



Reuters



Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico

Post-Hurricane Hell

Colonialist Profiteers Bleed Puerto Rico

It has been more than two months since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, yet there is no end in sight to the devastation suffered by this brutally oppressed colony of U.S. imperialism. Half of the island still has no electricity, while more than half of the population lacks access to clean water. Streets lined with mounds of soaking garbage, mud and dead animals, along with black mold-infested houses, are breeding grounds for diseases like the rodent-borne leptospirosis, which has already claimed the lives of several people. U.S. nurses organized by their unions to volunteer in Puerto Rico describe a desperate situation of hunger, disease and overwhelmed medical personnel with few supplies treating people in tents.

Above left: Downed power lines one month after island was devastated by Hurricane Maria. Above right: Puerto Rico teachers union protests against school closures and anti-union attacks. Imperialists have seized on disaster to push privatization of schools and electrical utility.

Puerto Rico's official Maria-related death toll of 54 hides the fact that nearly 500 more people died in September of this year than in the same month last year. A number of these deaths were of disabled and elderly people in sweltering hospitals or trapped in their homes. The distress in rural areas is particularly acute, with many areas cut off and having received no aid. Tens of thousands have lost their homes and all their possessions, and are left with no job prospects for the foreseeable future. There is

an exodus of hundreds of thousands of people from the island since the hurricane; many of them are moving into the cramped homes of relatives on the mainland. Meanwhile, those staying in hotels and motels in Florida and elsewhere face homelessness as rates increase during the high season. The colonial masters in Washington, led by President Donald Trump, have missed no opportunity to display their contempt for the oppressed Puerto Rican population. Displaying typical racist arrogance,

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), whose real purpose is revealed by the fact that it is part of the Department of Homeland Security, dispatched staff who speak no Spanish to an island where nearly three million people speak only Spanish. Before handing out any aid, FEMA is demanding documentation like utility bills and that applications be followed up via email or text message, knowing full well that people's homes have been destroyed and that they have no electricity, much less internet access. As of early November, FEMA had paid out a total of only \$121,000 in federal flood insurance aid to Puerto Ricans. FEMA's measly handouts consist of boxes with

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Zimbabwe

Mugabe Goes, Generals Stay

The following article was written by our comrades of Spartacist/South Africa.

On 21 November, the 37-year reign of geriatric autocrat Robert G. Mugabe came to an end at the hands of the military generals who had long propped up his repressive bourgeois regime. The next day, Mugabe's former vice president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, returned to Zimbabwe and was later sworn in as interim president. Mnangagwa had fled to South Africa following his axing by Mugabe in early November and a purge of Mnangagwa's supporters from the ruling Zimbabwe African National

Mnangagwa Regime: Enemy of Toiling Masses

Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The move against Mnangagwa was initiated by Mugabe's wife, Grace, who was widely seen as the one really running things, with her 93-year-old husband reduced to her puppet.

The purge of Mnangagwa was the immediate trigger for the military's "non-coup coup" beginning on 14-15 November. While placing Mugabe and his family under house arrest, detaining cabinet ministers, cordoning off parlia-

ment and seizing control of the national broadcaster, the generals were at pains to give the process a veneer of "democratic legitimacy" and ensure a "smooth transition." This accommodated the concerns of the imperialists in Britain, the country's former colonial masters, and the U.S., as well as their junior partners in Pretoria, who were happy to see Mugabe gone but found it awkward to endorse the military coup. Also approving Mugabe's ouster were the Stalinist rulers of the

Chinese deformed workers state, now the leading investor in Zimbabwe.

Mugabe's downfall met with jubilation from practically *all* Zimbabweans—from the hideously impoverished black masses who have borne the brunt of state repression and economic collapse to the white racist "Rhodies" who passionately loathe Mugabe. Mugabe was not only the first black leader of the former Rhodesia following the demise of white-supremacist minority rule but also the man who presided over the seizures of white-owned farms in the early 2000s. On 18 November, hundreds of thousands marched in Harare, the capital, demanding Mugabe's resignation. When he resigned a few days later, mass celebrations broke out, not only in Zimbabwe but also in South African

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25 October 2017

On Taiwan

Hi,
I've been a reader of a number of articles from the Spartacist League/ICL. While I've enjoyed their insights, I've noticed that there've been a few articles on the historical situation in Taiwan which make questionable claims.

For instance, there is the claim that "Taiwan has been a part of China since Ancient times," when it only became a part of China during the Qing Dynasty. In fact, Taiwan has had a history of multiple colonial regimes. The Qing Dynasty even considered Taiwan to be "a ball of mud beyond the pale" for much of its time in control of the island.

Taiwan also has a rather interesting his-

tory with communism (albeit quite brief due to its suppression during the Japanese and KMT [Guomindang] eras). The Taiwan Communist Party was established 1928 during the Japanese Colonial period. I think this would be an interesting history worth delving into.

Best regards,
A reader

WV replies:

In a 2005 joint statement of the Spartacist Group Japan and the Spartacist League/U.S., we denounced the imperi-

alists' ominous move of declaring Taiwan a "mutual security concern" and wrote: "Taiwan has been since ancient times a part of China, and we Trotskyists will stand with China in the event of any military conflict with imperialism over Taiwan" ("Down With U.S./Japan Counterrevolutionary Alliance! Defend the Chinese and North Korean Deformed Workers States!" WV No. 844, 18 March 2005). Since then, this formulation has been repeated several times in WV.

As our reader correctly points out, Taiwan was seized by Chinese invaders of the Qing dynasty in 1683—hardly ancient times. At that time, the number of Chinese in Taiwan was roughly equal to the number of indigenous Austronesian people. Over the years, Chinese immigration continued and by 1895, when Japan took Taiwan after a war against China, the island had long been overwhelmingly ethnically and linguistically Chinese. On their way to becoming a major imperialist power, the Japanese capitalist rulers murdered well over 30,000 Chinese on Taiwan and carried out genocidal drives against the Austronesians. Today, the deeply oppressed indigenous peoples make up just

2 percent of Taiwan's population.

In the years following Japan's 1945 defeat in the Second World War, Taiwan was ruled by the blood-drenched Chinese Guomindang regime. Led by U.S. puppet Chiang Kai-shek, the Guomindang treated Taiwan like a conquered province. In order to crush an island-wide revolt in February 1947—the "2-28 Incident"—Chiang dispatched troops from the mainland, who slaughtered as many as 28,000 people. With the advances of the Communist Party-led People's Liberation Army in the Chinese civil war, Chiang's forces fled en masse to Taiwan and imposed martial law for the next four decades. Ever since the 1949 Chinese Revolution, capitalist Taiwan has been an outpost for imperialist military threats and counterrevolutionary schemes against the People's Republic of China.

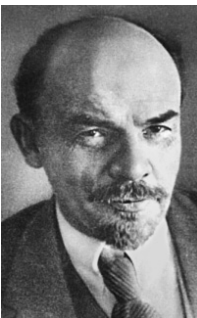
As a key part of our unconditional military defense of the Chinese deformed workers state, we call for the revolutionary reunification of China, creating a China-wide collectivized economy under a government based on workers democracy and proletarian internationalism. This requires proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats on the mainland and socialist revolution in Taiwan to shatter the capitalist state and expropriate the bourgeoisie. ■



TROTSKY

Historical Materialism and the Protestant Reformation

October 31 marked the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses criticizing the Roman Catholic church to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany. Friedrich Engels explained that behind the cloak of religious ideology lay a clash of class interests between the rising bourgeoisie and the decaying feudal order that was more starkly shown in the 17th-century English Revolution led by Oliver Cromwell.



LENIN

When Europe emerged from the Middle Ages, the rising middle class of the towns constituted its revolutionary element. It had conquered a recognised position within medieval feudal organisation, but this position, also, had become too narrow for its expansive power. The development of the middle class, the *bourgeoisie*, became incompatible with the maintenance of the feudal system; the feudal system, therefore, had to fall.

But the great international centre of feudalism was the Roman Catholic Church. It united the whole of feudalised Western Europe, in spite of all internal wars, into one grand political system, opposed as much to the schismatic Greeks as to the Mohammedan countries. It surrounded feudal institutions with the halo of divine consecration. It had organised its own hierarchy on the feudal model, and, lastly, it was itself by far the most powerful feudal lord, holding, as it did, full one-third of the soil of the Catholic world. Before profane feudalism could be successfully attacked in each country and in detail, this, its sacred central organisation, had to be destroyed....

The war-cry raised against the Church by Luther was responded to by two insurrections of a political nature: first, that of the lower nobility under Franz von Sickingen (1523), then the great Peasants' War, 1525. Both were defeated, chiefly in consequence of the indecision of the parties most interested, the burghers of the towns—an indecision into the causes of which we cannot here enter. From that moment the struggle degenerated into a fight between the local princes and the central power, and ended by blotting out Germany for two hundred years, from the politically active nations of Europe. The Lutheran Reformation produced a new creed indeed, a religion adapted to absolute monarchy. No sooner were the peasants of North-East Germany converted to Lutheranism than they were from freemen reduced to serfs.

But where Luther failed, Calvin won the day. Calvin's creed was one fit for the boldest of the bourgeoisie of his time. His predestination doctrine was the religious expression of the fact that in the commercial world of competition success or failure does not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrollable by him. It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of the mercy of unknown superior economic powers; and this was especially true at a period of economic revolution, when all old commercial routes and centres were replaced by new ones, when India and America were opened to the world, and when even the most sacred economic articles of faith—the value of gold and silver—began to totter and to break down. Calvin's church constitution was thoroughly democratic and republican; and where the kingdom of God was republicanised, could the kingdoms of this world remain subject to monarchs, bishops and lords? While German Lutheranism became a willing tool in the hands of princes, Calvinism founded a republic in Holland, and active republican parties in England, and, above all, Scotland.

In Calvinism, the second great bourgeois upheaval found its doctrine ready cut and dried. This upheaval took place in England. The middle class of the towns brought it on, and the yeomanry of the country districts fought it out. Curiously enough, in all the three great bourgeois risings, the peasantry furnishes the army that has to do the fighting; and the peasantry is just the class that, the victory once gained, is most surely ruined by the economic consequences of that victory.

—Friedrich Engels, Introduction to the 1892 English edition of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880)

Praise for Kipnis Book Review

6 November 2017

Dear Spartacists:

Kudos for your passionate review of Laura Kipnis's *Unwanted Advances: Sexual Paranoia Comes to Campus* (*Workers Vanguard*, 3 November). Once again, you defend the right of people to engage in consensual sex regardless of age and oppose laws against "crimes without victims" such as prostitution, gambling, drug use, and pornography. Your article echoes a point I too have been making by pointing to the irony of how people of my generation struggled in college against *in loco parentis*, whereas "students today invite college administration snoops into their bedrooms." How sad that so-called progressive students and even leftists today would

be looking to the state as their protector instead of asserting their own agency.

It is ironic too that it took a right-wing Trump administration and its Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to take the sensible step of reversing Obama's revision of Title IX guidelines that stripped the accused of any rights. It is sad to see how some leftist groups actually oppose this sensible step. One is tempted to conclude that the antisex feminists Andrea Dworkin and Susan Brownmiller have succeeded in the end. Victimology reigns today not only among many feminists, but also among so-called "LGBTers." What a shame!

Yours,
David Thorstad

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WORKERS VANGUARD



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No. 1123

1 December 2017

Celebrating the 1917 Russian Revolution

For New October Revolutions!



VAAP

Left: Russian workers demonstrate for eight-hour workday, 1917. Right: Troops with flag reading: “Down With the Monarchy—Long Live the Democratic Republic” during first days of February Revolution.



Viktor Bulla

We print below the first part of a presentation, edited for publication, given by Spartacist League speaker Diana Coleman at a November 4 forum in Chicago.

PART ONE

It is the 100th anniversary of the Russian October Revolution, the defining event of modern history and the greatest victory ever for working people. The proletariat, led by a Leninist vanguard party, smashed the bourgeois state and set up a workers state. I pondered what I could tell you in one hour—when after all, Leon Trotsky needed about 1,200 pages in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1932). But if this talk encourages you to read or reread Trotsky’s *History*, then I will have accomplished something.

As the founder of American Trotskyism, James P. Cannon, put it:

“The Russian Bolsheviks on November 7, 1917, once and for all, took the question of the workers’ revolution out of the realm of abstraction and gave it flesh and blood reality....

“The Russian revolution showed...how the workers’ revolution is to be made.... It showed in life what kind of a party the workers must have.”

—“Speech on the Russian Question” (1939), printed in *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (1943)

The need for a revolutionary party will be one of the themes of this talk. During the course of the Russian Revolution, the multinational proletariat, drawing behind it the peasantry and the oppressed nationalities, forged its own new organs of class power, the soviets, or workers councils. With the smashing of the old capitalist state, these soviets, under Bolshevik leadership, formed the basis of the new workers state. The vanguard of the workers understood that they were not just taking power in Russia; they were opening the first chapter of international proletarian revolution. The Russian Revolution inspired workers uprisings throughout Europe and rebellions in the colonial countries.

The Soviet government expropriated the capitalists and landlords and repudiated totally the tsar’s massive debt to foreign bankers. It proclaimed the right of working people to jobs, health care, housing and education, as the first steps to building a socialist society. Sounds good, doesn’t it?! The new workers state gave land to the peasants and self-determination—the right to their own independent state—to the many oppressed nations that had been ruled over by the hated tsar. I will speak some about the struggles V. I. Lenin waged to ensure the right of these nations to self-determination. The early Soviet government gave women in Russia an unprecedented level of equality and freedom.

Like many people, when I first came around the Spartacist League, I assumed that in a revolutionary situation all the left would get together and fight for socialist revolution. Comrades encouraged me to read about the Russian Revolution, which proves exactly the opposite. Believe me, if a group like the International Socialist Organization or Workers World has a reformist approach to pressuring the capitalist state now, then when the time comes, like the Mensheviks, they will wind up defending capitalism tooth and nail.

The bourgeoisie has always wanted

to bury the October Revolution under a mountain of lies. There has been a bunch of articles in the press on the 100th anniversary. A few were interesting. Most were like, “Yikes, it was just a historical accident, let’s hope it never happens again.” But it happened because the socially organized productive forces of the planet had developed to the point where bourgeois private property forms and the bourgeois nation-states had become shackles on social progress. World War I marked the descent of the capitalist system into mass slaughter and barbaric destruction.



Duke University

Early Soviet poster hailing workers’ victory: “The Path to October, to the World Revolution.”

It signaled that to free the planet’s productive forces from capitalist imperialism, proletarian revolution was necessary.

Capitalist imperialism is still caught in its fatal contradictions; it still creates a proletariat with the social power to overthrow the bourgeoisie, *and* it still creates the barbarism that we see around us. Under both capitalist parties, Democrats and Republicans, U.S. imperialism has destroyed countries around the world. Much of the Near East is a bombed-out shell. Now Trump

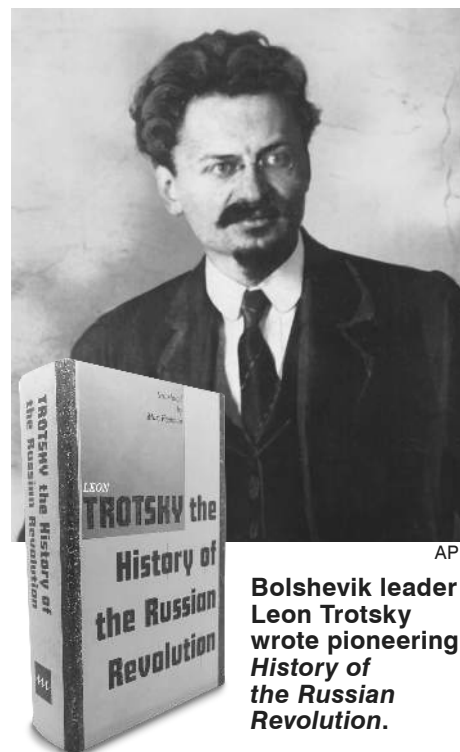
is threatening nuclear war against North Korea for their terrible crime of developing weapons to defend themselves. We call for the military defense of the North Korean and Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers states. It’s a good thing that North Korea is developing a credible nuclear deterrent. Without that, the U.S. would already have bombed them into oblivion.

Here at home, racist cop terror, union-busting, destruction of working people’s living standards, domestic surveillance and mass deportations continue apace under Trump as they did under Obama. Trump is not a fascist, but he has encouraged the fascist scum to come out of the woodwork. We all wish for there to be some hard class struggle in this country, and it will come—it is inevitable under capitalism. Our job is to make sure that there will be a party like Lenin’s in the right place at the right time. So this talk is not just about what happened in 1917 in Russia; it is also about the fight of the International Communist League to organize for new Octobers.

Russia’s Uneven and Combined Development

At this point I am going to discuss some of the background to the Russian Revolution and speak to why the first and, so far, only proletarian socialist revolution occurred in Russia. Russia was an acute example of what Trotsky called uneven and combined development. The country was ruled by a reactionary tsarist aristocracy presiding over a prison house of many oppressed nations. Seventy million Great Russians constituted the main mass of the country, but there were 90 million “outlanders.” So a majority of the country was oppressed nationalities. Barely 50 years out of serfdom, peasants made up some 85 percent of the population and lived in the most backward conditions imaginable. Ignorance and illiteracy were the norm. The ancient institutions of the traditional household and the communal village enforced a rigid patriarchal hierarchy and the degradation of women. Peasant women were beasts of burden; we have a picture in an article on “The

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AP

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky wrote pioneering *History of the Russian Revolution*.

(continued from page 3)

Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women” of peasant women harnessed up like oxen to pull a river barge (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 59, Spring 2006).

But underdeveloped countries do not just mechanically go through every stage that the more developed countries went through: they jump over certain aspects while retaining many very backward elements. By 1914, massive investment from Europe had created a new urban proletariat (one-third women!) in large-scale, state-of-the-art industrial concentrations. The percentage of Russian workers employed in factories of more than 1,000 employees was *higher* than in Britain, Germany or the U.S. The late-emerging Russian bourgeoisie, subordinated to foreign capitalists and tied to the Russian aristocracy, knew that any mass upsurge against tsarism was bound to sweep them away, too.

It was in response to this uneven and combined development that Trotsky formulated his theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky projected that despite the economic backwardness of the country, the Russian proletariat could come to power before an extended period of capitalist development. Indeed, the workers would have to come to power if Russia were to be liberated from its feudal past because the weak and cowardly capitalists sure weren't going to do it.

An essential aspect of Trotsky's permanent revolution was, as he wrote in the August 1939 article "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution" (also known as "Three Concepts"): "Only the victory of the proletariat in the West will shield Russia from bourgeois restoration and secure for her the possibility of bringing the socialist construction to its conclusion." And that, of course, was and is the rub. With the delay of world revolution, particularly in the advanced industrial countries, the Stalinist bureaucracy usurped political power in the Soviet Union in 1923-24, and capitalism was eventually restored in 1991-92. I will make the point that the ICL defended the Soviet Union against capitalist counterrevolution to the bitter end, unlike most left groups.

Key to the Bolsheviks' success in 1917 was the coming together of Trotsky's program of permanent revolution with Lenin's struggle to build a programmatically based vanguard party steered against all manner of reconciliation with the capitalist order. The Bolshevik Party was cohered in the long years of struggle against the Mensheviks, who looked to the liberal bourgeoisie to overthrow tsarism.

World War I had a profound impact on Lenin's thinking. In 1916, he wrote the book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which explained that imperialism is not a policy, but is the highest stage of capitalism. Imperialist wars to divide and redivide the world are inevi-



Women treated like beasts of burden in prerevolutionary Russia.

table under monopoly capitalism. World War I triggered the collapse of the Second “Socialist” International, which the Bolsheviks had considered themselves part of, when the vast majority of its affiliated parties lined up behind their own bourgeoisies’ war efforts. Lenin at first didn’t believe it when he heard that the German Social Democratic Party’s parliamentary group had unanimously voted to support the war. I guess he thought it was what today might be called “fake news.” But it was true.

Lenin concluded that the war had demonstrated that capitalism was in its final stage of decay. He maintained that the path to proletarian revolution was the transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war and that socialists in the imperialist centers must stand for the defeat, above all, of their own bourgeois state in the war. Lenin also concluded that a new, revolutionary international, the Third International, must be built on the hard programmatic Bolshevik model.

National Liberation Struggles and Socialist Revolution

If you look at Lenin's writings during the years leading up to 1917, a lot of them deal with the need for a hard position against the imperialist war and against not only the overtly pro-war fake socialists but also against the centrists like Karl Kautsky who covered for them. A number of the articles deal with the national question.

Now, the ICL has just had an intense internal struggle against a longstanding perversion of Leninism on the national question, particularly in relation to oppressed nations like Quebec and Catalonia within multinational states. As the fight unfolded internationally, it exposed a number of examples of chauvinist positions in opposition to just national struggles of oppressed nations. To get a sense of how these represented a capitulation to the pressures of Anglophone imperialism, read “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 65, Summer 2017).

The point is that our old position went against Lenin's very extensive writings on the national question. In his 1914 article, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Lenin outlined a very definite programmatic stance: "Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers."

This stance applied not only to colonies but also to countries forcibly retained within multinational states. Lenin wrote:

Further:

“On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organizational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and

their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in face of all manner of intrigues, treachery and trickery on the part of the bourgeoisie.”

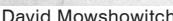
—“The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (1916)

During the war years, Lenin waged a struggle against the advocates of what he called imperialist economism. The original Economists of whom he speaks in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) thought that the economic struggle was everything and that there was no need to bother with political problems and struggle. The imperialist Economists thought that since imperialism had triumphed, there was no need to bother with the problems of political democracy and self-determination. These included various Polish Social Democrats whom Lenin denounced for thinking that “self-determination is impossible under capitalism and superfluous under socialism” (“A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism” [1916]).

Lenin adamantly disagreed with both these propositions. He wrote: “Socialist parties which did not show by all their activity, *both now, during the revolution, and after its victory*, that they would liberate the enslaved nations and build up relations with them on the basis of a free union...these parties would be betraying socialism” (“The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,” emphasis added).

This position was key to making the Russian Revolution. Our old articles contained phrases like “getting the national question off the agenda,” which we often used as an excuse for not supporting struggles for national liberation. The Bolsheviks saw that national liberation struggles could be catalysts for socialist revolution and sought to unleash their revolutionary potential. National liberation can be a motor force for proletarian rule if the proletariat acquires communist consciousness and is led by a communist party.

Fighting national oppression is one of the things the Bolsheviks were known for, as well as their workers mobilizations against anti-Jewish pogroms by the fascistic Black Hundreds. We could certainly use some of these workers mobilizations against today's fascists. As Lenin said in *What Is To Be Done?*, the party must be “the *tri-*



Victims of Kishinev Massacre, an anti-Jewish pogrom in 1903. Bolsheviks fought to mobilize working class to defend minorities, oppressed nationalities under brutal tsarist rule.

bune of the people...able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression."

The February Revolution

So by now you're all saying, "Enough already, let's get on with the revolution!" The February Revolution of 1917 that overthrew the tsarist monarchy was carried out overwhelmingly by the working class, with the peasants, organized in the army, also playing a key role. The spark was a demonstration by women workers demanding bread on February 23 (which is March 8 in the new calendar, International Women's Day). It shows it's a good thing for women to get out of the villages and have some social power as workers! Then on February 25 there was a general strike in Petrograd, followed by a mutiny in some army regiments.

What broke the back of the tsarist monarchy was that the army no longer wanted to fight, and whole units were abandoning the front or refusing to carry out orders. A powerful indication was when the Cossack regiments, who were considered very loyal to the tsar, refused to suppress a workers demonstration in Petrograd. In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky relates:

"The officers first charged through the crowd. Behind them, filling the whole width of the [Sampsonievsky] Prospect, galloped the Cossacks. Decisive moment! But the horsemen, cautiously, in a long ribbon, rode through the corridor just made by the officers. 'Some of them smiled,'...and one of them gave the workers a good wink!"

If the Cossacks were winking at the workers, the tsar was in trouble.

You have to realize how bloody and unpopular the war was. *The ABC of Communism* (1920) by Bolshevik leaders Nikolai Bukharin and Evgeny Preobrazhensky estimated that by 1918 the number of Russian soldiers killed in the war was eight million. And they remarked acidly, “If we assume the average weight of a soldier to be 150 lb., this means that between 1 August 1914, and 1 January 1918, the capitalists had brought to market twelve hundred million pounds of putrid human flesh.” Trotsky encapsulated the situation as follows: “‘Everything for the war!’ said the ministers, deputies, generals, journalists. ‘Yes,’ the soldier began to think in the trenches, ‘they are all ready to fight to the last drop...of my blood.’”

Trotsky's *History* shows the quick tempo of events. February 23 International Women's Day demo; February 25 general strike; police and state officials were sent packing and on February 27 the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was formed. The soviets, which had previously arisen in the 1905 Revolution, were revived in the February Revolution, but they now included soldiers, who were mainly peasants and who would otherwise have been difficult to organize. By February 28 the tsar's ministers were arrested, and by March 2 the tsar had abdicated.

The paradox of the February Revolution was that while the autocracy and the tsar had been overthrown by the workers, the official government that emerged was bourgeois. Even as street fighting was raging in Petrograd on the night of February 27, a self-appointed Provisional Committee composed of bourgeois-monarchist

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The Fight for Leninism on the National Question

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Inset: Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920.

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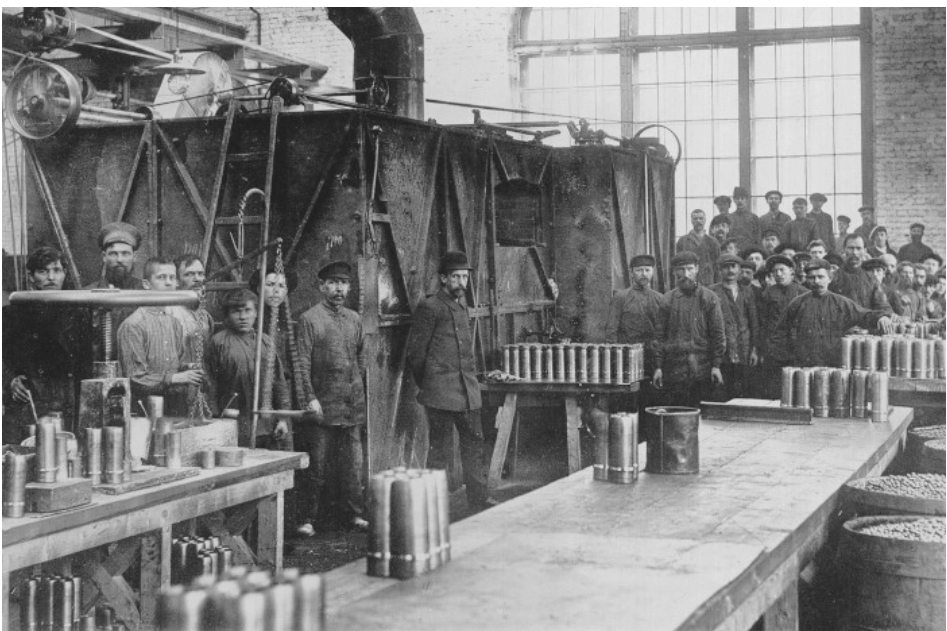
politicians met in the Tauride Palace, behind the back of the popular revolution. They declared a Provisional Government aimed at erecting a constitutional monarchy.

Meanwhile, in another wing of the Tauride Palace, a “Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies” was being formed. The leadership of the Soviet was dominated by the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs). While the SRs were largely based on the peasantry, the Mensheviks represented urban petty-bourgeois layers and the more conservative and privileged workers. The program of the Mensheviks and SRs was that the bourgeoisie should lead and rule, and they desperately appealed to the bourgeois Provisional Government to take control.

Trotsky often quotes the left Menshevik Nikolai Sukhanov, who was a leader of the Soviet in its early days and himself wrote a history of the Russian Revolution. Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* quotes Sukhanov as saying: “The Executive Committee [of the Soviet] was in a perfect position either to give the power to the bourgeois government, or not give it.” Further: “The power destined to replace tsarism must be only a bourgeois power.... Otherwise the uprising will not succeed and the revolution will collapse.”

That’s blunt! When I first read about this, I had trouble believing that any kind of so-called socialist, with the workers in ascendancy and soviets being set up, deliberately runs around the city looking for capitalist politicians to hand over power to. But let me tell you something: This has happened many times. From the abortive Chinese Revolution of the late 1920s to Spain in the 1930s to Greece in the late 1940s after World War II, promising revolutionary situations have been betrayed by latter-day Mensheviks and deliberately handed over to the bourgeois executioners time and time again. These reformists seriously do not believe that the working class can take and hold power.

The February Revolution thus resulted in a situation of dual power. That is, alongside the Provisional Government of the bourgeoisie, there stood the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies. There was continual conflict between the Provisional Government and the soviets. Trotsky notes that one bourgeois politician complained: “The government, alas, has no real power; the troops, the rail-



TsGAKFFD
Workers in Putilov armaments factory, 1915. Modern techniques of capitalist production were imported to backward tsarist Russia, leading to development of powerful urban proletariat.

roads, the post and telegraph are in the hands of the Soviet. The simple fact is that the Provisional Government exists only so long as the Soviet permits it.” Dual power is unstable and can only be resolved either by revolution or counterrevolution.

Rearming the Bolshevik Party

Trotsky comments that the February Revolution was led by “conscious and tempered workers educated for the most part by the party of Lenin.” The Bolsheviks were in the soviets, of course, but as a minority. The Bolsheviks were slow off the mark, with a leadership underground and dispersed—Lenin was in exile—and, in general, lagging behind the masses. The soviets in February were dominated by the SRs and Mensheviks, who maintained that the February Revolution had achieved the main task of overthrowing the monarchy, and now the task was to defend “democratic” Russia against German imperialism. In other words, upholding the war aims of the Russian bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks and SRs took positions similar to the pro-war German Social Democrats. During Lenin’s exile and particularly after the return of Joseph Stalin and Lev Kamenev, the Bolshevik leaders in Russia began to bend in the direction of the Mensheviks’ defensism, dropping Lenin’s revolutionary defeatism and even mooting the possibility of the Bolsheviks

and the Mensheviks merging! Lenin in exile was trying desperately to get back to Russia and wrote in a furious March letter: “I would choose an immediate split with no matter whom in our party, rather than surrender to social-patriotism.”

When he finally arrived in Petrograd, Lenin climbed atop an armored car to address the cheering workers who had brought down the tsar. Lenin hailed them and, to the shock of the official pro-war Soviet welcoming committee, gave an internationalist salute to the German revolutionary Marxist leader Karl Liebknecht, who was in prison for opposing German militarism. “The hour is not far when, at the summons of our comrade Karl Liebknecht, the people will turn their weapons against their capitalist exploiters.... Long live the worldwide socialist revolution!” (Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*).

Lenin went straight on to a Bolshevik meeting, where he gave a two-hour speech. The speech is not preserved, but the ever-present Sukhanov, who was allowed into this Bolshevik meeting by an overindulgent Kamenev, describes Lenin as saying: “We don’t need any parliamentary republic. We don’t need any bourgeois democracy. We don’t need any government except the soviet of workers’, soldiers’, and farmhands’ deputies!” Sukhanov bleats: “I will never forget that thunderlike speech, startling and amaz-

ing not only to me, a heretic accidentally dropped in, but also to the faithful.”

This was the opening shot of Lenin’s fight to rearm the party. Lenin’s “April Theses,” which he fought for at the April party conference, included recognition that the seizure of power by the proletariat in Russia would place on the order of the day not only the democratic tasks but also socialist tasks. So now Lenin is sounding more like Trotsky on permanent revolution. As Trotsky noted in *Lessons of October* (1924): “The fundamental controversial question, around which everything else centered, was this: whether or not we should struggle for power; whether or not we should assume power.”

Lenin could win over the party because his program corresponded to the needs of the proletariat and peasantry. And because there was a proletarian base to the party that had been waiting—as Trotsky says in his *History of the Russian Revolution*, “gritting their teeth”—for Lenin or someone to put forward a revolutionary strategy for the seizure of power by the Soviets. Yet, at the same time, there was a conservative wing of the party. As Trotsky points out in *Lessons of October*, “A revolutionary party is subject to the pressure of other political forces.” The party’s power of resistance is weakened when it has to make political turns and it “becomes, or runs the risk of becoming, the indirect tool of other classes.” The most abrupt turn is when the question of armed insurrection against the bourgeoisie is on the agenda. We’ll see a second part of this fight right before the insurrection. After Lenin’s successful struggle to rearm the party, the Bolshevik Party began to raise its revolutionary program, and its influence spread like wildfire.

Not surprisingly, the fall of the tsarist monarchy in February had stimulated national movements among the oppressed nations of Russia. Trotsky wrote: “In this matter, however, we observe the same thing as in all other departments of the February regime: the official democracy, held in leash by its political dependence upon an imperialist bourgeoisie, was totally incapable of breaking the old fetters.” They sure weren’t going to relinquish, as Trotsky put it, “Ukrainian grain, Donetsk coal, and the ores of Krivorog.” So, after February as before, Lenin kept hammering away on the right of self-determination for oppressed nations.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

NYC Subway...

(continued from page 8)

titles—have everything to gain by fighting for a safe, reliable subway system. Such a struggle would resonate widely among working people and the ghetto and barrio poor, especially since Local 100’s black, Latino, white and immigrant membership has roots in every part of working-class New York City. Against efforts by Democrats and the MTA bosses to pit riders against the union, the TWU could win massive public support by resurrecting its historic demand for free mass transit.

Instead, the misleaders of the unions support the profit system and preach reliance on one or another Democratic Party false “friend of labor.” In his final weeks as Local 100 president, before being elevated to be TWU International president, John Samuelsen assisted Cuomo by mobilizing union resources to shame the mayor for supposedly not paying the city’s “fair share” for the subways. Over the years, the Democratic governor has ripped off transit for his pet projects and amassed a lengthy anti-union record, including (with Samuelsen’s complicity) the knifing of a looming strike by nearly 6,000 workers on the MTA’s Long Island Rail Road in 2014.

In recognition of his services to the governor, Samuelsen was appointed by Cuomo to the MTA Board last year as a nonvoting member. The job of union officials is to defend the membership against the bosses’ attacks, not help the bosses run the company. Union officials off the MTA board!



TWU Local 100
Transport Workers Union ad counters bosses’ anti-union campaign blaming workers for crumbling infrastructure, train delays.

Tellingly, Samuelsen some time ago renounced the December 2005 transit strike led by his militant-talking but no less class-collaborationist predecessor Roger Toussaint. In so doing, Samuelsen reinforced all the wrong lessons drawn by transit workers furious at the strike’s sellout. Truth is, the battle could have been won. It was hugely popular among wide swaths of workers and the poor and showed the way forward for labor by openly defying the anti-strike Taylor Law. After 60 hours—with Toussaint’s favorite Democratic politicians making themselves scarce, city union chiefs refusing to support the strike and the TWU International opposing it—the Local 100 tops called off the strike despite not having a contract in hand or amnesty from reprisals.

Under the direction of Democratic attorney general Eliot Spitzer and Republican governor George Pataki, the capitalist courts and MTA went after Local 100 with a vengeance. The union and individual workers were hit with steep fines. Automatic dues checkoff was later revoked, showing the danger of making the boss the union’s banker. Dues should be collected by union reps. The MTA agreed to restore the dues checkoff in 2008 after Local 100 tops criminally signed a no-strike pledge.

In spring 2006, Toussaint forced through a rotten contract by insisting on a revote. The union’s retreat emboldened management to launch new attacks. Many of the workers who had exhibited determination on the picket lines became disillusioned with the union. As a result, the cohesiveness of Local 100 was torn apart

and its financial resources diminished. Collective consciousness of the union as an organization for defending the membership’s livelihoods and lives against the bosses has been thrown far back.

There must be forged a new leadership committed to mobilizing labor’s power independently of the state agencies and political representatives of the class enemy—especially the Democrats—and not just in the TWU. Such a class-struggle leadership of the unions would undertake the vitally necessary battles against America’s bourgeois masters. It would enforce the right of every worker to shut down any unsafe work site on the spot and would establish union safety committees, made up of elected reps and completely independent of management, to fight against hazardous conditions on the job. It would insist upon billions for mass transit as part of a massive program of public works. It would engage in struggle to organize the unorganized and for jobs for all through a shorter work-week at full union wages.

These needs of the working class run right up against the inability of the capitalist system to satisfy them. Workers need their own party, one that fights for the interests of workers and the oppressed, while directing their struggles toward ending the rule of the capitalist class and establishing a workers government. The only way out of capitalist decay is for the proletariat to seize the productive wealth in society from the greedy and rapacious capitalist rulers and begin building a collective, planned economy based on social need, not profit. ■

(continued from page 1)

U.S. Imperialists Strangle Puerto Rico

The capitalist ruling class that represses and exploits working people in Puerto Rico does the same to workers and the oppressed on the mainland. And the drive to smash unions and slash workers' pay and benefits is being carried out in both places. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans are an important component of the working class and union movement in the U.S. itself. It is in the interest of workers in the U.S. to side with their Puerto Rican class brothers and sisters against the common class enemy and to demand: *Cancel Puerto Rico's debt!*

Last year, amid the debt crisis that began in 2010, Obama imposed a junta named PROMESA to ensure that Washington could directly oversee the island's finances and impose austerity. Up until then, local control over finances was exerted by the imperialists' Puerto Rican toadies in the bourgeois Partido Nuevo Progresista and Partido Popular Democrático. The island's health care and public education systems had already been heading for collapse before the hurricane due to the economic crisis.

**October 3 protest
outside Trump
Tower in New York
against colonial
oppression of
Puerto Rico and for
hurricane relief.**

In recent years, clinics had closed and hospitals had filed for bankruptcy, while hours and pay for medical staff were cut. More than 3,000 doctors left the island after 2010. Over 200 schools were closed as part of the austerity drive, while another 300 schools had been slated for closure when the storm hit. A measure of the economic devastation of the island is that 10 percent of Puerto Rico's population had moved to the mainland between 2005 and 2015.

Union Busting and Privatizations

Andrew Biggs, a Republican board member of PROMESA, gave voice to the chauvinism of the U.S. ruling class toward Puerto Ricans, complaining of the “inherited political culture” from Puerto Rico’s time as a Spanish colony—a thinly veiled way of labeling the U.S.’s Spanish-speaking colonial subjects lazy and ungrateful. Biggs also took aim at the supposed “structural barriers” preventing Puerto Rico’s economic recovery: minimum wage laws, paid sick days for employees, paternity leave and overtime pay. In other words, he wants to get rid of any rights, protections and benefits for workers and the poor that might diminish the profits of the imperialist rulers.

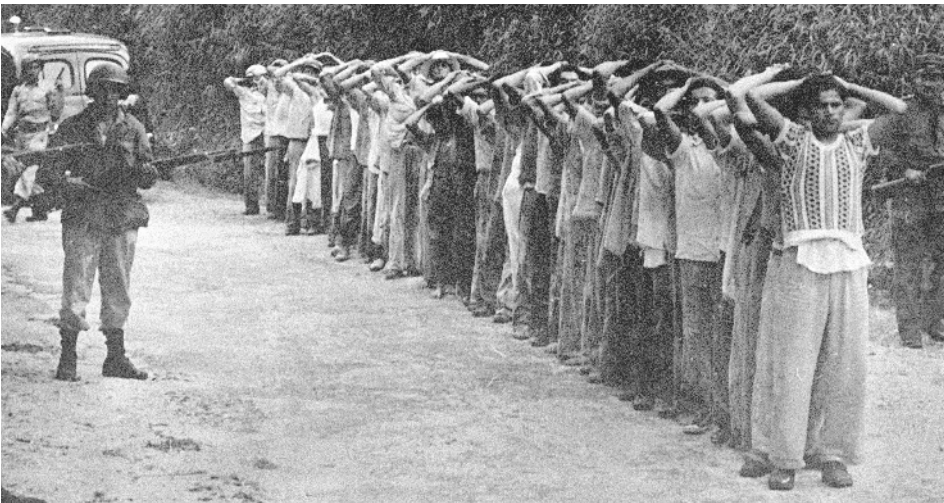
Indeed, in recent years, the imperialists and their domestic lackeys in the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie have waged massive union-busting campaigns against the working class. They have especially targeted the unionized electrical workers of the state-owned Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) and the teachers union, the Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (FMPR). These workers have been in the front line of struggles against austerity and are key to restoring services on the island by repairing the electrical grid and reopening the schools.

The privatization of PREPA has been the long-sought-after prize of the U.S. and local bourgeoisie, who also seek to smash the electrical workers union, Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (UTIER). To this end, the Puerto Rican government signed a \$300 million contract with the small Montana company Whitefish Energy to repair part of the power grid after the hurricane. Two major transmission lines that Whitefish repaired failed soon after (leaving 80 percent of the population in the dark). Following a political scandal (which included the company's alleged ties to the Trump administration), Whitefish's contract was canceled.



Whitefish had brought in private contractors from the U.S. to do repair work that should have been done by UTIER members, many of whom are unemployed. The hiring of any additional workers should be controlled by the UTIER. *No to privatization! Defend the UTIER!*

The imperialists also see the hurricane as an opportunity to privatize Puerto Rico's public school system and smash the FMPR teachers union. Their model is the evisceration of public education in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. Some 7,000 teachers, mostly black women, were laid off, and the city was left with a school system composed almost entirely of charter schools. Charters are an attack on public, secular education and a weapon to destroy teachers unions. Due to Hurricane Maria, over 45 percent of the schools in Puerto Rico today are closed. Both the



Puerto Rico National Guard rounds up independence fighters following national uprising, November 1950.

U.S. secretary of education Betsy DeVos and her counterpart in Puerto Rico, Julia Keleher, want to keep school doors shut in order to accelerate privatization.

Twenty-one FMPR members were arrested on November 7 for holding a protest in Keleher's office to defend access to public education and their union. Teachers on the island have helped clean up the schools and have fought for them to be reopened. Meanwhile, teachers who fled Puerto Rico after the storm have only until January 8 to reclaim their jobs. But the Department of Education has stated that up to a fifth of schools will never reopen. *Down with privatization of schools! Defend the teachers of Puerto Rico!*

For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico!

Puerto Ricans' sentiments about the island's status are deeply contradictory. There is keenly felt resentment over the U.S. overlords' racism and repression and the poverty to which they have reduced the island. At the same time, many worry about losing the ability to live and work on the mainland and fear that Puerto Rico would suffer greater immiseration if the island became independent. Some see statehood as a way to end the island's second-class status. Puerto Rican history is marked by a tradition of militant independence struggles. Independence fighters are important symbols of national dignity, such as Oscar López Rivera, who was imprisoned by the U.S. for nearly 36 years before he was released in May.

The U.S. colonialists and their local com-

pradors have long sought to suppress independence sentiments. Between 1948 and 1957, Puerto Rican governor Luis Muñoz Marín's *Ley de la Mordaza* (gag law) even prohibited flying the Puerto Rican flag. People who displayed the flag in their own homes were subject to lengthy prison terms. *Independentistas* have been bloodily suppressed, from the police killing of four Partido Nacionalista militants at the Río Piedras campus in 1935 to the repression of López Rivera's Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional in the 1970s and '80s and the killing of Ejercito Popular Boricua leader Filiberto Ojeda Ríos by FBI agents in 2005.

As intransigent opponents of national oppression and U.S. imperialism, we favor independence for Puerto Rico. However, in upholding the right of self-determination, should Puerto Ricans decide they want statehood, we would support the will of the population, just as we would oppose any attempts by the U.S. rulers to forcibly impose independence. Thus, we stress the *right* of independence for Puerto Rico. The fight for independence would run up against local agents of the imperialists, like the current governor, Ricardo Rosselló. With the working class at its head, the fight for independence could become a lever for overthrowing capitalist rule on the island. An independent Puerto Rico would inspire the workers and the oppressed in the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as the millions of Puerto Ricans and other working people in the United States. On the other hand, a successful workers revolution in the U.S. would offer immediate independence and massive economic aid to Puerto Rico.

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Trump quiere profundizar el saqueo, AMLO y PRD renegociarlo

¡Abajo el TLCAN, rapiña imperialista contra México!

Pablo Nieto y Trump durante la reunión del 20 de julio.

Además de la reunión que en el Palacio porfiriano se celebró el domingo, el demagogo trunquista Donald Trump contó con una parte de su campaña periodística en el departamento del Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (TLCAN) "ha beneficiado más a México" que nunca a El Norte, "el peor tratado de la historia". El demócrata trunquista le hizo repetidas preguntas al 26 de julio pasado, en un punto, "¿cómo se benefició el mundo por haberse ido los productores de El Norte, El Caribe y el Pacífico del este de los Estados Unidos, si el TLCAN es el acuerdo de intercambio más poderoso que el poder de los gobiernos estadounidenses y su socio trunquista estadounidense como la superpotencia de los Estados Unidos para la competencia mundial. Tras el anuncio de la Casa Blanca, el gobierno del

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Por la mala suerte de comprontar así el éxito del saqueo una firma trunquista de 7 mil millones de dólares, la inversión en el TLCAN. México es un exportador de manufacturas pero es un enorme importador de capital. En 2015, la inversión extranjera estadounidense en México alcanzó casi 95 mil millones de dólares. En 2016, el comercio entre ambos países llegó a su nivel estimado de casi 580 mil millones de dólares, entre los cuales redujeron por el comercio de El Norte, Canadá y Chile. El primer "déficit comercial" de El TLCAN, frente a México, de 55.6 mil millones de dólares en 2016, sobre el que están hablando Trump, se debe sobre todo a la exportación por parte de firmas estadounidenses controladas en México, incluyendo la gran mayoría de las compañías petroleras de México, que se están haciendo un negocio de millones de dólares a su propio pie. La economía mexicana necesita más ayuda, la importación a través de la exportación del petróleo entre 2009 y 2014, el tipo de apoyo y subsidios y el apoyo trunquista de 50 mil millones de dólares de la economía de El Norte. Acusando de trunquista, "¿qué pasaría si la huelga imperialista estadounidense respaldara que el comercio mundial se acordara sin el consentimiento ni planeamiento de los trunquistas y la ayuda trunquista, por ejemplo, los EE.UU. tiene derecho a decir que México es el primer país que se

¡Por un gobierno obrero y campesino!

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Por la mala suerte de comprontar así el éxito del saqueo una firma trunquista de 7 mil millones de dólares, la inversión en el TLCAN. México es un exportador de manufacturas pero es un enorme importador de capital. En 2015, la inversión extranjera estadounidense en México alcanzó casi 95 mil millones de dólares. En 2016, el comercio entre ambos países llegó a su nivel estimado de casi 580 mil millones de dólares, entre los cuales redujeron por el comercio de El Norte, Canadá y Chile. El primer "déficit comercial" de El TLCAN, frente a México, de 55.6 mil millones de dólares en 2016, sobre el que están hablando Trump, se debe sobre todo a la exportación por parte de firmas estadounidenses controladas en México, incluyendo la gran mayoría de las compañías petroleras de México, que se están haciendo un negocio de millones de dólares a su propio pie. La economía mexicana necesita más ayuda, la importación a través de la exportación del petróleo entre 2009 y 2014, el tipo de apoyo y subsidios y el apoyo trunquista de 50 mil millones de dólares de la economía de El Norte. Acusando de trunquista, "¿qué pasaría si la huelga imperialista estadounidense respaldara que el comercio mundial se acordara sin el consentimiento ni planeamiento de los trunquistas y la ayuda trunquista, por ejemplo, los EE.UU. tiene derecho a decir que México es el primer país que se

¡Por un gobierno obrero y campesino!

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Trump quiere profundizar el saqueo, AMLO y PRD renegociarlo

¡Abajo el TLCAN, rapiña imperialista contra México!

Pablo Nieto y Trump durante la reunión del 20 de julio.

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(continued from page 1)

While enthusiasm over the prospect of an end to the suffocating, repressive regime is understandable, this sentiment has been expressed in support for the military and Mnangagwa's faction of ZANU-PF. They, in turn, are looking to play ball with Britain and the U.S. and are working closely with the imperialists' preferred party in Zimbabwe, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Mnangagwa and the generals had for decades been cogs in the Mugabe regime, carrying out gruesome crimes against the toilers. In the 1980s, the military massacred an estimated 20,000 Ndebele villagers, targeting alleged supporters of rival bourgeois-nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo, whose main base was among the Ndebele people. The killings by the ZANU-PF regime, which has historically been based on the dominant Shona people, came to be known as the Gukurahundi, a Shona term meaning “the early rain that washes away the chaff.” Mnangagwa, who is aptly nicknamed “Ngwenwa” (The Crocodile) for his ruthlessness, played a crucial role in this bloody crime. In a speech in 1983, the then minister for state security likened the targets of the Gukurahundi to “cockroaches and bugs” against which they needed to use “DDT.”

The Zimbabwean International Socialist Organisation (ISO) was originally part of this bloc with the colonial-derived, imperialist-backed white propertied classes, including having one ISO leader elected to parliament for the MDC in 2000! Since then, it has become too embarrassing to openly support the MDC, which the ISO now rebukes for “supporting neoliberalism.” However, the social-democratic ISO and its international cothinkers, led by the Socialist Workers Party in Britain, continue to promote deadly reformist illusions. While denouncing Mnangagwa as representing “the deep state, the junta and the army” and claiming he is “favoured by capital and imperialism,” they nevertheless enthuse over the 18 November protests, whose main aim was to mobilise popular support for Mnangagwa and the generals. In articles on socialistworker.co.uk, they gushed that “the masses were all united” (19 November) and declared that the demonstrations “will have raised the confidence of the working class” (21 November).

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Make no mistake: if struggle breaks out against the dictates of the IMF and other agents of finance capital, the generals who are now being lauded as “friends of the people” will try to impose “investor-friendly” conditions at the barrel of a gun. Anyone who looks for it will find ample evidence of this truth in Zimbabwe’s history, from repression meted



Robert and Grace Mugabe join hands with longtime ally Emmerson Mnangagwa (left) last year. Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe's new president, will continue repressive, anti-working-class policies of Mugabe regime.

Land Seizures and Imperialist Reaction

Both the leftists who supported Mugabe and the imperialists who disparaged him conveniently distort the true history. During his first two decades in power, Mugabe was praised by London and Washington as a “moderate” African leader because he perpetuated the economic dominance of the former white colonialists. Western bourgeois politicians and media scarcely noticed, much less protested, the Gukurahundi massacre. As long as his regime did not touch the wealth of the white propertied classes, the men who run the City of London and Wall Street couldn’t have cared less about what he did to workers and peasants. In addition to his “good neighbour” policy toward apartheid South Africa in the 1980s, Mugabe carried out an economic austerity programme the next decade at the behest of the IMF and World Bank. As of 2000, the white minority still owned 70 percent of the country’s most fertile land.

The imperialists did everything to squeeze the Zimbabwean economy as punishment for Mugabe's defiance, from sanctions to the cutoff of economic aid and investment. These actions contributed to and compounded the collapse in agriculture, the main source of Zimbabwe's exports. The economic effects have been devastating. Today, unemployment is estimated as high as 90 percent, and those who still have jobs regularly go without pay for months at a time. Several million Zimbabweans have emigrated over the last two decades. The desperate state of the

For a Socialist Federation of Southern Africa!

“The conflict which has currently come to the fore between smallholding peasants and the agricultural proletariat can only be equitably resolved in a *revolutionary* fashion, that is, by the expropriation of the landed estates and imperialist holdings. Soviets of farm labourers and poor peasants would democratically determine which lands would be maintained as state farms and which would be distributed to individual peasants. A workers state would encourage poor peasants to join together in cooperative farms by providing tractors and other technology. In South Africa, which has no peasantry to speak of, a revolutionary workers government would simply expropriate the highly mechanised and capital-intensive commercial farms. Only under an expanding collectivised economy, based on a perspective of proletarian revolution in the advanced industrial countries and an international planned economy, could the necessary resources and technology be provided to liberate rural workers from backbreaking labour while absorbing in industry or construction those former peasants and agricultural workers no longer required to work the land.”

This perspective is based on understanding the potential social power and historic role of the proletariat as the grave-

Under neo-apartheid, the Alliance government acts as front men for the racist capitalists, including at times by interceding in Zimbabwe and elsewhere on behalf of the Randlords and their imperialist senior partners. This role is the counterpart to the brutal exploitation and oppression of the black, Coloured and Indian working masses in South Africa itself. Unable to satisfy the masses' demands, the government uses the timeworn colonial strategy of divide-and-rule, pitting blacks and other non-white people against each other and stirring up anti-immigrant pogroms.

To carry out this programme requires revolutionary leadership—the working class must be broken from the Tripartite Alliance and fight on the basis of political independence from *all* bourgeois parties. Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), seeks to build the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party needed to lead the fight for socialist revolution. As part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa, in which there would be equal rights for all its myriad peoples, a black-centred workers government in South Africa would use the country's industrial and mineral wealth to develop the vast resources of the region. Such a government would necessarily fight to link up with workers revolutions in the imperialist centres, opening the road to a world socialist future. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

No to Anti-Union Attacks!

NYC Subway Shambles



TWU Local 100 (left); Norman/NY Times

Left: Derailment of A train in Harlem injured dozens in June. Above: Morning rush hour at Grand Central Terminal in August. Capitalist greed and contempt for working people have made daily commute hazardous to New Yorkers' health.

The meltdown of the New York City subway system did not happen overnight. The power outages, signal malfunctions, equipment failures, crumbling tunnels and worn tracks that cause daily service disruptions are the result of decades of chronic underfunding of this vital infrastructure. Responsibility lies with the filthy rich bankers, Democratic and Republican politicians and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bosses who have let things go to hell, while making working conditions miserable for the members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100. Insofar as the NYC transit system gets people where they want to go, it is thanks to the hard work of Local 100 members.

The riding public is seething, and for good reason. Morning commute delays have brought not only the nuisance of severely overcrowded platforms and getting packed like sardines into train cars, but also docked pay and job dismissals. The system is bursting at the seams. Average weekday ridership has ballooned to 5.7 million, nearly double what it was two decades ago. The situation is even worse in outer boroughs like Queens and the Bronx, where the heavily black and other minority residents have limited public transportation and far worse subway service than that in Manhattan, reflecting their treatment as second-class citizens.

There is a desperate need for safe, reliable mass transit citywide. Indeed, the subway is a ticking time bomb. On the morning of June 27, an A train derailed and careened into the tunnel wall between stations in Harlem. Two hundred feet of track, signals and concrete were reduced to twisted metal and rubble and at least 34 people were injured. After having ignored the decrepitude of the subway for years, Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo, who controls the MTA, declared a “state of emergency” for the NYC subways two days later.

The main outcome of Cuomo’s cynical “concern” for the system that he helped bleed dry was a war of words with NYC mayor Bill de Blasio over whether City Hall should fund half of the MTA’s \$836 million stabilization plan. (That plan itself represents a drop in the bucket of the \$68 billion that the American Society

of Civil Engineers estimates is needed to modernize the transit system over the next 20 years.) Meanwhile, service remains abysmal. The very next month, a Q train derailed in Brooklyn, albeit without any reported injuries.

The *New York Times* recently published a major piece titled “How Politics and Bad Decisions Starved New York’s Subways” (18 November). After giving lots of detail on the shortcomings of the subway, the article comes to its main point: “The M.T.A. has given concession after concession to its main labor union.” In the view of this haughty mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie, the funds necessary to fix the transit system should come out of the hides of the workers. The purpose of the article is to mobilize public opinion behind further attacks against Local 100. While transit workers’ wages and benefits are modest enough, these gains are the result of the workers having a union, and that is what the city rulers hate.

Not surprisingly, in its lengthy report the *Times* says nary a word about the brutal working conditions of transit workers, who toil away just to make ends meet in often dangerous jobs. Indeed, 13 have been killed on the job since 2001. Every year, many transit workers have their bodies broken through industrial accidents. Frequently, workers die within a few years of retiring. Earlier this year, station agent Darryl Goodwin died while being hounded by the cops and MTA, after they claimed he had not opened a gate fast enough for the racist police (“Darryl Goodwin: We Will Not Forget,” WV No. 1116, 25 August).

The MTA invites further disaster by pushing speedup and broadbanding (combining job duties). Skimping on maintenance has created a huge backlog of repairs, even as hundreds of maintenance jobs have been cut over the last decade. Train crews frequently have to work days

on end without a lunch break, and the ever fewer station agents are kept busy dealing with irate passengers. Above ground, bus drivers face traffic, difficult weather conditions and abusive riders and suffer bodily wear and tear like back, kidney and repetitive motion injuries. Workers are also subject to a harsh disciplinary system, referred to by the multiracial workforce as “plantation justice.”

The decades-long starving of the subway in one of the wealthiest cities in the world reflects the irrationality and decay endemic to today’s capitalist society. As the country’s economic position began to deteriorate in the late 20th century, infrastructure was left to rot. Only now that rampant subway delays are impacting the bottom line, costing city businesses millions in lost productivity, are bourgeois politicians like Cuomo giving lip service to fixing the subway. Even so, nothing much has changed. In July, trash that caught fire on a Harlem subway track left nine people suffering smoke inhalation and ignited chaos during the morning rush hour. Three months later, the MTA announced plans to do away with 300 overnight station cleaner positions, in order to avoid paying shift premiums.

Criminal Neglect of Infrastructure

The bond-holding Wall Street vultures—who have long fed off the decaying subway system—are again circling overhead, demanding more money be used to service the MTA’s astronomical debt. Already, 17 percent of the transit budget goes to that purpose. Between 2011 and 2015 alone, \$270 million was siphoned out of the system to ensure the bankers got their cut. A revised capital plan, approved by the MTA board in May, will increase the agency’s overall debt from \$38 billion to roughly \$43 billion over the next five to seven years.

Mass transit should be a service for the public good, not an interest-bearing piggy bank for finance capital. The capitalist profiteers have shown time and again that they’re more than willing to let NYC’s infrastructure fall to pieces: leaking gas pipes, bursting water mains, structurally deficient bridges, the list goes on and on. That reality has become

increasingly clear to subway commuters, who have to endure the daily grind of standing shoulder-to-shoulder near the platform edge in a filthy station, just to enter a train that may very well break down while en route.

Problems with the signal system and the tracks are major causes of subway delays. Signals not only direct train movement throughout the network but also ensure a safe distance between trains. The age of the signals is a major danger. Much of the system is based on technology that predates World War II, beginning with its cloth-insulated wiring.

Last spring, the top subway official admitted that the signal system is 30 years beyond its useful life. While the agency struggles to maintain this antiquated system, many subway experts point to the need to modernize. But at the current glacial pace of upgrade, it will take the MTA half a century to do so.

Track-related issues require a great deal of careful attention and maintenance, too. Like the signal system, a good portion of the track is antiquated, and massive trains pass over it day and night. Transit bosses are making anemic attempts to install a newer, continuously welded type of rail that would reduce the number of joints and therefore the number of potential failure points. Continuously welded rail (CWR), along with other technologies like friction pads and concrete ties, would also reduce the amount of wear on the rails. Upgrading to CWR began in 1979, but nearly 40 years later only half of the system’s tracks have been replaced.

For a Planned Economy Under Workers Rule!

Members of TWU Local 100—the powerful 41,000-strong industrial union that represents transit workers of all job

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