imagine what it could have been like with hundreds of us marching as union contingents instead of 20, marching simply as individual members.

Knowing the IG's history and centrist politics I was not too surprised when I saw their article that evening claiming a great victory by the ILWU. While sounding all the right revolutionary wording, it completely glosses over the treachery of the ILWU leadership. Many of my co-workers that came out that day were more than confused by this piece. They could not understand if the members of the IG were delusional; we had all seen the actions and heard the words of the ILWU leadership all week! For me it is clear, like the rest of the reformist left, the IG capitulates to a wing of the trade-union bureaucracy and seeks to simply give it a more revolutionary cover than some of the more openly reformist socialist groups. What is desperately needed is the fight to build a principled, programmatically based class struggle opposition to the current pro capitalist misleaders in the unions as part of the fight to build a Revolutionary Workers Party.

## Bay Area...

*(continued from page 8)*

mobilize with the ILWU on August 26! The Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee will be mobilizing a contingent emphasizing that for labor to bring its power to bear against the fascist terror gangs, it must be mobilized on the basis of its own independent strength—not as an adjunct to the Democratic Party politicians who are trying to get the fascist rally banned by the federal government. Unfortunately, the Local 10 leadership is pushing the efforts of the Democratic Party administration of San Francisco and Democratic Party Congressional leader Nancy Pelosi to get the rally banned, with Local 10 president Ed Ferris telling KPFK on August 18, 'I am hopeful that they'll just deny this permit'."

Such deadly reliance on the forces of the capitalist state and Democratic politicians has long corroded the fighting power of the unions. In this case, it was wielded by the Local 10 bureaucracy to betray the members who voted to mobilize to stop the fascists. No call to action based on the motion was issued by the union misleaders. On the contrary, they did nothing to mobilize the ranks of the union.

### The Treachery of the Labor Bureaucracy

In the week leading up to the fascist rally, we did several sales of WV at the ILWU hall. Many Local 10 members did not even know about the motion passed at the August 17 union meeting. Many more were fearful of what might happen in a march to Crissy Field. In particular, black workers who are the majority of the local were understandably worried that they would be targeted by the fascists and the cops. Several told us that they would join the protest if it was a mass, disciplined show of the social power of the ILWU against fascist terror. But they also knew that Local 10's leadership had no intention of organizing such an action.

Instead of taking responsibility for implementing the motion, reaching out to other unions and mobilizing its own membership, the Local 10 bureaucrats sloughed off any purported organizing to a phony "rank and file" committee. The majority of those who attended the one organizing meeting of this committee were not ILWU members, though there were some members of other unions, especially electricians from IBEW Local 6 who were attempting to mobilize their union based on the ILWU motion (see report above).

Serving as the bureaucracy's handmaiden in this charade was Jack Heyman,

a now retired member of Local 10 who was previously on its executive board. A practiced hand in the bureaucracy's game of smoke and mirrors, Heyman has a long history of boosting the "militant" credentials of the ILWU while covering for the treacherous policies of the bureaucracy. The *only* call to action ever issued to the Local 10 membership was signed by Heyman and an active longshoreman, who called themselves "Longshore Workers to Stop the Fascists." WV was told that this flyer, posted on the website of the Heyman publicists in the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee, barely saw the light of day at the union hall, and it was never distributed by the active Local 10 member who co-signed it.

Heyman joined Local 10 president Ed Ferris for the KPFK radio interview, never disagreeing with Ferris's support for the local Democrats' attempts to get the Patriot Prayer rally banned. In the interview, Ferris offered the Local 10 dispatch hall as the meeting point for the action, saying, "People can start queuing up at Local 10 and begin the march" to Crissy Field. He claimed details would be firmed up later. Yet when the leaflet of the putative "Longshore Workers to Stop the Fascists" appeared it listed Marina Green, not the Local 10 hall, as the meeting place for the march. This had the effect of further distancing the Local 10 leadership from the action, and it ensured there would be a far smaller longshore turnout.

On the night of August 24 and the morning of August 25, WV supporters distributing literature at the Local 10 hall heard from some workers that the planned march was the work of "outsiders." Very few longshoremen said they planned to attend. A "Special Memo to the ILWU Local 10 Membership" issued by Ed Ferris did not mention the unanimously passed union motion or the march to Crissy Field. Instead, Ferris advised "rank and file" longshoremen who "may choose to protest the 'alt-right' groups" that weekend to "be safe and keep it peaceful."

This was a treacherous act of *demobilization* by the Local 10 leadership, allowing a wider hearing to more conservative elements in the union. Fearing a threat to their livelihood, some longshoremen argued that the best strategy was to ignore the fascists. "Why should we make ourselves targets and give the fascists publicity," they told WV. Many pointed out that the fascists wouldn't dare to march in black Oakland, or in the SF black neighborhoods of Hunters Point/Bay View.

The growing fascist menace in Trump's America threatens black people, immigrants and unionists *everywhere*, as the proliferation of nooses and racist graffiti at the SSA Terminal in the Oakland Port illustrates. The fascist killers, including those who mobilized in Charlottesville, are mainly young, urban, have military training and are out for blood. *When they are ignored, they are emboldened.* Members of ILWU Local 10 brought their collective strength and solidarity to bear on May 25 when they shut down the SSA terminal to protest the racist noose provocations. In doing so, they gave a glimpse of the social power the multiracial working class can unleash to drive the white supremacists back into their holes. The union's August 17 motion could have provided the potential for the Bay Area labor movement to flex its muscle. It is a crime that the Local 10 leadership worked to sabotage that potential.

### The Cynical Charlatans of the Internationalist Group

Having demobilized longshore workers, the labor tops then used them for a cynical photo op on the morning of August 26 at the Local 10 hall—after Patriot Prayer had announced that it was canceling its Crissy Field rally. Union members who had been told that all rallies were canceled and to come out to get jobs were then asked to pose for a picture in front of a banner reading, "Stop Fascist Terror." It is an impressive picture of some 50, mainly black, longshore workers looking militant and determined. The reality is that these Local 10 members had gone to the hall for work, not to march against the fascists. We don't fault them. They were used as pawns by the Local 10 bureaucracy, which after undermining the August 17 union motion, saw the opportunity to burnish their "militant" credentials. Helping perpetrate this fraud were members and supporters of the Internationalist Group (IG) who are also featured in the photo.

A shamelessly cynical August 26 article on the IG's website prominently features a nearly identical picture under the headline "Fascists Forced to Flee San Francisco—A Significant Victory." The IG brays: "Key to running off the fascists was the move by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 to shut down the port and march to stop the fascist 'Patriot Prayer' rally." This is a complete fabrication, as anyone with any contact with Local 10 members knows.

The IG's lies simply gallop along. After

claiming that the Patriot Prayer fascists canceled their rally "after the ILWU voted to use its power to stop it," their article argues that "if the longshore union had taken the next step to bring out the membership in a mass labor-led victory march, it would have really driven home the lesson." But the ILWU bureaucracy had done nothing to take the first step of mobilizing the union's power to stop the fascists. And the IG assisted them in the charade that "rank-and-file" longshoremen were organizing for action. At an August 24 meeting for the Berkeley protests, two IG members passed themselves off as speaking for Local 10 longshore workers through the bogus "rank-and-file" committee.

In the aftermath, the IG writes that "not only the fascists, but also the cops and their Democratic Party bosses are well aware that going up against this heavily black powerhouse of Bay Area labor is quite a different matter than attacking loosely organized protesters drawn largely from student and middle-class sectors." True. But the heavily black ILWU Local 10 workforce was not being mobilized! Rather, they rightly feared what would happen if they went out for a similar "loosely organized" protest headed by the variety of liberals and reformists in the "rank-and-file" committee.

The IG is providing a left cover not only for the putatively more militant leaders of Local 10 but for the ILWU International bureaucracy. The ILWU International ran the photo of Local 10 members in the hall the morning of August 26 on its *Longshore and Shipping News* website. What is completely disappeared is any mention of the Local 10 motion calling for the union to take the lead in a march to Crissy Field to stop the Patriot Prayer fascists. Instead, the photo is being used to promote a "Statement of Policy on Racism" which simply echoes the rhetoric of the Democratic Party-inspired "love fests" that have been endorsed by labor misleaders in the aftermath of Charlottesville.

Notably *Longshore and Shipping News* never saw fit to publish a single word about the nooses found on the Oakland docks or Local 10's May 25 work stoppage to protest them. The ILWU International is using the rise of fascist terror not to mobilize labor's power against these storm troopers but to further shackle the workers to their capitalist exploiters and oppressors. Joining the IG in providing cover for this treachery are the labor reformists of *In These Times*, who ran a slightly less delusional article on



# Afghanistan...

(continued from page 2)

Kabul in early July with her Republican senatorial colleague John McCain, Elizabeth Warren demanded that the White House add some “economic and diplomatic” gloss to the military effort. And while Bernie Sanders, that darling of the reformist left, has met Trump’s troop increase with silence, he had no trouble voicing support for the troop presence in Afghanistan when the Democrat Obama was calling the shots. The “socialist” Sanders is in fact an imperialist politician who has time and again given his support to U.S. wars and occupations.

The Democrats gave near-unanimous support to the Afghanistan war when it was launched 16 years ago by George W. Bush. On Obama’s watch, the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan grew to 100,000 at peak. Extending the reach of the “global war on terror,” his government waged an unprecedented campaign of killings by drones in South and Central Asia, the Near East and Africa while trampling on democratic rights “at home,” including by massively increasing domestic surveillance. In Obama’s last year in office the U.S. dropped 26,171 bombs—three every hour, 24 hours a day. Obama also oversaw the building of more nuclear warheads than any president since the Cold War. In continuity with his Democratic predecessor, Trump is spending billions to develop



Spartacist contingent marches in San Francisco rally against U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, October 2001.

new nuclear cruise missiles and to replace aging Minuteman missiles.

## Afghan Women and the Red Army Intervention

Supposedly, it was a 1972 picture of women in miniskirts walking the streets of Kabul that convinced Trump to jack up U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Leaving aside the very notion that Trump has concern about the condition of women

aftermath of the rampage of fascist terror and murder in Charlottesville, the city rulers and their cops did not want to pay the overhead for mass casualties and arrests that day. The fact that the cops retreated this time should not lull any opponent of fascist or cop terror. The fascist gangs are the reserve army of the bourgeoisie, to be unleashed in times of crisis, when regular state terror does not suffice to enforce capitalist class terror and racist murder against the working class, black people and all the oppressed.

Antifa activists may well be defiant and heroic, but their political outlook is simply the street-fighting face of the “anti-hate” liberals. The fascist menace cannot be eliminated through isolated actions that do nothing to advance the political consciousness of the working class. A serious fight to eradicate fascism must be based on a revolutionary proletarian perspective to do away with the capitalist order that breeds the fascist scum.

In the 1980s and into the ’90s, the SL and PDC initiated mobilizations to stop the KKK and Nazis when they reared their heads in major cities. The aim was to stop the fascists. But it was also to imbue the working class with the consciousness of its social power as well as to arm it with an understanding of the class nature of the capitalist state and the Democratic Party. In building for these actions, we sought the endorsement of unions and their officials in order to be able to mobilize the union ranks, who formed the proletarian core of these mobilizations. These actions demonstrated the possibility of mobilizing the proletariat in defense of itself and all the oppressed. Above all, they underlined the need for a revolutionary proletarian leadership that is steeped in the lessons of the battles of the past and able to arm the workers for the battles to come.

The working class has the numbers, the power and the organization at the point of production not only to defeat the fascist stormtroopers but to win what the ruling class appropriates for itself—health care, quality education and housing, the very ability to lead a decent life. What is lacking is the kind of leadership necessary to fight—a leadership of the unions that doesn’t bow to the bosses’ laws, their political parties and state agencies. We need a workers party that fights for a workers government to rip the means of production from the capitalist class and institute a planned socialist economy that operates not for the profit of a few greedy exploiters but for the working people who produce the wealth. ■

anywhere, the lie that the U.S. military is the vehicle by which Afghan women will be liberated has been recycled by Republicans and Democrats. Indeed, cities like Kabul were not always run by woman-hating Islamist cutthroats. When the left-nationalist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power in 1978, the U.S., under Democratic president Jimmy Carter, began funding fundamentalist forces waging “holy war” against the gains women were making.

Among other reforms, including redistributing land to poor peasants, the PDPA regime lowered the bride price, made schooling compulsory for girls and launched literacy campaigns, building 600 schools in just over a year. These relatively modest reforms—which are powerfully portrayed in Kathleen Foster’s 2007 documentary, *Afghan Women: A History of Struggle*—were nothing short of revolutionary in Afghanistan, sparking a fierce insurgency. The earliest bloody confrontations were over women’s education. PDPA cadres and women literacy workers had acid thrown in their faces, and many were driven from villages and killed.

Faced with this onslaught, the PDPA requested Soviet aid. Fearing the collapse of its PDPA allies and acting to defend its southern flank, the Soviet Union sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan in December 1979. While the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy did not aim to effect a social revolution, the military intervention opened up the possibility of bringing Afghanistan into the modern world. By the late 1980s, women were serving as soldiers and commanders in the Afghan army. Some 40 percent of doctors were women, as were 60 percent of teachers at the University of Kabul.

In what became a decade-long proxy war against the Soviet Union, the CIA massively increased its aid to the *mujahedin*. In the biggest covert operation in U.S. history, the CIA armed and trained the Islamic reactionaries to kill Soviet soldiers. Among Washington’s Afghan “freedom fighters” were those who went on to found the Taliban, Al Qaeda and its ISIS offshoot. As Trotskyists who stood for the unconditional defense of

the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and who champion women’s liberation, we proclaimed: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples! But instead of fighting to finish off the *mujahedin*, the Kremlin bureaucrats temporized, vainly hoping to appease the U.S. In 1988-89, Moscow withdrew the Soviet Army, a betrayal that destroyed any prospect for social progress in Afghanistan and helped pave the way for the destruction of the USSR itself.

While the gut-level response of radical leftists should have been support for the Red Army intervention, most of the left echoed the imperialists’ anti-Soviet hue and cry. Among the most vociferous was the International Socialist Organization (ISO), followers of the late Tony Cliff. Cheering the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the ISO’s *Socialist Worker* (May 1988) declared that “the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan” will “give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin’s heirs.” A few years later, when Boris Yeltsin’s imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution staged a coup in Moscow, the Cliffites rejoiced that “Communism has collapsed” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 31 August 1991). The destruction of the Soviet Union and East European deformed workers states turned those countries into hellholes of mass unemployment, homelessness and ethnic slaughter, and reinvigorated the U.S. imperialists in their drive to dominate the planet.

Afghanistan today is a shattered country. According to the UN’s Human Development Index, it ranks near the bottom in every social category: infant mortality, life expectancy, caloric intake, per capita income, literacy, electricity usage, etc. Women continue to suffocate in the *burqa*, and forced marriages and “honor killings” of women are rampant. Only proletarian revolution can break the grip of imperialism in the region, defeat the local forces of reaction and chart a course toward a socialist future. While within Afghanistan there does not exist an industrial proletariat, powerful proletarian concentrations exist in neighboring countries such as Pakistan, India and Iran. The Afghan peoples have much in common with those across the borders, which were artificially drawn up by the imperialists.

The key to social emancipation is an internationalist communist perspective pointing to the seizure of power by the proletariat standing at the head of all the oppressed. To carry out this program, revolutionary workers parties must be built as sections of a Trotskyist Fourth International, providing leadership to the working masses in struggle against imperialist domination, capitalist exploitation and all forms of religious reaction and social oppression. Such struggles must be linked to the fight for proletarian revolution in the imperialist heartlands, which will lay the basis for an internationally planned economy that harnesses the most advanced economic forces to lift the masses from want. In pursuit of this goal, the SL/U.S. is dedicated to building a multiracial workers party that will lead the proletariat in overthrowing the American imperialist beast from within. ■

## The Working Class Is the Key

In the wake of the August 27 Berkeley anti-fascist rally, Democratic mayor Jesse Arreguin is demanding that antifa be branded a “gang”—i.e., criminal outlaws. He is backed by a collective howl from the bourgeois media, grotesquely equating antifa with the violence and terrorism of the fascist gangs. Joining this chorus is the one-time guru of anti-communist anarchism, Noam Chomsky, who describes antifa as a “major gift to the right.” Such grotesque ravings—which echo Trump’s condemnation of “both sides” in Charlottesville—serve to strengthen the powers of the cops, the source of the most lethal racist violence in this society, against anti-fascist activists and anyone else deemed an “enemy of the state.”

We salute the courage of the antifas in driving away the fascists from MLK Park that day, as well as the precautions they took to protect other anti-fascist protesters. But make no mistake: they only got away with it because, particularly in the

# République ouvrière...

(continued from page 3)

Quebec. It is crucial for revolutionaries to assimilate the historic lessons of the workers movement here and in all countries in order to be educated in a spirit of proletarian internationalism.

The fight for a Leninist position on the national question has allowed us to reaffirm the Trotskyist revolutionary continuity of the ICL, going back directly to the Russian Revolution of 1917. For example, we were the only organization in the world that fought against the capitalist counter-revolution in East Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989-92, while also fighting for

proletarian political revolutions against the bankrupt Stalinist bureaucracies. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the victorious seizure of power by the Russian working class, the work of the Bolsheviks remains our model for new October Revolutions throughout the world.

*République ouvrière* will strive to rise to its historic tasks. What Lenin wrote in 1902 in *What Is To Be Done?* is still the burning question for the tasks of a revolutionary press today:

“This newspaper would become part of an enormous pair of smith’s bellows that would fan every spark of the class struggle and of popular indignation into a general conflagration. Around what is in itself still a very innocuous and very small, but regular and *common*, effort, in the full sense of the word, a regular army of tried fighters would systematically gather and receive their training.” ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## ILWU Tops Bury Union Call to Action

# Bay Area Anti-Fascist Protests

“Alt-right” fascist gangs had long been planning to stage a double-header of provocations in the Bay Area on the weekend of August 26-27. The first was called for Saturday at San Francisco’s Crissy Field by “Patriot Prayer,” which organized a June 4 fascist rally in Portland following the murder of two men who had intervened to stop the racist intimidation of two young women by a white supremacist. At the eleventh hour, its leader, Joey Gibson, called off the Crissy Field rally. Whining that he had been maligned as a white supremacist, Gibson complained that “tons of extremists” were being whipped up against him by Democratic Party city rulers and Democratic Congressional leader Nancy Pelosi.

This was as big an invention as the lie that Patriot Prayer has no ties to the fascists. The Democrats’ aim was to contain outrage against the fascists through the velvet glove of appeals for “peace and love” and the repressive force of the capitalist state. An army of SF cops was mobilized, together with the federal police agencies that control Crissy Field. Their purpose was to disarm and imprison anti-fascist protesters in a massive police pen at Crissy Field, where draconian restrictions banning picket signs and other items were announced. When Gibson said that he would instead hold a three-hour “press conference”—i.e., an alternate rally—at Alamo Square, the cops also threw up fences to barricade the area. Over 1,000 protesters marched on the San Francisco square, where several hundred were initially trapped inside the cops’ pen but later allowed to rally.

It is a victory that the fascists had to call off their SF rally and press conference. However, what mainly took place in San Francisco that day were insipid “unity” rallies. In collaboration with the mayor’s office, the Democrats’ loyal labor statemen in the San Francisco Labor Council worked to divert any protest against the fascists at Crissy Field into a liberal “anti-hate” event miles away at Civic Center. The politics of this rally were the lie that racist terror is an assault on “American values” and the promotion of the Democrats as the “answer” to the fascists emboldened by Trump’s White House.

In fact, Trump is simply the naked face



Spartacist League/PDC contingent at anti-fascist protest in Berkeley, August 27.

## For Labor/Black Action to Stop the Fascists! Defend Antifa!

of the brutal racist reality of American capitalism, which the Democratic Party equally represents. California Senator Dianne Feinstein, who joined the howls of outrage against the Patriot Prayer rally, fought to keep up the Confederate flag of slavery at that very same Civic Center in 1984 when she was mayor after we had torn it down.

For all its sniveling complaints about safety, Patriot Prayer was itching to stage a provocation. On August 27, Gibson and his bodyguard turned up in Berkeley for a planned “No to Marxism in America” rally, as did a couple of dozen other right-wing and fascist provocateurs. They were appropriately dealt with by antifa, with Gibson, his bodyguard and others fleeing into the arms of the phalanx of heavily

armed cops that had been mobilized to protect them. After warning other anti-fascist protesters, including those who did not want to participate, to safely retreat, the antifas defiantly jumped over the police barricades surrounding Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park, where the fascists had called their rally.

### Mobilize Labor/Black Power to Smash the Fascists!

At the Berkeley protests against the fascists’ “No to Marxism” rally there was only one contingent that actually represented the program and the purpose of Marxism. That was the 40-strong contingent of the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee. The reformists of the International Socialist Organization (ISO)

and the Democratic Socialists of America had linked up with assorted liberals and preachers to organize a “Rally Against Hate” demonstration to celebrate non-violence and diversity blocks away from where the fascists planned to have their provocation. Others had prevailed in actually marching toward the fascists’ rallying site. We joined that march under an SL banner demanding, “Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party! Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!” and a PDC banner declaring, “For Labor/Black Mobilizations to Stop the Fascists!” Standing at the head of the oppressed, and relying on its collective strength, the working class is the only force in society that has the social power to not only stop the fascists but to overturn the whole capitalist system that spawns these vermin.

Against the pro-Democratic Party “dump Trump” reformists, we stood out as a militant and disciplined communist pole. Our chants of “Sweep the Fascists from the Streets! Racist Terror is not Free Speech!” as well as “Remember Hiroshima! Remember Vietnam! Democratic Party We Know Which Side You’re On!” took on those liberal and reformist organizations that promote the capitalist state and the Democratic Party as their protectors from fascist terror. These chants were picked up by others in the crowd.

In the lead-up to the fascist provocations in SF and Berkeley, we had been mobilizing ourselves and others behind the call made in a motion passed unanimously at the August 17 union meeting of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in the Bay Area. That motion resolved that the local would march on San Francisco’s Crissy Field on August 26 “to stop the racist, fascist intimidation” by the Patriot Prayer rally and “invite all unions and anti-racist and antifascist organizations to join us defending unions, racial minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women and all the oppressed.”

As we wrote in the last issue of WV (“For Labor/Black Mobilizations to Stop the Fascists!” WV No. 1116, 25 August):

“We welcome this call. Other unions and all opponents of racist terror should

*continued on page 6*



AP photos

Left: Antifa contingent at Berkeley anti-fascist rally, August 27. Right: Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson driven away from MLK Park by antifa militants.