6 October 2017

W Travel

Hurricanes and Man-Made Disasters





Puerto Rico Plundered by U.S. Colonialism

Puerto Rico lies devastated, its residents struggling to obtain the very essentials of life: food, drinking water, medicine, fuel, electricity, sanitation and shelter. There is nothing natural about this unfolding catastrophe. Long before Hurricane Maria made landfall, U.S. colonial domination had bled Puerto Rico to the point of collapse. The island of three and a half million people, today in more than \$70 billion debt bondage to Wall Street vultures, was deprived of infrastructure and resources, left destitute, vulnerable and unable to cope with the mighty storms that tear through the Caribbean.

Presented with deep-going suffering and desperation, Washington responded how it knows best: with gunboats and a military occupation. A three-star general, Jeffrey Buchanan, has been placed in charge of the "relief" efforts. By the end of the first week, over 7,000 U.S. troops had arrived in Puerto Rico, including over 1,000 marines and sailors on two amphibious assault ships off the island's coast. National Guardsmen were patrolling urban streets, while other soldiers engaged in clearing operations. The 101st Airborne Division, elite killers known for suppressing major civil unrest, like in 1967 black Detroit, are flying Blackhawk helicopters over San Juan.

The huge Roosevelt Roads naval base was even reopened as a staging area. It had been decommissioned shortly after the Pentagon in 2003 opted to abandon its long-time training grounds on nearby Vieques, where military exercises and relentless bombing provoked angry protests over the years. Those exercises pose dangers to this day. Two months ago, the unannounced detonation of explosives on Vieques by the U.S. Navy exposed residents to toxic fumes. We say: *U.S. troops out!*



Left: Devastation in Puerto Rico. Hurricanes destroyed homes, infrastructure across the island. Right: People without access to water line up to buy ice.

With shelters running out of supplies and long lines for what little there is, the armed forces were mobilized primarily to assert control over the island and to contain any social outburst. Paving the way for military rule is what the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is all about. When FEMA, now part of Homeland Security, was in its infancy, Reagan administration officials made plans for it to set up the infrastructure for military dictatorship in the event of a "national emergency."

True to form, days passed before FEMA bothered to contact some mayors of Puerto Rican cities, and even then 10,000 shipping containers full of food and other aid continued to sit undistributed at the Port of San Juan. When the capital city's mayor sharply criticized FEMA for perpetuating suffering, Trump shot back with racist arrogance typical of the U.S. rulers, lambasting the victims as "politically motivated ingrates" who "want everything to be done for them." The federal government's criminal indifference toward the lives of U.S. imperialism's Spanishspeaking, dark-skinned colonial subjects recalls the rulers' treatment of black people in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Democratic Party politicians, shedding crocodile tears for the plight of the Puerto Rican people, have enjoined the Trump administration to "do more"—that is, beef up the military intervention. Typical is a September 27 letter to Trump

from 145 Congressional Democrats urging the deployment of the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* in order to, among other things, quell supposed "looting and crime" at the hands of "armed gangs." Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York (where there are almost one and a quarter million people of Puerto Rican descent) is bragging about the humanitarian supplies that the state has sent to Puerto Rico... along with over 150 state troopers and National Guardsmen for law enforcement.

While U.S. troops have participated in "search and rescue" and have distributed some food and supplies, their main function is not to help the island's population but to impose reactionary "law and order." They are to hunt down "looters," in reality survivors foraging for life's necessities, especially those who go out after dark. An extended nighttime curfew, a precursor of martial law, was imposed from the first by right-wing Puerto Rican governor Ricardo Rosselló. That flunky of the imperialists has also pleaded for a greater U.S. military presence in order to head off "a mass exodus" to the mainland. Washington could not agree more with that objective and has stationed military personnel at the commercial airports.

The Democrats and Republicans, both capitalist parties, represent one of the biggest looters the world has ever known: the U.S. imperialist ruling class. Ever since 1898, when control of Puerto Rico was

wrested from Spain through war, it has pillaged the wealth of the island. Washington's Puerto Rican colony has served successively as a naval coaling station, a sugar-baron empire, a low-wage manufacturing base, a corporate tax haven, and now a target for parasitic hedge funds. With nearly half the population living below the official poverty line, working people have overwhelmingly shouldered the cost, as they will for whatever passes as rebuilding under the watch of the U.S. profiteers.

In their various statements on the disaster, the Democrats have taken to reminding themselves, and the country, that Puerto Rico's inhabitants are U.S. citizens. In fact, under the present commonwealth arrangement, Puerto Ricans are oppressed *second-class* citizens who cannot vote in presidential elections and are not represented in Congress, but who have been drafted in disproportionate numbers for U.S. imperialism's wars. That citizenship was first conferred a century ago, in order to press some 20,000 Puerto Ricans into service as cannon fodder in World War I.

Even today, the minimal political rights and paltry federal assistance granted to Puerto Ricans provide a thin gloss on colonial exploitation. Puerto Ricans are prohibited from managing their own economy, negotiating their own trade relations and controlling their own currency. Although by and large fed up with the current commonwealth relationship, Puerto Ricans have expressed contradictory views toward independence. On the one hand, people on the island have a very strong national identity informed continued on page 2

U.S. Troops Out! Cancel the Debt! For the Right of Independence!

Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 1)

by a long history of anti-colonial struggle, which the U.S. imperialists have brutally suppressed, including by murdering, imprisoning and torturing independentistas. On the other, many fear losing the ability to live and work on the mainland and of sinking further into poverty. After the hurricane, by all accounts, many Puerto Ricans view getting off the island as their only chance for a future.

As intransigent opponents of national oppression and U.S. imperialism, we favor independence for Puerto Rico. However, in upholding the right of selfdetermination, should Puerto Ricans decide they want statehood, we would support the will of the population, just as we would oppose any attempts to forcibly impose independence. Thus, we stress the *right* of independence for Puerto Rico.

Whatever the final sum spent on rebuilding the island, it will be a drop in the bucket of the total needed to truly modernize Puerto Rico. There is no percentage in that for the U.S. ruling class, which in general invests only what it can realize back in profit. Puerto Rico has to escape the colonial straitjacket to even begin to address the needs of the working class and the poor.

A fight to cast off colonial oppression will by its very nature run up against local agents of the imperialists like Rosselló, who have enforced austerity on behalf of their U.S. overlords. With the working class at its head, such a fight could prove a springboard to the smashing of capitalist rule on the island and would be a powerful leaven for class struggle across the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as on the U.S. mainland, where millions of Puerto Ricans reside. If workers were to first seize power in the U.S., they would immediately grant independence and massive aid to Puerto Rico.

Capitalist Profiteering and Colonial Subjugation

In his first post-Maria tweet on Puerto Rico, Trump reminded the world that U.S. bankers and financial speculators will still need to collect on the territory's massive debt. In so doing, he was continuing the work of his predecessor. Last year, the Obama administration appointed a fiscal control board, widely reviled as the "junta colonial," to slash the island's spending—and break union contracts and sell off public assets in the process.

This instrument of colonial subjugation has ruthlessly enforced austerity, including by cutting health care expenditure by 30 percent, closing hundreds of schools and lowering the minimum wage to \$4 an hour for people under 25 years old. With Puerto Rican society now in a state of near total collapse, the unelected board approved \$1 billion for relief efforts, but the money was merely reallocated from other parts of the budget. Additional planned antiworker measures, like furloughs and pension cuts, remain on the table.

The island's U.S. creditors are even angling to profit further off the mass misery, as documented in an Intercept article (27 September) titled "Puerto Rican Debt Holders Respond to Catastrophic Hurricane by Offering Puerto Rico More Debt." The debt was a crushing weight on Puerto Rican workers even before the present disaster. Early estimates for the cost of rebuilding the island would double the debt. Workers in the U.S. have an obligation to side with their Puerto Rican class brothers and



San Juan, November 1950: Police and National Guard detain political prisoners following island-wide revolts for independence. More than 3,000 people were arrested within a matter of days.

sisters against the common class enemy. To clear the path for their Puerto Rican brothers and sisters to recover from social disaster, workers in the U.S. must demand: Cancel the debt!

The U.S. capitalist rulers have plundered the island without stop for more than a century. Witness the Jones Act shipping restrictions, which the Trump administration did not temporarily waive until eight days after Maria. Enacted in 1920, this protectionist legislation mandates that all 'coastwise" shipping, including between the mainland and Puerto Rico, must be on U.S. vessels, or face high tariffs and fees that are passed on to the Puerto Rican population. This price-fixing scheme for U.S. shipping magnates contributed to the island's economic crisis. Thanks to the legislation, the price of goods from the mainland is at least double that in neighboring islands, and the cost of living in impoverished Puerto Rico is higher than in most U.S. cities. That means materials needed for hurricane preparation and recovery, from storm windows to generators, are for many priced out of reach.

Perhaps the greatest testament to U.S. colonial pillage, though, is the decrepit state of the electrical utility, PREPA. With the deindustrialization of the island in the 1990s, U.S. capital lost its primary incentive to ensure the upkeep of this

crucial infrastructure. Over subsequent years, many of the generation and distribution systems became dangerously outmoded. Saddled with billions in debt, PREPA increasingly skimped on preventative maintenance. This corner-cutting included foregoing annual safety inspections of dams, including the one at Guajataca now on the verge of failing.

By the end of last year, Puerto Ricans were experiencing more than four times as many electrical outages as the average U.S. customer, while paying higher rates than in any state except Hawaii. According to the electrical workers union, UTIER, the utility intentionally degraded service to prime the pump for privatization. Many skilled workers were forced out through retirement and emigration. Then, the glancing blow of Irma turned off most lights, PREPA delayed restoration to build support for a corporate sell-off, and Maria finished the job.

Some of Puerto Rico's creditors prefer PREPA to simply restructure its debt and pass the cost on to consumers (for decades). Other bourgeois elements view a fire sale to private bidders as an opportunity, not least to completely smash UTIER, which before the shuttering of industry was in the vanguard of the combative proletariat on the island. Over the last 15 years,

continued on page 6



TROTSKY

Self-Determination and Socialist Revolution

In many of his writings, V.I. Lenin emphasized that the fight of subjugated peoples against their national oppression was a necessary link in the struggle of the international working class for socialist revolution. Lenin's intransigent fight for the selfdetermination of nations, that is, the right to separate and establish an independent state, was crucial for the Bolshevik Party in winning the confidence of the various nationalities imprisoned within the tsarist empire.



LENIN

Not only the right of nations to self-determination, but *all* the fundamental demands of political democracy are only partially "practicable" under imperialism, and then in a distorted form and by way of exception (for example, the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905). The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies that is put forward by all revolutionary Social-Democrats is also "impracticable" under capitalism without a series of revolutions. But from this it does not by any means follow that Social-Democracy should reject the immediate and most determined struggle for all these demands—such a rejection would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and reaction—but, on the contrary, it follows that these demands must be formulated and put through in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, i.e., up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie....

Increased national oppression under imperialism does not mean that Social-Democracy should reject what the bourgeoisie call the "utopian" struggle for the freedom of nations to secede but, on the contrary, it should make greater use of the conflicts that arise in this sphere, too, as grounds for mass action and for revolutionary attacks

—V.I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (January-February 1916)

WORKERS VANGUARD



DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour

EDITOR: Alan Wilde CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

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

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 October 3.

No. 1119 6 October 2017



Saturday, October 7, 3 p.m. 322 West 48th Street, Manhattan

First Floor (Between 8th and 9th Avenues-

Take A, C or E to 42nd Street) Information: (212) 267-1025 nysl@tiac.net

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, October 14, 5 p.m.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church* 3300 Wilshire Boulevard (At Berendo St., 2 blocks west of Wilshire/ Vermont stop on Red/Purple Line) Information: (213) 380-8239 slsycla@sbcglobal.net

*The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church. Saturday, October 21, 2 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church of Oakland 2619 Broadway, Oakland (Entrance on 27th St.) Information: (510) 839-0851 slbayarea@fastmail.net

CHICAGO

Saturday, November 4, 2 p.m.

Chicago Public Library Roosevelt Branch 1101 W. Taylor Street

(UIC-Halsted Blue Line)

Information: (312) 563-0441 chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

WORKERS VANGUARD 2

Our comrade Ed Cliffel died in Orlando, Florida, at the age of 78. At his side were his wife, Linda, and daughter Lauren. Also, two comrades were sent to be with him in his final hours. Ed had been in New York assisting Workers Vanguard and the central party leadership when he became gravely ill and had to be hospitalized. He died on September 23, only three weeks after a diagnosis of aggressive metastatic cancer.

Edward James Cliffel was born in Cleveland on 28 August 1939 and grew up in a working-class family. In a 2012 interview, recorded as part of a younger comrade's oral history project aimed at preserving the experiences and knowledge of senior party cadre, he described his family's politics as "right-wing Catholic" and anti-Communist. He was moved by the injustice of his father's life—just working and sleeping—and thought the working class deserved better. In 1957, he enrolled at Case Institute of Technology but left two years later after getting involved in other pursuits—mainly politics but also playing bridge. Having worked as a postal worker for a year and a half, Ed then returned to education, eventually earning a master's degree in psychology. His professional knowledge and understanding of people were invaluable to the party in many situations. His job was psychology, but Ed's profession was communist politics.

Ed was a leader of our organization for nearly four and a half decades. He was elected an alternate member of the Spartacist League Central Committee (CC) in 1977. He was a member of the Central Control Commission from 1980 to 1983. He became a full CC member in 1983 and served in that capacity until his death. Ed became a full member of the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the ICL beginning in 1992. He took a hard stand in defense of Leninism

on the national question in the fight leading up to our Seventh International Conference earlier this year (see Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 65, Summer 2017). He actively participated in that conference, even as he was recovering from open-heart surgery, and became a consultative member of the IEC.

Ed joined the party in 1973 as part of a fusion process between the Spartacist League and the Cleveland Marxist Caucus (CMC). At 34 years old, he was older than most of those we were recruiting at that time. While many of those who burned with revolutionary fervor during those tumultuous years of anti-racist and antiwar struggles soon returned to the more comfortable options available to them, Ed was steadfast in placing his life in the service of his communist convictions.

The Cleveland Marxist Caucus was a loose collective of friends and sometime cothinkers who were moving toward systematic study of Marxism. The political origins of the CMC members lay in the breakup of the New Left, coming individually from the Cleveland Students for a Democratic Society, the Movement for a Democratic Society and Weatherman. Other members came out of the Cleveland women's liberation movement.

In this period, the SL and its youth organization had a number of regroupments with local New Leftist groupings that were studying Marxism and becoming convinced of the need for a revolutionary party. One of these was the Buffalo Marxist Caucus, which had ties with and strongly influenced the CMC. Our fusion with the Buffalo Marxist Caucus in November 1972 paved the way for winning Ed and other CMC members, including his lifelong friend and comrade, Corky.

Ed authored the article for WV that described the CMC's roots and its process of fusion:

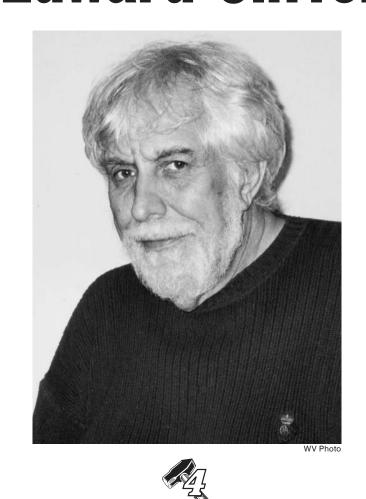
"The group's definitive break with New Leftism, opening the door to development on the basis of Marxism, thus came from the piecemeal recognition that isolated sectors of the oppressed, organized around struggles for immediate needs, do not automatically come to socialist conclusions. The group's illusions as to the revolutionary potential of the lumpenized 'community' dwindled as the destructive effects of lumpenization were realized. Such struggles do not spontaneously come together and unite in socialist revolution...but must be *united* behind the class struggle of the workers through the agency of a mass, working-class vanguard party."

—"Cleveland Workers Vanguard Committee

Formed," WV No. 17, March 1973

As a party member, Ed moved from Cleveland to New York in 1974. He played a leading role in the NYC

Edward Cliffel



local, including as education director, and wrote for the party press. Ed transferred to Chicago in March 1979 and, over time, became the central political leader of that local. A frequent and effective public spokesman, Ed was the SL's presenter at a formal debate with the Chicago-based Sojourner Truth Organization in 1981 on "The Polish Events and the Russian Question." The account in WV No. 275 (27 February 1981) includes extensive quotes from Ed's remarks—he wiped the floor with his anti-Soviet opponent.

1939-2017

Comrade Ed possessed a keen understanding of the U.S. and its peculiarities, of the many ways in which black oppression has been and remains at the core of American history and political life. In a 1995 exchange with an official of the International Association of Machinists who defended the union bureaucracy's chauvinist protectionism, Ed skewered the union tops:

"The class collaborationism of the union officialdom has sapped the organized strength of the working class. Nor is that all. The savage attacks on the living standards of working people and on the very ability of

the poor and helpless to live, the slashing of health care at all levels, the McJobs and empty futures of youth, the rampant racist attacks and massive incarceration of blacks (a social agenda neatly fitting with that of the Ku Klux Klan) are, no less, the products of this treacherous collaboration. Those who you defend, with the bosses, have made this bed. Others, however, must sleep in it."

"Exchange on Boeing Strike," WV No. 634, 1 December 1995

Ed was arguably WV's best writer, and drafted many of our front-page articles. His prose was always eloquent and persuasive, drawing on a broad range of sources—from Shakespeare and the King James Bible to popular movies. He presented complex issues concisely and often with mordant humor. His knowledge was wide-ranging, as reflected in his incisive remarks in meetings and contributions to our internal bulletins.

To cite one example, Ed was instrumental in strengthening our programmatic understanding of the Chinese deformed workers state. In 1997, he initiated a discussion on a formulation that had appeared in Spartacist which defended "the right of independence for a Tibetan soviet republic." Ed pointed out that there was no objective basis for an independent soviet Tibet, one of the most backward and inaccessible regions on earth. By offering such an illusory perspective, we were making a "curtsy toward 'human-rights'-led counterrevolution," i.e., the Tibetan "independence" movement of the Dalai Lama and his imperialist sponsors. Ed was right and was the author of an article correcting the line in the Spartacist piece. It was published in WV No. 695 (28 August 1998) under the headline "'Free Tibet': Rallying Cry for Counterrevolution in China."

Ed was a presence, his booming laugh irresistible. He was a voracious reader of everything, from politics and history to science, poetry and literature,

and enjoyed a wide range of music—classical, jazz, Sinatra, Meat Loaf. He thought outside the box and was one of the most creative, independent and critical Marxist thinkers in our party. Ed was always looking for political discussion and debate—usually over copious amounts of alcohol. His mind was brilliant and his spirit was kindly belligerent; his gusto for life was Falstaffian. He had a deep sense of the human condition. In his public political work, people of every background quickly opened up to him.

Ed's death is a great loss to the ICL. It is an indescribable diminution of our collective knowledge, culture and political understanding. We extend our condolences to Linda, Ed's companion for 45 years, and Lauren. Linda has told us that Ed used to say, "My one wish is to die a communist." Indeed, Ed lived as he had wanted to and died with his boots on, in the trenches of the struggle for a communist future.

Memorial meetings for comrade Ed Cliffel are being organized in Chicago and New York. Please contact us for more information.

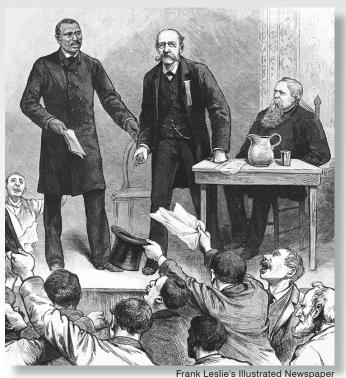


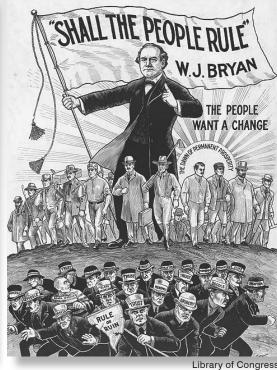
March 1975: Ed Cliffel (center) marches in Spartacist contingent at New York City demonstration against U.S. backing of South Vietnamese and Cambodian puppet regimes.

3 **6 OCTOBER 2017**

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Race, Class and American Populism





Left: Knights of Labor leader Terence Powderly (center) introduced by Frank Farrell, black delegate at union's tenth annual convention, 1886. Right: Campaign poster for William Jennings Bryan, who played key role in drawing Populist movement into racist Democratic Party.

We print below the conclusion of an article based on a March 5 Spartacist League Black History forum presentation by Brian Manning in Oakland. Part One appeared in WV No. 1118 (22 September).

PART TWO

Up until the aftermath of the Civil War, trade unions in the U.S. had been very weak. In 1869, some four years after the war ended, a group that became known as the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor was founded, one of the country's earliest national labor organizations. Unlike the farmers' alliances and other populist groups, the Knights of Labor was a proletarian organization. In addition to white male workers, it organized women and black people, including in the South.

The Knights of Labor's membership pledge stated that it meant "no antagonism to capital." At the same time, its founding leader, Uriah Stephens, also called for the complete emancipation of working people "from the thralldom and loss of wage slavery" and placed great emphasis on solidarity. Their motto was "An injury to one is the concern of all," a slogan later adapted by the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) in the early 20th century.

The Knights' leadership under Terence V. Powderly, who succeeded Stephens in 1879, was opposed to strikes. But as is often the case, the rank and file thought differently. In 1885, the Knights of Labor won a strike against the Wabash Railroad, part of the southwestern system controlled by the railroad baron Jay Gould. Union members on other railways refused to operate any train with Wabash cars. The union men won a surprising and unprecedented victory, leading to a major increase in the membership rolls of the Knights. By June 1886, the national membership had increased from about 100,000 to over 700,000. Gould then provoked a strike and crushed the Knights on his railroads the next year. But the 1885 victory enhanced the union's authority.

In this period, the South experienced rapid development in cotton, tobacco, iron

and steel production, textile and furniture manufacturing, coal mining and lumbering. The workforce was mostly composed of native white Southerners, but particularly in coal mining, lumbering and iron and steel production there was a large component of black workers. The Knights originally established a foothold in urban areas but eventually spread out to more rural areas.

Knights of Labor and Black Workers

The leadership of the Knights was derived from Northern (anti-slavery) abolitionists. Powderly thought that both the abolitionists and organized labor were "revolutionary in their character...[their] ends in view were the same, viz.: The freedom of the man who worked" (quoted in Melton Alonza McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South* [1978]). The Knights of Labor leadership had several ways of deal-

"EQUAL RIGHTS TO ALL: SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO NONE."

| Formula | Figure | Fi

People's Party 1892 presidential ticket: James B. Weaver and running mate James G. Field.

ing with the race question in the South, sometimes trying to circumvent it, saying it was just an economic issue, and at other times directly confronting it. These positions were outlined by historian Philip S. Foner in his book, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker: 1619-1973*:

"Two tendencies were apparent in the attitude of the Knights of Labor toward the Negro. One was reflected in the widespread evidence of unity in strikes, labor demonstrations, picnics, assembly halls, and the election of blacks to office in predominantly white locals. Nothing like this had ever occurred before in the American labor movement. The other tendency was the reluctance of the leadership to antagonize Knights who were not prepared to grant equality to black members and its unwillingness to take steps to eliminate restrictions barring Negroes from entrance to industry and apprenticeships."

In 1886, there were 60,000 black members of the Knights, mostly in the South.

Most of them were in all-black locals, but there were a few integrated ones as well. All told, there were nearly 2,000 Knights of Labor assemblies or locals organized in the South. They were organized, as the Knights said, "irrespective of party, race, and sex." But as much as the Knights sought to recruit black and women workers, they had a reactionary position against Chinese workers, and sometimes expressed that position in violent actions.

One story captures the contradictory quality of the Knights and Powderly on anti-black racism. During the Knights' 1886 General Assembly in Richmond, Virginia, the New York delegation left a hotel when one of its black members was refused admittance. When Powderly heard of this, he had the black member, Frank J. Ferrell, introduce him on the stage of the convention. Ferrell said that the Knights sought the "abolition of those distinctions which are maintained by creed or color"

and that Powderly was a man "above the superstitions which are involved in these distinctions." After the meeting, the New York delegation went down the road and integrated a theater. At the same time, Powderly wrote a letter to the Richmond Dispatch in which he sought to mollify his Southern critics: "I have no wish to interfere with the social relations which exist between the races of the South.... There need be no further cause for alarm. The colored representatives to this convention will not intrude where they are not wanted, and the time-honored laws of social equality will be allowed to slumber undisturbed."

Nonetheless, many Southern blacks rushed into the Knights of Labor because they were landless and barred from many industries and sought the dignity that membership in the Knights provided. But even within their organization the Knights were not always able to overcome racial divisions. In 1887, black iron workers in Birmingham went on strike, but their white counterparts refused to support them. The state organization of the Knights ordered the white iron workers to go out on strike, which they reluctantly did. But there was so much disgruntlement that the Knights had to call off the strike.

The bosses especially targeted militant black workers for deadly violence. By 1887, the Knights had organized 10,000 cane workers in what was known as the Sugar Bowl of southern Louisiana—9,000 were black and 1,000 were white. That year sugar workers went on strike, demanding payment in cash (not scrip redeemable only at the plantation store) as well as an increase in their daily wages and payment every two weeks. The governor called in the militia—which was headed by former Confederate general P.G.T. Beauregard to drive the workers from their cabins on the plantations. Corralled into the black part of the town of Thibodaux, as many as 300 black strikers and their families were killed by white vigilantes. This was one of the deadliest attacks on a strike in American history. There was not another attempt to organize workers in Louisiana cane country for decades.

As more radical workers entered the Knights, the conservatism of the leadership, including its opposition to class struggle, hardened. The opposition of Powderly and other Knights leaders to "radical anarchists" became especially vehement after the 1887 execution of the Haymarket martyrs—anarchists and labor organizers who fought for the eight-hour day. As radical white workers left or were expelled from the Knights, the influence of those who held racist, anti-black views became more prevalent. In 1894, shortly before its final demise, the Knights of Labor, the same organization that had earlier fought to organize black workers, called for the deportation of black people to Liberia "or some other parts of Africa."

In addition to the bosses' concerted offensive against labor struggles, white prejudice played a big part in the downfall of the Knights of Labor. At bottom, this reflected its inability to counter the rise of racist reaction in the post-Reconstruction period. Nonetheless, militant labor struggles continued through the 1890s. A number of veterans of the Knights of Labor went on to support the formation of the People's Party in 1892.

The People's Party

Blocked in their attempts in the 1880s to win gains through social struggle, populists from the farmers' alliances and other organizations turned toward the electoral system. Black and white Alliancemen joined in forming the People's Party. The case for doing so was made most strongly by black people in the South who were desperate for some kind of relief-anything to undermine the Democrats. At People's Party conventions, black members insisted on respectful treatment by white delegates, many of whom were their landlords. This alliance between the small exploiters and those they exploited reflected the irreconcilable class interests that would lead to the demise of the People's Party.

In 1892, People's Party delegates nominated James B. Weaver as their candidate for president and ratified a platform calling for government ownership of railroads, telegraphs and steamships; a progressive income tax; an eight-hour workday; paper money; a loan program. Most significantly, the People's Party became an electoral vehicle that threatened to break up the Democratic Party's political monopoly in the South. Weaver, who had been a brigadier general in the Union Army during the Civil War, was the target of all kinds of abuse by the Populists' opponents in the South.

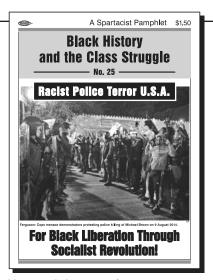
The contradictions that would eventually tear apart this populist alliance of black and white farmers were perhaps best illustrated in the person of Tom Watson. Watson was a white large landowner whose majority-black Tenth District was the center of Populist voting strength in Georgia in the 1890s. In his essay "The Negro Question in the South" (1892), Watson expressed racist views about black people. But the essay also showed that Watson had a pragmatic rationale for enlisting the support of black voters to defeat the Democrats. It was in this context that he pointed out that both Republicans and Democrats exploited racial antagonisms to maintain their rule. Referring to poor blacks and whites, Watson wrote:

"Now the People's Party says to these two men, 'You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both'."

Watson ran for Congress in Georgia in 1892 and had a black Populist organizer, H.S. Doyle, who gave 63 speeches for him. When Doyle was threatened with lynching by a mob of Democrats, he fled to Watson's house. Watson called out 2,000 armed white farmers to protect him. At the same time, Watson was no supporter of black equality; he told Doyle to sleep in the shed out back.

When the People's Party repeatedly failed to unseat the Democrats in the South, Watson came to believe that the Democrats' use of the bugaboo of black domination to scare whites away from the Populists could best be overcome by eliminating the black vote. In 1904, Watson offered to support Democrats seeking to amend the Georgia constitution to uphold white supremacy, in line with other Southern states that had disenfranchised black people. Watson went from defending the black vote and opposing lynching in the early 1890s to becoming a whitesupremacist by the early 20th century promoting anti-Jewish, anti-socialist, anti-Catholic and pro-KKK views in his magazine, The Jeffersonian.

Demonstrating the subordinate position of black people in the People's Party, the 1892 ticket included no blacks, and only two of the 160 delegates to the Georgia state Populist convention were black, a far cry from the radical Republican regimes during Reconstruction. The white Populist leaders never stood for black social equality. Nonetheless, their appeals to



No. 25, July 2016 \$1.50 (64 pages)

Black History is sent to WV subscribers.

Make checks payable/mail to:

Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO

New York, NY 10116

black voters, who still could tip the vote in one direction or the other in the South, led to the People's Party being disparaged as the "Negro Party," much as the Republican Party had been known as the "black Republicans" a generation before.

The Defeat of Populism and Consolidation of Jim Crow

In the face of burgeoning support for the Populists, the Democrats tried different strategies. Some politicians co-opted the rhetoric of the People's Party. In other places the Democrats openly stole votes, stuffed ballot boxes and intimidated voters. And as always, the Democrats played the race card, conjuring the specter of black domination to scare white voters away from the Populists. In the 1892 election, the Democrats carried the South and won the U.S. presidency. The People's Party got only 8.5 percent of the national vote but carried five western states and won three governorships.

However, by 1896 the Populists had fused on the national level with the Democrats and did not run a presidential candidate that year. They supported the Democratic candidate, William Jennings Bryan, who gave his famous "Cross of Gold" speech calling for an end to the gold standard, which was a key demand for the Populists. This fusion was fatal for the Populists, leading to the decline of the movement. Black Populist delegates had opposed the fusion because they recognized that it would cement white racist hostility.

The prospect of a black-white alliance undermining their rule impelled Southern Democrats in the 1890s to further extend segregation into every aspect of life. Black people were increasingly disenfranchised through the amendment of state constitutions. In 1890, Mississippi established a lengthy residency requirement, a poll tax and literacy tests to be eligible to vote. Within two years, the number of black voters dropped from 190,000 to 8,615. The Mississippi Plan of constitutional disenfranchisement, including through outright racist terror, swept across the South. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court placed its imprimatur on the racist policy of segregation with its ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson, upholding the segregation of railway cars in Louisiana.

By the opening of the 20th century, black voting rights had been virtually eliminated in the South, and legally sanctioned Jim Crow segregation was fully consolidated. For the next 50 years or more, the South remained this way under one-party, Democratic rule. The Northern bourgeoisie and Republican Party had by the turn of the century thoroughly embraced the whitesupremacist ideology of the "white man's burden," which served as justification for the subjugation of the darker races in the U.S.'s new colonies. Ben Tillman, a racist Democratic politician from South Carolina, wrote at the time of the Spanish-American War of 1898:

"No Republican leader, not even [New York] Governor [Theodore] Roosevelt, will now dare to wave the bloody shirt and preach a crusade against the South's treatment of the negro. The North has a bloody shirt of its own. Many thousands of them have been made into shrouds for murdered Filipinos, done to death because they were fighting for liberty."

-quoted in C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (1974)

Working-Class Power Is Key

A powerful example of the working class overcoming racial divisions was the New Orleans General Strike of 1892. The American Federation of Labor (AFL), which had been formed in 1881 and largely organized skilled, white, native-born workers, was compelled to lead the general strike, uniting skilled and unskilled, black and white workers, who were largely organized in segregated locals. The strike served to break down race prejudice among white workers.

In October, the Triple Alliance of scalesmen, packers and the largely black teamsters, numbering somewhere between two and three thousand, went on strike for a ten-hour day, overtime pay and a union shop. The bosses tried to break the strike



Bettmanı

Mississippi, 1963: Racist former cop assaults black civil rights activist at lunch counter sit-in against Jim Crow segregation.

by publishing stories about attacks by black strikers against local whites, but by November a general strike had begun. Forty-nine AFL unions went out, demanding union recognition, a closed shop, wage increases and shorter hours. While the unions did not attain a closed shop, they won other demands.

The general strike was a great demonstration of interracial labor solidarity in action. It showed that thousands of workers in the increasingly segregated Deep South could unite in common struggle, despite the efforts of the bosses to divide them by using anti-black prejudice. This was possible because workers have a common class interest in their struggles. However, economic struggles in and of themselves cannot achieve racial unity on a longer-term basis. For that it is necessary to have a class-struggle leadership that takes up the fight against black oppression and women's oppression, and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Such a leadership would be based on the understanding that the workers and bosses do not share a common interest and that the capitalist system ultimately needs to be swept away through workers revolution.

A number of socialist leaders came out

of the populist movements of the late 19th century, including Socialist Party (SP) leader Eugene V. Debs. Many of the activists who went on to form the Industrial Workers of the World had also been populist activists. These leaders came to recognize the social power of the working class as key. However, the SP and, initially, the Communist Party (CP) did not see the need for a program to address the dual oppression of black people as both workers and the victims of all-sided racism. In the case of the SP, some of its leaders were openly racist. And despite being an opponent of racism, Debs remained in the SP because he believed in building a party that encompassed all political currents in the workers movement, no matter how politically backward.

It was not until the intervention of the Communist International, established after the Bolshevik Revolution led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky in October 1917, that the early American Communists took up the struggle for black freedom. The Bolsheviks had developed their party in intense opposition to the Great Russian chauvinism of the tsar's empire, and they understood that the struggles against national and other forms of special (i.e., non-class) oppression could be powerful levers to advance socialist revolution. They had built a vanguard party of workers of different nationalities with the most advanced, revolutionary consciousness.

The idea of the fight against special oppression as an impetus for revolution changed how American Communists thought about their work in a country founded on black chattel slavery. This was captured by James P. Cannon, a CP leader who was later won to Trotskyism, i.e., authentic revolutionary Marxism. Cannon noted that American Communists learned "to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a special question of doublyexploited second-class citizens, requiring a program of special demands as part of the overall program—and to start doing something about it" ("The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement," in The First Ten Years of American Communism [1962]).

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, a wave of popular discontent over economic devastation spawned a number of populist demagogues who tried to deflect this anger away from the capitalist

continued on page 6

Workers Vanguard Subscription Drive

August 17 to October 11 Local Quota (in points) (Sept. 21-27) Week 6 (Sept. 21-27) % Bay Area 350 258.5 74% Chicago 250 253.5 101% Los Angeles 250 212 85% New York 650 606 93% National Total 1,500 1,330 89%

WORK	ERS V	angu	ARD 50 22 September 25
Trump Kills D	ACA Democ	rate Puch Roi	rder Securit
•	-		
No	Depo	rtatio	ns!
The lines of some 500,000 younger treat greats, there heads an adversarial treatment of the control of the lines of the li	Full Cit for Al	izenship I Immigr	Rights ants!
when DMCA germin begin to cupies, Ackade, here are riperes of demains, Ackade, here are riperes of demains, statement in cellings, tradects in cellings. By Instabling this lines and imaginess which. Though was playing to list matries beau. Coming on up of the occur per- sistence of the companion of the companion of the beau. Coming on up of the occur per- sistence of the companion of the companion of Acyatic multi-be deviction by the Buyerness courts are proposed, below period endour- cement of the said below the beautiful and the said period below consistency and the said period below the said of contributions are not only intengating and Medicine the block that the said period of the consistency that the said period of the said period of the consistency that the consistency	7		
The move to scrap DACA producably afforded Democratic Party politicians a shape opportunity for some thearinal grandstanding. First and forecast aroung them was Barack Obsers, who procured Terring Yurid. For recitabling the 2012 executive order that established DACA. The receives weeklife scrapids known products or control in Account.	actions and an oriented second. Taking, comes abroad of intelligency who list their DDCA waters who that their DDCA waters who had their DDCA waters who their it was subject from a factor of their product in the supposed page affailition or it legal due to their inhelity to page the 5500 reasonal for every two years—and to be reasonal or and their waters of the subject waters and the subject was a federal, and off aim out if it was a federal, and off aim out if it was a federal, and off aim out if it was a federal and off aim out if it was a federal and off aim out if it was a federal and contained to the subject with the program was needed, of landing Discounces for yet translation.	Al a September II pero, conference in San Prancisco en DACA, Peloci ma- tera de la composição de la composição de productivos de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de porta de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la composição de la c	devery and the continued cociel oppose of black people. DWA recipions expens a wife range of social took appears with the range of social took appears. It is socially not be a social took and the social took and the social took all the social took and the social too
a thing are two about crushly. Among his many critics in CRG of Amsterium capitalism, Obtamic deported more people than say previous president in CLS formers, in fast, despite a quille in another, the raise of task, despite a quille in another, the raise of task, despite a quille in another, the raise of task, despite a quille in another in the raise of task, despite another in another despite quille of the post prepared a very wolf-quipped dispositation in another in the CLS quies despite another in the CLS quies and the rest in the control of the cls of	of stating between long transaction. Namy Perka and Charl Schmere began regestrates with the Trang White Home- nacomation of DACA in some form linked to a package of robasical books seasing measures. White the reality of a feel sensition in question, the enthusiasm of the Damactans for back its components in nor, with Schmere brugging on the Sensite Rose subsect the "gate sensory explorated" man- ufactured in his home sense of New York, Marc Barcher Broot amone, more owned.	atten coloit. The Mental Act woods but allowed immergrams possible to position for permission residence, where completion for permission residence, where completion for the color of the c	scattles. With UK-Action sources ingly Mexicus were and consonitated. Texts and California, were construct contrins an bermanding Tramph clock for considing meantainty own that how- ther options in the profit inferior colonel from a description of the profit inferior colonel from a description of the profit in the restiguistic are "disserving," intering who extended the US. from the "loss that even." The motion presented by Democratic of "most" review "bull" Democratic of "most" review "bull".

5

Subscribe Now!

□ \$10/22 issues of Workers Va (includes English-language Sp International rates: \$25/22 issues— □ \$2/6 introductory issues of V □ \$2/4 issues of Espartaco (er □ I would like to contribute \$	artacist and Black I Airmail \$10/22 issu Workers Vanguard 1 español) (include	History and the Class Struggle) ues—Seamail d (includes English-language Spart es Spanish-language Spartacist)	
Name		Ü	
Address			
Audi 633		Apt. #	
City	Stato		
City	State	ZIP	
Phone ()	Email		
· ·	_		11
Make checks payable/mail to: Spart	taciet Bublishing Co	Boy 1377 GPO New York NV 1	0116

6 OCTOBER 2017

Populism...

(continued from page 5)

profit system. Among these was Democratic Party politician Huey Long, who had served as governor of Louisiana. After Long became a U.S. Senator, the KKK said that it was going to campaign against him in Louisiana. This prompted Long to get up in the Senate press gallery and say, "Quote me as saying that that Imperial bastard will never set foot in Louisiana." And if he did, he risked leaving with "his toes turned up." Long was certainly no anti-racist, but his stance against the Klan won him much sympathy among black people in Louisiana.

In 1934, Long launched a "Share Our Wealth" campaign with the slogan "Every Man a King," promising \$5,000 to every family. Initially a supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Long claimed that his populist proposals came from Roosevelt's unfulfilled promises. Long said:

"When one man decides he must have more goods to wear for himself and family than any other ninety-nine people, then the condition results that instead of one hundred people sharing the things that are on earth for one hundred people, that one man, through his gluttonous greed, takes over ninety-nine parts for himself and leaves one part for the ninety-nine."

—Every Man a King: The Autobiography of Huey P. Long (1933)

The Occupy Wall Street movement came full circle from movements like Long's, proving that there is nothing new under the sun as far as these populist shibboleths are concerned.

The U.S. Trotskyists of the time, organized in the Workers Party, sought to



Spartacist League contingent at "Millions March NYC" demonstration against racist police killings, December 2014.

expose the pretensions of Long. In an article titled, "Huey Long—Workers' Enemy," the *New Militant* (27 April 1935) wrote: "Huey Long proclaims in grandiose style for the redistribution of wealth; but he is equally vociferous in his proclamations for the maintenance of the present social relationship."

For Revolutionary Integrationism!

Starting with World War I, the great migrations of black people from the rural South to the North led to the entry of large numbers of black people into the industrial working class, giving black workers enormous potential social power. This development underscored the need for a

revolutionary program to address the special oppression of black people. The black population in the U.S. is an oppressed race-color caste, an integral part of American class society since the time of slavery while at the same time forcibly segregated in the main at the bottom of this society. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s did away with de jure segregation, but de facto segregation is built into the economic order of American capitalism.

The entire history of mass black struggle—from the anti-slavery abolitionists through the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to the civil rights movement—has been in the direction of integration, not separation. Black workers in the 1930s participated in and often played leading

roles in the labor battles that created powerful, racially integrated industrial unions. Our program as Marxists in the U.S. is one of *revolutionary integrationism*—fighting against all instances of racial oppression, we stand for a working-class socialist revolution that sweeps away the capitalist economic order in which segregation and racial oppression are entrenched. Separate will never be equal! Only a socialist society based on production for social need and not private profit can provide the decent jobs, education, housing and health care that are denied to those left to fight for survival in the ghettos.

The liberal populists of today, no less than the populists of the 19th century and their 20th-century successors, are incapable of offering a program to resolve the profound economic and social inequality faced by black people. Capitalism is a system based on exploitation and oppression; a proletarian, revolutionary perspective is needed. Despite the increasing destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength in recent decades, black workers continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat, such as urban transit, longshore, auto and steel.

Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section of the proletariat, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multiracial proletariat, and will be leading cadres of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party.

Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 2)

this union has experienced a halving of its membership without a corresponding drop in the workload.

For a Planned Economy Under Workers Rule!

This hurricane season, widespread structural damage and the loss of electricity have also upended life in the U.S. Virgin Islands (not to mention a swath of other Caribbean islands). A curfew is in effect there, too, as the U.S. military polices the heavily black combined population of 110,000. Washington's derisory "relief" efforts led one resident to describe the islanders, who are plagued by racism, unemployment and sharp economic disparities, as "the bastard step children of America." We uphold the right of self-determination for this colony.

One nation in the Caribbean, Cuba, fought its way out of total dependence on U.S. imperialism, through the expropriation of the capitalists on that island in the period following the 1959 Revolution and with crucial Soviet military and economic

aid. A bureaucratically deformed workers state was consolidated with the overthrow of capitalist rule and a planned, collectivized economy was built, guaranteeing jobs, housing, education and food. However, these gains are today increasingly threatened, from without and within.

One indication of the advantages of the collectivized economy over the capitalist system of production for private profit is the success the Cuban workers state has had in protecting its population from hurricanes. As a matter of course, the government provides early forecasting, educates and mobilizes the population and has arrangements in place for shelters, transport, food and medical backup. Often, hurricanes rake the island without any fatalities at all. This year, Hurricane Irma slammed Cuba and killed ten people, but even so, the island is in far better shape than Puerto Rico and others in the Caribbean that were ravaged by storms. Cuba's deputy foreign minister, Rogelio Sierra Diaz, even offered to send electricity workers and medics to assist Puerto Rico.

Cuba's high level of preparedness is maintained despite the bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy and the



WV Photo

September 2015: In midst of debt crisis, thousands of public-sector workers demonstrate in San Juan against austerity.

country's relative poverty, which has been deepened by over five decades of U.S. economic embargo. We Trotskyists stand for the unconditional defense of Cuba against capitalist counterrevolution and imperialist attack. That defense includes the fight for workers political revolution to oust the bureaucracy and put political power in the hands of the working class. Defense of the Cuban Revolution fundamentally requires its international extension through successful struggles for proletarian power throughout Latin America, and especially in the belly of the U.S. imperialist beast.

What has happened to Puerto Rico is a stark indictment of the barbarous, irrational capitalist-imperialist system and its insatiable drive for profit. Even as the U.S. ruling class amasses ill-gotten gains by exploiting workers at home, it retards the development of the colonial and neocolonial world to the same end. As long as capitalism remains, it will reproduce catastrophe over and over.

Marxists fight for a society that will provide for the toiling masses and ultimately eliminate material scarcity altogether. Only when production is planned and directed at satisfying human need and not the profit motive can the human toll of natural hazards be minimized. It will take a series of workers revolutions across the globe to rip the mines, factories and other means of production from the grip

of their private owners, and pave the way for an internationally planned, collectivized economy. The struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the world imperialist order is a matter of the very survival of humankind. Simply put, in the words of Rosa Luxemburg, the choice is socialism or barbarism. Our perspective is to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties in the U.S., Puerto Rico and beyond, national sections of a reforged Fourth International, dedicated to the fight for workers rule.



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

—— 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 YorkBox 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008 nysl@tiac.net

6

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 -

trotskyste.montreal@gmail.com

TorontoBox 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

Catalonia...

(continued from page 8)

As we wrote in the document of the ICL's most recent International Conference, "The fate of the provinces forcibly retained within France strongly depends on what will happen on the Spanish side of the border. We call for the independence of the Basque Country and Catalonia, in the North and the South" ("The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra," Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 65, Summer 2017).

Workers Must Fight for National Liberation

The struggle for the liberation of the oppressed nations can be a powerful motor force for revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against the Spanish capitalist order. But the central leadership of the countrywide trade-union federations, headquartered in Madrid, is imbued with the putrid anti-Basque and anti-Catalan chauvinism of its own capitalist rulers. Thus, the day after the Catalan people voted for independence, the national leaderships of the two largest trade-union confederations in Spain, the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), issued a statement opposing any "Unilateral Declaration of Independence." They wrote: "We do not endorse that position nor that political strategy."

Such chauvinism is not only an obstacle to the struggle for liberation of the oppressed nationalities, but also undermines struggle by all workers in the Spanish prison house of peoples against their own capitalist exploiters. The Madrid government's offensive against Catalonia has emboldened the Spanish fascists, who have held demonstrations under the call "Catalonia is Spain." These forces represent a deadly threat to all workers, immigrants and oppressed minorities in Spain, and the working class must mobilize to stop them.

In Catalonia in recent weeks, hundreds of thousands have defied the Castilian rulers, their constitution, courts and cops the so-called democratic order. Secondary and university students went on strike, while farmers drove their tractors into the cities and formed blockades to protect voters. But most significant were the actions carried out by unions in defense of the referendum. The port workers in Barcelona and Tarragona refused to service the ships being used to accommodate the Policía Nacional and Guardia Civil. The firefighters union also took action, forming security cordons around voting sites.

The working class has enormous potential social power that must be marshalled in support of the struggle for independence. It is absolutely necessary to defend Catalonia's bourgeois pro-independence leaders against the repression from Madrid. However, workers must be politically



Barcelona, October 3: Hundreds of thousands take to streets in Catalonia-wide "national stoppage" protesting police violence against independence vote.

independent from these capitalist politicians and their parties. These include not only the bourgeois nationalists of the Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (PDeCAT) and of the Esquerra Republicana (ERC), but also the left nationalists of the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP). Although claiming to be socialist, the CUP is a petty-bourgeois party that has propped up the bourgeois government of PDeCAT and the ERC in the Generalitat (Catalan parliament).

For the Catalan bourgeoisie, independence means being able to rule over those whom they exploit for profit. They will deploy their own forces of capitalist repression, such as the Mossos d'Esquadra (Catalan police), against the working class. It would be suicidal for the proletariat and oppressed to rely on the Catalan bourgeoisie in the fight for national liberation. For a Catalan workers republic!

The way forward was shown by the Bolshevik Party in Russia, which won the oppressed nationalities to its banner by championing the right of national selfdetermination. As Leon Trotsky, leader together with V.I. Lenin of the proletarian 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, wrote:

"In order to achieve liberation and a cultural lift, the oppressed nationalities were compelled to link their fate with that of the working class. And for this they had to free themselves from the leadership of their own bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties—they had to make a long spurt forward, that is, on the road of historic development.

The History of the Russian Revolution (1932)

Down With the Imperialist EU!

The Catalan bourgeois nationalists have long looked to the European Union (EU) for their salvation. Following the referendum, Catalan government leader Carles Puigdemont declared: "I must appeal directly to Europe.... The European Union

can no longer continue looking the other way." In response, the European Commission made the EU's position clear: "Yesterday's vote in Catalonia was not legal." It went on to reiterate that "this is an internal matter for Spain that has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain."

The EU is determined to keep the current European borders intact, fearful that the breakup of Spain or any other member state could bring down the whole EU house of cards. As Marxists, we are

Trotskyist Fraction-Fourth International, vociferously claimed to defend the "right to decide" in the referendum while openly opposing Catalan independence. They wrote: "We don't call for a Yes vote because we are neither independentistas nor do we share the republican and constitutional process proposed by Junts pel Sí [bourgeois-nationalist parliamentary coalition] and the CUP" (izquierdadiario.es, 27 September).

The Izquierda Revolucionaria/Esquerra Revolucionària (IR/ER) of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) likewise trumpeted, "The Catalan people have the right to decide!" but were careful to assure chauvinist opponents of independence that "anyone who does not support independence has the clear choice not to vote for it." Then, on the day before millions voted for an independent Catalan republic...these consummate opportunists came out for independence.

The Taaffeites spent years inside the social-democratic PSOE and fully imbibed its national chauvinism. As recently as 2014, the IR/ER explicitly opposed independence in a pamphlet titled ¡Por el derecho a la autodeterminación, por el socialismo! (For the Right of Self-Determination, for Socialism!): "The task of the workers movement, there as here, in Euskal Herria and Catalunya, in the Spanish state as a whole and in Europe, is not to build new states and erect new borders, but to build socialism on a global scale."

The breakup of the Castilian-chauvinist Spanish state, with its monarchy and



September 20: Over a thousand people demonstrate in Perpinyà, France, part of Northern Catalonia, before the October 1 referendum. Banner reads: 'Northern Catalonia is also Catalonia."

opposed on principle to the EU, which is a reactionary consortium of capitalist countries. The EU aims to increase profits by squeezing workers throughout Europe, while its dominant members—Germany and, to a lesser extent, France—use it to further subordinate the weaker European countries. Our opposition to the EU is proletarian internationalist. We fight for workers revolutions throughout the continent, culminating in a voluntary Socialist United States of Europe.

Following the global financial crisis of 2008, the EU dictated vicious austerity to Spain, while having the common euro currency deprived Spain of the option of devaluing its currency to alleviate the crisis. The then-PSOE government in Madrid willingly enforced the EU's austerity measures. For their part, the Catalan nationalists in the Generalitat also administered brutal austerity against workers and the oppressed.

The EU has also pushed union-busting across Europe. In 2014, the EU's Court of Justice decreed that the Spanish port unions are in violation of EU rules on "free enterprise." The Rajoy government issued a decree to force compliance with the EU rules. In response, thousands of port workers throughout Spain, including in Catalonia and the Basque Country, waged a series of strikes earlier this year against these attempts to smash their union.

Reformist Left: Wedded to the Bourgeois Order

Sundry reformists in Spain have for years opposed independence for Catalonia, while pretending to fight for selfdetermination. The Corriente Revolucionaria de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras (CRT), affiliated to the neo-Morenoite

Francoist nostalgists, would represent an enormous step forward for the struggles of all working people in Spain against the capitalist rulers. The struggle for national liberation of Catalonia and the Basque Country is integrally linked to the fight to overthrow capitalist rule throughout Spain and France. What is needed to lead the workers and oppressed in this fight are Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties, national sections of a reforged Fourth International. Down with the Spanish monarchy! For workers republics! ■





Edición en español Número 40, septiembre de 2017 **\$1** (32 páginas)

Spanish edition 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.

Spanish-language Spartacist is sent to all Espartaco subscribers. Make checks payable/mail to:

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



Available in Catalan

September 2017 \$.25 (4 pages) Article also available in

English, French and Spanish. Order from/make checks payable to: Spartacist Publishing Co.

Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

6 OCTOBER 2017 7

WORKERS VANGUARD



OCTOBER 3—Two days ago, the Spanish state unleashed massive repression aimed at preventing an independence referendum in Catalonia. Over two million people defied the savage police mobilization to cast their ballots, and 90 percent voted in favor of an independent republic in Catalonia.

The Castilian rulers of the capitalist Spanish state will brook no opposition to the sacrosanct unity of the Spanish prison house of peoples, which denies the right of self-determination to the Catalan, Basque and Galician nations. The state of siege imposed by Madrid is a powerful confirmation that the national oppression of Catalans-and of the Basques-cannot end short of independence. Autonomy is a fraud—Madrid retains the whip hand. The only principled position for revolutionary Marxists is to demand the immediate independence of these nations and to rally the workers of Spain

and Europe to this struggle.

In the lead-up to the vote, the Castilian chauvinists who rule the country from Madrid declared the referendum illegal, with the full backing of the European Union. Thousands of Policía Nacional (National Police) and paramilitary Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) cops were sent to suppress any move toward self-determination by the oppressed Catalan people. The Catalan government's funds were seized, many of its leaders arrested and offices raided. Millions of ballots, posters and official ballot boxes were confiscated. Tens of thousands of protesters who took to the streets are threatened with sedition charges. Hundreds of websites promoting the referendum were taken down by the Spanish authorities, including those of the Catalan government. Anyone deemed responsible for conducting the referendum is facing jail time and massive fines.

Thousands occupied schools overnight and massed before dawn to ensure the referendum went ahead. As the polls opened, riot cops smashed their way into polling stations, beating voters, dragging them out into the street and seizing ballot

Policía Nacional, Guardia Civil **Out of Catalonia!**

For a Catalan Workers Republic!

Province of Girona, Catalonia: People confront Spanish Guardia Civil cops trying to prevent independence referendum, October 1.

boxes. People outside were hit with rubber bullets, tear gas and police clubs. Nearly 900 people were injured.

Despite the police terror tactics, the Catalan people remain unbowed. As we go to press, a "national stoppage" called by the Catalan government, business associations and unions to protest the repression has brought Catalonia to a halt. It is urgent for the working class in Catalonia and throughout Spain to rally in defense of Catalan national rights. Working people throughout Spain must demand: *Drop*



Barcelona, September 28: Firefighters union joins student demonstrators. On October 1, firefighters defended polling stations.

Guardia Civil and Policía Nacional out of Catalonia!

The brutality unleashed by the Spanish government against the people of Catalonia is reminiscent of the long years of the Franco dictatorship. The Catalans and the republican Basques played a vanguard role in the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s. But the triumph of counterrevolution in 1939 under Generalissimo Francisco Franco resulted in decades of bloody repression of the working class and of the Catalan and Basque nations. Thus, after Franco died in 1975, the struggles of the oppressed nations were mainly expressed along national lines, in contrast to the 1930s, when the working classes of these same nations fought directly for power.

Spain's right-wing governing Partido Popular (Popular Party) is descended from the Franco regime. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy declares that the Catalan independence referendum violated the 1978 Spanish constitution. Maintaining the unity of the Spanish state is central to the chauvinist, anti-democratic constitution of 1978, which established the monarchy as bonapartist overlord. The social-democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and Stalinist Partido Comunista de España (PCE, now buried in Izquierda Unida) criminally supported the establishment of this reactionary constitution while mouthing platitudes about "self-determination." To maintain the "indivisibility" of Spain, bloody policestate repression has long been used against militant fighters for Basque independence, including by PSOE governments.

Tens of thousands have rallied in Euskal Herria (Basque Country) in support of the Catalan referendum, and the Basque independence movement has been given a boost by the developments in Catalonia. The Basque and Catalan nations, each of which straddles the border between France and Spain, are oppressed by both these capitalist states. Solidarity protests have also taken place in the Catalan and Basque regions of France.

continued on page 7