

Democrats Exploit School Massacre



Newscom (left); AP

Gun Control Schemes: Threat to Labor, Blacks

In response to the criminal killing of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, over a million protesters rallied nationwide in one of the biggest mobilizations for gun control in U.S. history. The horror of mass shootings has become a habitual episode in modern America. And the aftermath of such massacres has become predictable: a debate over gun violence, in which each party of the blood-soaked and hypocritical ruling class follows its playbook.

Trump, who once gloated about how he could “shoot somebody” and “wouldn’t lose voters,” offered “thoughts and prayers” alongside reactionary schemes of deputizing armed teachers as adjuncts to the police. The Democrats offered their own reactionary schemes for gun control, supplying the cash, organizers and glitterati for the “March for Our Lives” protest. They saw a new platform for their “resistance,” a pony they could ride all the way to the midterm elections this fall.

Just under three years ago, the Obama government seized on the coldblooded

Democrats push gun control, promote March 24 nationwide “March for Our Lives” events to boost electoral fortunes. Top left: D.C. rally; top right: Senator Dianne Feinstein at San Francisco demonstration.

Charleston church massacre to push gun restrictions. There, nine black people were assassinated by a white-supremacist killer. They were unable to defend themselves

precisely because they were *unarmed*.

The current aim is a ban on semiautomatic rifles like the one used in Parkland and other massacres by lone gunmen in



Amezcue/Sacramento Bee

Gun control strengthens power of racist capitalist state. March 22 protest in Sacramento following cop killing of Stephon Clark.

the last several years. The AR-15 available to civilians is a modified version of a fully automatic military weapon. It accounts for nearly one in five guns sold in the U.S., is relatively easy to use and is designed to produce maximum casualties quickly. Though the majority of homicides in this country are committed with handguns, many people, including gun owners, are sympathetic to banning the AR-15 and other semiautomatics, as well as high-capacity magazines, in the name of curbing gun violence.

No matter how it’s packaged, behind any gun legislation is a move toward disarming the exploited and oppressed. As Marxists, we oppose gun control laws and uphold the right to armed self-defense, a necessity for the working class, black people and the populace as a whole. In a 1916 piece titled, “The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution,” Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin underlined that the struggle for working-class revolution required an armed proletariat: “An oppressed class which does not strive to

continued on page 6

Racist Cops Kill Stephon Clark

Black Sacramento Seethes

The mounting toll of death at the hands of the racist cops has become horrifyingly routine. But for Sacramento’s embattled black population, the police killing of yet another unarmed black man, 22-year-old Stephon Clark, was one too many. A father of two, Clark was gunned down in a hail of 20 police bullets on March 18 as he stood in the backyard of his grandmother’s Sacramento home. Backed by a police helicopter, two cops—one black

and one white—cornered Clark as he tried to enter the house in the heavily minority Meadowview neighborhood where he had often stayed. Within seconds Clark, who was holding his cell phone, had been executed. A recently released independent autopsy report showed that of the eight bullets that hit him, six were fired into his back.

Chanting “cells up, don’t shoot,” protesters hit the streets to express their rage. On March 22, the day after graphic videos of the shooting were released, and again five days later, hundreds blocked the entrance to the city’s Golden 1 Center sports arena where the Sacramento Kings

were playing. Inside, during warm-up basketball players wore T-shirts in Clark’s honor. Elsewhere in the city, black youth faced off against phalanxes of riot cops. The protests have defiantly continued almost daily, and hundreds came out for Clark’s funeral on March 29.

Adding to the anger was the usual attempted cover-up as the cops tried to vilify Clark as the criminal. Caught out in their lie that Clark had a gun, the cops then claimed that they thought his cell phone looked like one. Sacramento mayor Darrell Steinberg, a liberal Democrat and advocate of “community policing,” initially argued that

he “cannot second guess the split-second decisions of our officers.” With the outburst of protest, Steinberg beat a hasty retreat, saying that the cop killing of Clark was “just plain wrong.” At a March 27 city council meeting, the mayor appealed to the hundreds of black people who packed the room for “peace, justice and change.”

An anguished and angry Stevante Clark, Stephon’s brother, punctured Steinberg’s hypocrisy. Taking over the podium, he pointed to the desperate poverty of Sacramento’s black population and shouted, “The chief of police

continued on page 2



Sacramento...

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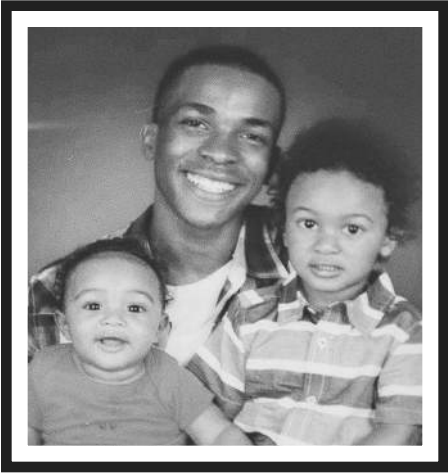
got my brother killed.” Tanya Faison, a founder of Black Lives Matter (BLM) Sacramento, which has organized most of the protests, said, “It feels like genocide.” On the night of March 31, a cop car accelerated and hit a well-known 61-year-old activist before speeding off, sending her to the hospital for head and wrist injuries.

The difference between the police harassment and targeting of BLM protesters and the courtesy afforded to the March 24 “March for Our Lives” has not been lost on black protesters. While an invitation to the Sacramento “March for Our Lives” rally had been extended to BLM, an exchange on the rally organizers’ Facebook page echoed

the cops’ violence-baiting of BLM, contemptuously warning, “as long as they are peaceful & non distracting they are welcome”!

Police Reform Scam

Speaking at the city council meeting, Betty Williams, president of the Greater Sacramento NAACP, pointed to the case of Donald Venerable, another black man shot to death while holding a cell phone by the Sacramento cops back in 1999. Despite various “police reform” schemes, including body cameras and the creation of a Community Police Commission, *nothing has changed*. Nor did having black faces in high places—like Steinberg’s predecessor Kevin Johnson, who was mayor from 2008 to 2016—make any difference. In the last three years, seven black men have been killed by the cops in the Sacramenro area. Others, like



Clark Family

Stephon Clark with sons.

Nandi Cain, are routinely brutalized. Walking home from work, Cain was jumped and slammed to the ground by a Sacramento cop, punched in the face 20 times and then thrown into an isolation cell for nine hours for the “crime” of jaywalking. Promises for change came with the appointment of Daniel Hahn as Sacramento’s first black police chief last August. But that illusion was shattered in the hail of police bullets that killed Stephon Clark.

On the streets there is a determination that “this has to stop.” But the solutions pushed by the NAACP and a parade of black preachers—respectfully submitted to the very city officials who have presided over the carnage perpetrated by the Sacramento police—amount to yet another cycle of meaningless reforms that only end up giving the racist killers in blue a fresh coat of whitewash. They appeal to the rulers that the police be held “accountable” for their crimes as if it were simply a matter of firing or convicting a few bad apples.

Black Lives Matter demands that the county DA prosecute the cops who executed Clark. With the police who killed Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and others getting off without even a slap on the wrist, it is by now well known that the chance of a cop being charged, much less convicted, is rare to nonexistent. Amid the Sacramento protests, Louisiana state officials announced that the Baton Rouge cops who killed Alton Sterling in 2016 will face no charges.

One black woman, a student at UC Berkeley, took apart the litany of police reform pleas at the March 27 city council meeting by rightly making the point that in terrorizing black people the cops are “doing their job”—a job rooted in the history of this country where “the function of the police was to brutalize, was to captivate, was to enslave, was to kill black people.” She went on to demand the “complete abolition” of the cops, a call that has been echoed by BLM in Sacramento.

The call to abolish the police raises the question of who can bring that about. Along with the courts, the prisons and military, the cops make up the armed core of the capitalist state whose very purpose is the violent and brutal suppression of the working class, black people, immigrants and all the oppressed. No capitalist government—city, state or federal—is going to disarm, much less abolish, the very armed thugs the capitalist class relies on to maintain its rule. Nor can the police be made to “serve the people” with some kind of “community-based” operation. A cop is a cop, and their job is the same no matter the color of their skin or the neighborhood they come from.

CORRECTION

In “West Virginia School Strike: Militant Union Battle Ends” (WV No. 1129, 9 March), we incorrectly identified a case before the Supreme Court as *Janus v. American Federation of State, Municipal and County Employees*. The correct name of the union is American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.



TROTSKY

1914 betrayal by the German Social Democracy, which supported its ruling class in the interimperialist First World War. He stressed that the course of history demonstrated the correctness of Lenin’s struggle to forge a party made up of advanced workers and the declassed intelligentsia committed to leading the proletariat in the fight for socialist revolution.

They claim his [Engels’] support for their contention—the one thing they all agree on—that it is wrong to try to create a revolutionary party under the present conditions when the number of conscious revolutionists is so limited...

The real issue, as it is evolving, is the attempt to use the authority of Engels to liquidate the conception of a party of socialists, based on a definite program—a party which under present conditions can only be a small one—in favor of some prospective “big” party, to be constructed some time in the future by some people whose names and addresses are unknown, as a result of further development of the spontaneous process. That is dead wrong because the very idea of a party—large or small—presupposes a program and therefore *consciousness*...

Sixty years have elapsed since Engels laid down his pen. From what he saw and knew at the time he thought the German party of [August] Bebel was good enough, by and large. On the other side, Lenin, in 1907, was content to take the Bebel party for a model. He said—in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*—that he was “not creating any special variety of Bolshevik tendency,” but simply adapting “the viewpoint of the revolutionary Social Democracy,” as represented in the Second International, to Russian conditions.

But the German Social Democratic Party proved inadequate to its historical task and collapsed ignominiously in the test of 1914. Can there be any doubt that Engels would have drawn some radical conclusions from this catastrophe? Lenin, for his part, was compelled later to recognize that his concept of the vanguard party, which he had originally intended as nothing more than a Russian version of the German party, was in fact something new—a development and application of the Marxist theory of the party in the epoch of the actual struggle for power.

This conception was vindicated positively in the Russian Revolution, and negatively by the defeat of the revolution in other countries where the old forms held sway. The leit-motif of Trotsky’s great struggle in the post-Lenin epoch, summed up and restated in his thesis on the crisis of leadership in the Transitional Program of 1938, was precisely this Leninist contribution and extension of Marxism in the theory and practice of the party.

If one merely wants a “big” party, just to have a party, then any kind of a party will do; but nothing less than a Bolshevik party is good enough for war and revolution. That, I think, is the conclusive verdict of historical experience. Moreover, the construction of such a party cannot be postponed until everybody recognizes its necessity. The project has to be started by those who are ready, willing and able. That’s the way it was done in Russia, and nobody has yet discovered a better way.

—“Engels on the American Question,” Letter from James P. Cannon to Vincent R. Dunne, Socialist Workers Party *Discussion Bulletin* (June 1955)

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After black people, the chief target of racist police terror in California is the Latino population. In the state’s Central Valley, where Sacramento is located, agribusiness profits are squeezed from the blood and toil of mostly Mexican and Central American workers, whose historic struggles to organize unions faced brutal police attacks. Like a pre-Civil War slave catcher, Sacramento County’s racist sheriff, Scott Jones, grooves on helping I.C.E. round up undocumented immigrants. Only three weeks before Stephon Clark was executed, police in Gilroy, south of San Jose, beat, tased and choked to death Latino construction worker Steven Juarez.

Racist police terror in Sacramento also serves as the handmaiden of the city rulers’ gentrification schemes. The 2008-09 financial crisis devastated minority neighborhoods like Meadowview with foreclosures and unemployment. Now black people are being driven out as house prices and rents skyrocket with the influx of those fleeing the astronomical housing costs in the San Francisco Bay Area. Last summer, the police and sheriff sent a surge of cops to “saturate” the historically black Oak Park neighborhood, once the site of the Sacramento office of the Black Panther Party, in order to clean up the streets for profitable “renewal.”

The war against black people in American society is wielded by the capitalist exploiters to divide and conquer their wage slaves and thus increasingly drive up the exploitation of the multiracial working class. Integrated unions like SEIU Local 1000, which represents California state employees, not only have the power to shut down Sacramento but also provide a vital link to defending the black and Latino poor. However, not only have the SEIU misleaders taken no action in defense of the city’s besieged black population, they have actively recruited cops and prison guards into the union. Such betrayals, together with the bureaucracy’s allegiance to the capitalist Democratic Party, have assisted in the bosses’ ongoing war against the unions and have left the black and Latino masses defenseless in the face of police terror.

Police brutality and killings will not be eliminated short of doing away with the entire system of racist American capitalism, which is built on the foundation of black oppression. A multiracial, revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of black freedom and the liberation of all the oppressed can be forged only in political combat against the misleaders of labor. Led by such a party, the victorious workers revolution will shatter the power of the racist rulers and their state. International workers rule will lay the basis for eradicating all inequalities based on class and race by using the wealth of this country and all the world for the benefit of those whose labor produces it. ■

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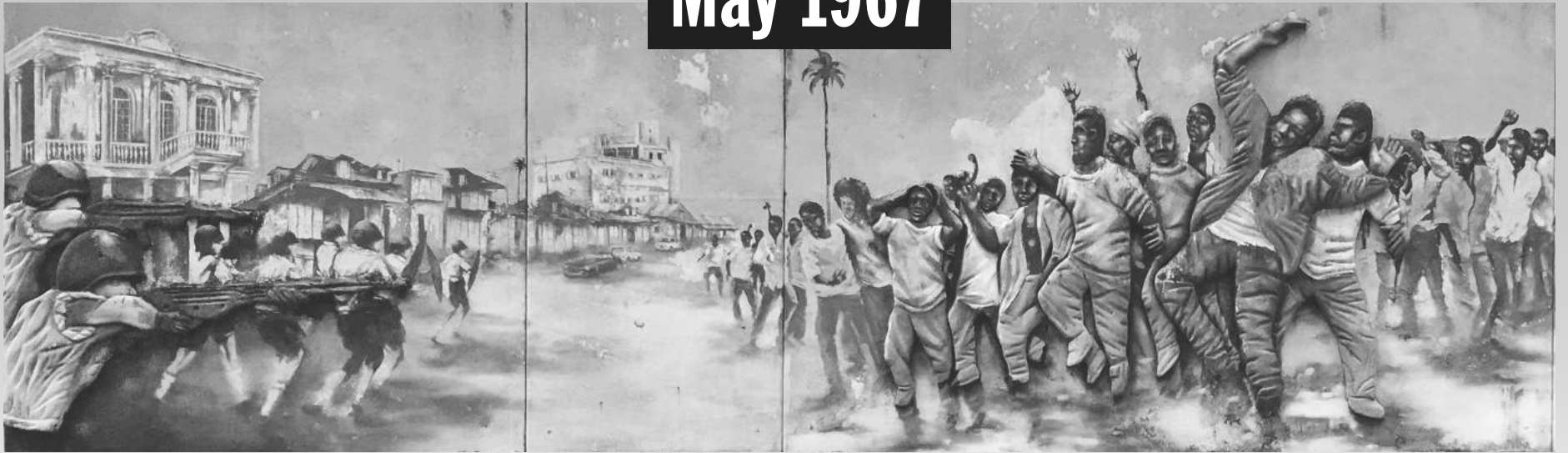
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2

WORKERS VANGUARD

May 1967



WV Photo

French Colonial Massacre in Guadeloupe

The following article is translated from le Bolchévik No. 222 (December 2017), newspaper of our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League.

The year 2017 marked the 50th anniversary of “Mé 67” (May ’67 in Creole), when on 26-28 May 1967 many Guadeloupeans were massacred in [the Caribbean island’s largest city] Pointe-à-Pitre and its outskirts by the French colonial state. The brutal repression of a construction workers demonstration, against a backdrop of racial oppression and the rise of radical nationalism, unleashed a series of racist manhunts in and around the cap-

LE BOLCHEVIK

ital. For nearly 20 years the official count of those shot and beaten to death by the riot police stood at eight. Then in March 1985, a representative of [French president François] Mitterrand’s government admitted that 87 people had been killed. For 50 years, the French government has maintained a veil of secrecy over the killings it perpetrated, as it did regarding the Algerian demonstrators murdered by the police in Paris on 17 October 1961.

The unbridled violence of the May 1967 repression in Guadeloupe was the result of an explosive situation combining a workers mobilization with nationalist militancy, striking fear in the bourgeoisie that an insurrection would drive out French imperialism. The repression reflected French imperialism’s determination to hang on to the last remnants of its colonial empire after its crushing defeats in Indochina and Algeria—defeats that encouraged national liberation movements throughout the world. In the French Caribbean, the Gaullist regime then in power in France feared the “contagion” of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, which had in particular inspired the creation of the GONG (National Organization Group of Guadeloupe), a pro-Mao, pro-Castro national liberation organization. Indeed, the first casualty of the May 1967 events was a GONG member, Jacques Nestor, who was shot by a police sniper.

Fifty years after May 1967, French imperialism continues to maintain its overseas possessions under the colonial jackboot because these territories remain international power bases and strategic military positions. At the same time, France is stepping up its bloody repression in the name of the “war on terror,” mounting murderous military expeditions to Syria, Iraq and the Sahel region south of the Sahara. *French military bases, troops, cops and judges out of Guadeloupe and the other colonies! French troops out of Africa and the Near East!*

Colonialism is a daily reality that means negation of national and cultural rights, underdevelopment, racist discrimination and contempt. These are reflected in all



Alamy

Top: Pointe-à-Pitre mural depicts May 1967 massacre in Guadeloupe. Above: Paris commemoration marks 50th anniversary of massacre, 2017.

official statistics. According to the French national statistics bureau, the rate of unemployment is two or three times higher in the colonies than in “metropolitan France.” In Guadeloupe the Gross Domestic Product per person is over a third less than in France. Food products are much more expensive there because of the cost of importing them from France and the exorbitant profit margins of the big retailers. These businesses are owned by the *békés*, the descendants of the former slaveholding white plantation owners.

Black Guadeloupeans have French citizenship, but in fact they remain second-class citizens. In 2016, the proportion of young people with major reading difficulties reached 32 percent in Guadeloupe, as against around 10 percent in France. This is directly linked to the privileged status of the French language in education. Article Two of the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic stipulates that “the language of the Republic is French” and thus only one official language exists in France. All other languages spoken in the “one and indivisible” republic are relegated, at best, to the status of “regional languages” (Basque, Corsican, Catalan, Breton, Alsatian, the various creole languages).

The majority of the population of Guadeloupe speaks two languages, French and Guadeloupean Creole, but a full education is only available in French. Creole was only integrated into the national education system in 2001, and only in schools in which teachers had undergone supplementary training to teach it. Thus Guadeloupean Creole is considered a “foreign”

language, taught optionally alongside other languages like English, Spanish or German. *For the right of Guadeloupeans to receive education in their own language, from nursery school to university! No privileges for French!*

For the Right to Independence for Guadeloupe!

The position of genuine Marxists has always been to fight for the liberation of oppressed nations and peoples. This battle, which is an integral part of the revolutionary struggle for the emancipation of

the proletariat, can serve as a motor force for that struggle. For us fighting here in the “belly of the beast” of French imperialism, this fight is posed with special urgency, as was emphasized by the eighth of the “21 Conditions” of membership in the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky, adopted in July 1920:

“In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations. Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International is obligated to expose the tricks of ‘its own’ imperialists in the colonies, to support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies, to instill in the hearts of the workers of its country a truly fraternal attitude toward the laboring people in the colonies and toward the oppressed nations, and to conduct systematic agitation among its country’s troops against all oppression of colonial peoples.”

Thus, we are in favor of independence for all the colonies of French imperialism. However, we also take into account the ambivalent attitude of the Guadeloupean population regarding independence: we are not for imposing independence on them if they do not want it. This is why we call for the *right to independence* for the Guadeloupean people—that is, their right to choose whether or not they want to separate from France and form an independent state.

In Guadeloupe itself, our central perspective is the fight for working-class power. The overthrow of capitalism on the island would be a powerful haven for class struggle throughout the Caribbean and beyond—particularly in France, where there are hundreds of thousands of workers from the French Caribbean. If the workers took power in France, they would grant immediate independence to Guadeloupe and the other French colonies

continued on page 4

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Guadeloupe...

(continued from page 3)

and would send them massive aid. *Down with French imperialism! For a workers republic of Guadeloupe!*

However, the Ligue trotskyste de France has over the years actively polemicized *against* independence for Guadeloupe, using the argument that it could only lead to greater poverty for the masses. In an article on the 1967 massacre published in 1985, we argued that “there will never be any real independence for a bourgeois state in Guadeloupe or Martinique, above all in the ‘American lake’ that is the Caribbean.” We added: “In these small islands, which are deprived of a viable economy, all that the nationalists can offer the masses is poverty” (*le Bolchévik* No. 57, September 1985). More recently, we wrote in 2009:

“While in France the task of a revolutionary party is to rally the working class to the side of the West Indians in struggle, in Guadeloupe and Martinique the key task is to break the hold of nationalist false consciousness. Under imperialism, nations are not equal and while we defend the right to an independent Guadeloupe under capitalism, independence could only drive the standard of living of the poor further down.”

—*le Bolchévik* No. 187, March 2009 (reprinted in WV No. 937, 22 May 2009)

We repudiate this chauvinist line that French imperialism is at bottom beneficial (or in one way or another represents a lesser evil) for the peoples it continues to colonize, and that these peoples’ aspirations for national liberation is supposedly “false consciousness” that must be broken down.

The latest issue of *Spartacist* (English-language edition No. 65, Summer 2017) draws the balance sheet of a struggle waged at the Seventh International Conference of the International Communist League against a longstanding perversion of Leninism on the national question within our party and in our propaganda. As we explain in *Spartacist*, with such arguments “the liberation of Guadeloupe and Martinique was presented as being dependent on the French labor movement, as though the local workers did not have the strength to fight for their liberation.”

This kind of pseudo-Marxist anti-independence argument in fact has a long history dating back to the beginnings of French imperialist colonialism and the workers movement of this country. Before World War I, in *l’Humanité* (29 June 1904), edited by [the social democrat] Jean Jaurès, René Viviani, one of Jaurès’ cothinkers, wrote about French Algeria: “I have always thought that the penetration [sic] of this people is France’s duty” and that “to lead it along this road” (of colonial development) “is really a noble endeavor, which is bound to tempt the best among us.”

The Communist International (CI) waged

a bitter struggle against the colonial prejudices that continued to infect the young Communist Party. Thus, Trotsky made the main report on the French Question at the Fourth Congress of the CI in 1922, and denounced at length a resolution of the Sidi-bel-Abbès section of the Communist Party in Algeria. That resolution stated: “A victorious rising of the Muslim masses of Algeria that is not preceded by a victorious rising of the proletarian masses of the mother country would necessarily lead in Algeria back to a regime bordering on feudalism, which cannot be the aim of a communist action.” Trotsky replied: “As for us, we cannot tolerate



L’Anticapitaliste

Rally by banana plantation workers in Guadeloupe during successful strike in May-July 2017.

two hours or two minutes from comrades who have the mentality of slaveholders and who wish for Poincaré [head of the French government at the time] to maintain them in enjoying the blessings of capitalist civilization!”

May 1967: Massacre and Colonial Repression

In the early 1960s, Guadeloupe was undergoing a serious economic crisis. The sugarcane industry was collapsing (due to the development of less expensive sugar beets); the banana plantations were just getting started; and tourism was still small. Because of the economy of dependence imposed by France on its colonies, products imported into Guadeloupe cost 50 percent more than in France, weighing heavily on the living standard of the population. Furthermore, like the other Caribbean islands, Guadeloupe was hit very hard by Hurricane Inez in September 1966: 33 dead, hundreds injured and 15,000 left homeless. Half the sugarcane crop and all the banana plantations were destroyed and 25,000 workers were left jobless.

The agricultural workers fired by bankrupt sugar refineries swelled the ranks of the construction workers, a booming industry. In Pointe-à-Pitre, Mayor Henri

Bangou, a member of the Guadeloupean Communist Party (PCG), launched a program of public housing to begin to replace the thousands of shacks in which a large part of the population was living. The working conditions imposed by the bosses, whether *békés* or French, were hard and the wages miserable.

The strike of May 1967 took place against a background of racial tensions exacerbated by the Srnsky Affair. On 20 March 1967, nearly two months before the strike, one Vladimir Srnsky, owner of a shoe store in Basse-Terre [the capital of Guadeloupe], had set his dog upon Raphaël Balzinc, a black handicapped

shoemaker whose workbench was on the sidewalk across the street, while hurling racist insults at him. (Srnsky, a notorious Gaullist, had contributed to electoral fraud in the March legislative elections by buying votes with funds officially intended for the victims of Hurricane Inez.) This was all too reminiscent of the hunt for fugitive slaves, and it provoked two days of revolt in the city. Srnsky’s store in Pointe-à-Pitre was the target of an explosive device. The PCG mayor intervened to restore order, and Srnsky had to flee to the United States.

Two months later, on May 24, the construction workers of Pointe-à-Pitre struck for higher wages. Negotiations took place at the Chamber of Commerce on Place de la Victoire, the main square in Pointe-à-Pitre. The construction bosses, all white, did not give an inch. One to two thousand people rallied in front of the Chamber of Commerce on May 26 to show their solidarity with the workers.

Suddenly, a rumor spread that one of the leading bosses had declared: “When the n----rs get hungry, they’ll go back to work.” This sparked an explosion of anger. The first projectiles (stones and large seashells picked up near the port) rained down on the riot police stationed in the surrounding areas. The cops struck back immediately, firing on the crowd. Jacques Nestor fell dead. He had been especially targeted by a police sniper posted on a terrace next door to the police station. At the sniper’s side was Commissioner Canalès, Pointe-à-Pitre’s police chief. Two other demonstrators in the crowd were also killed: Ary Pincemalle (killed by a bullet to the head) and Georges Zadingues Gougougnan. Faced with these atrocities by the guard dogs of French capitalism, Pointe-à-Pitre rose in revolt. Two armories were raided. Youth came out into the street and began to confront the police.

Pierre Bolotte, the prefect of Guadeloupe ([the highest civilian authority on the island and] formerly one of the organizers of the Battle of Algiers), organized the repression along with Jacques Foccart, de Gaulle’s *éminence grise*. Foccart, the son of a *béké* mother and a Guadeloupean planter father, was the kingpin of “Françafrique” [the neocolonial system by which France controls its former sub-Saharan colonies]. Bolotte deployed two squadrons of riot police, the “red *képis* [military caps].” This kicked off a series of police raids that became a wholesale hunt for black people.

On the evening of May 26, the cops and riot police began to systematically “cleanse” the town, neighborhood by neighborhood. Journalists Xavier-Marie Bonnot and François-Xavier Guillermin wrote in their book *Le Sang des Nègres* [*The Blood of Negroes*]: “From dusk to dawn, anyone who found himself in the streets became a potential target of the military.” Camille Tarret, a father of two, was chased by riot cops, cornered in a back alley and killed in cold blood. At the wake organized at his home that same evening, the “red *képis*” fired on the house and killed Gilles Landre, who had come to pay his respects to his childhood friend. On the night of Friday, May 26, the hospitals filled up with wounded.

The repression was also aimed at political activists who were in the crosshairs of the colonial power, like Paul Tomiche, a union leader recently expelled from the Communist Party. He turned himself in to the police on June 14 and was imprisoned for ten months.

On Saturday, May 27, a thousand high school students marched toward the subprefecture in Pointe-à-Pitre to protest against the previous night’s atrocities. They were violently pushed back by the riot police and another man, Olivier Tidas, was killed. The repression continued in the barracks and police stations.

Following the three-day events in May 1967, the bosses agreed to the demands of the construction workers, who won a 25 percent wage increase. But the government repression continued. Having drowned the Guadeloupe revolt in blood, the state went after the GONG and other anti-colonial militants such as Tomiche, who were accused of instigating the May upheaval, as well as the March upheaval in Basse-Terre.

Guadeloupe CP Justifies Witchhunt Against the GONG

For its part, the Guadeloupean Communist Party condemned the demonstrations against colonial oppression. In an internal letter addressed to the French Communist Party, it denounced “subversive action using violence and terrorism of the purest red guard kind” (see Bonnot and Guillermin’s *Le Sang des Nègres*). Two months later in France, the Communist Party published an interview with [prominent PCG member] Bangou, in which he said: “These events were an opportunity for some leftist politicians and groupings that simply wanted to create an anti-white movement, to take advantage of a crowd of unemployed youth in the streets.... Thus, leftist groupings used this politically in order to take aim at our party” (*l’Humanité*, 27 July 1967).

In France, in the decade that followed the split with the social-chauvinists [of the Socialist Party] at the Tours Congress in 1920, the Communist Party implemented the anti-colonial perspective of the eighth of the 21 Conditions. In particular, the French Communist Party (PCF) took up the cause of the Moroccans, who rose up against Spain and then against France during the Rif War.

But in 1935, at the time of the Laval-Stalin agreement [a bilateral treaty between France and the Soviet Union], the PCF rallied to the “national defense” of French imperialism. Having become reformist, the Stalinized PCF thus abandoned the fight for the liberation of the colonies of its “own” bourgeoisie. It began calling for “reforms” of the colonial system. And it opposed the national liberation struggles of peoples enslaved by “democratic France,” sometimes going so far as to actively support colonial repression. Thus, the PCF denounced the Algerians massacred by the French army in [the Algerian town of] Sétif on 8 May 1945, calling them “Hitlerite killers.” Meanwhile, the “Communist” ministers in de Gaulle’s government solidarized with the repression that left thousands dead.

At the end of World War II, the Guadeloupean federation of the PCF also had a line overtly favorable to “assimilation” with France. However, it had some roots in the working class and led some important struggles in the sugarcane fields and

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Transit...

(continued from page 8)

600-volt third rail, with very little space for workers to get out of the way. Overnight crews are under the most pressure to finish work and “clear up” before the start of the morning rush hour. And these are certainly not the best of times.

Everybody knows the subway is a ticking time bomb, for both transit workers and riders: decrepit tunnels, tracks and signals, power outages, train derailments and, now, more deaths on the job. Democratic New York governor Andrew Cuomo, who controls the MTA, a New York State agency, declared a “state of emergency” last summer. But this is just a cover for an all-sided attack on the TWU. The capitalist class and both of their political parties have starved transit and other infrastructure for decades. That the subway system could be degraded to this desperate state in one of the wealthiest cities in the world reflects the irrationality and decay at the heart of this racist capitalist society (see “NYC Subway Shambles,” WV No. 1123, 1 December 2017).

There is a huge backlog of repairs, a measure of severe cuts to maintenance jobs over the years. Train crews frequently have to work without meal and bathroom breaks; bus mechanics do their job while

inhaling toxic fumes; and everyone else labors under brutal conditions as well. Constantly pushed into long shifts, many workers suffer injuries and deteriorating health or die within a few years of retiring. Management relentlessly pushes speedup and pressures workers to cut corners to the point of violating the MTA’s own minimal safety regulations, which the bosses treat as so much paper. These hellish conditions are enforced by vicious disciplinary procedures—from the petty to the draconian—that are aptly dubbed “plantation justice” by unionists.

The purpose of a union is to defend the workers against the transit bosses, whose indifference toward safety means injury and death. But this requires combating the policies of the pro-capitalist TWU bureaucracy. Whether it is productivity, discipline or safety, one regime after another of TWU misleaders has preached the lie of a partnership between the union membership and the bosses.

Following Richards-Stephens’s death, TWU Local 100 president Tony Utano alibied the bosses by telling the press, “These are things that happen.” He also



Newspaper ad by TWU Local 100 commemorates New York transit workers killed on job since 2001.

gave credence to the irrelevant point that Richards-Stephens’s size might have been a factor, saying, “He was a big worker and the railing broke.” He then added Cuomo’s perfunctory Twitter condolences to his own on the union’s website. This is the same governor who has bled the MTA dry!

sugar processing plants. With the anti-colonial struggles that shook the Third World in the 1950s and ’60s and faced with the fact that the nature of colonial rule had not changed despite “departmentalization” [formal annexation to France] (which the Stalinists had supported), the Guadeloupean federation separated from the PCF in 1958. It became the Guadeloupean Communist Party and began calling for “autonomy” for the Guadeloupean people—but always within the framework of the French republic, “one and indivisible.” Moreover, the PCG continued its class collaboration with the colonial state power, particularly at the municipal level. In 1967, there were PCG mayors in the island’s two main cities, Pointe-à-Pitre (Henri Bangou) and Basse-Terre (Gerty Archimède).

The Shadow of the Cuban Revolution

The 1960s marked a setback for French imperialism, with the collapse of its colonial empire. In 1960, virtually all the French colonies in Africa won their national independence (the Comoros Islands followed in 1975 and Djibouti in 1977). This decolonization culminated with the defeat of the French army in Algeria and Algeria’s independence in 1962. Coming eight years after the crushing of the elite parachutists at Dien Bien Phu by the soldiers of General Giap [in Vietnam], this was another humiliating defeat for French imperialism, which, even today, sticks in the French rulers’ craw. These defeats for French imperialism encouraged national liberation movements throughout the world.

The 1959 Cuban Revolution was another factor. With the expropriation of the Cuban bourgeoisie and the imperialist companies [in 1960-61], it led to the consolidation of a deformed workers state. This social revolution brought gains to the Cuban people, particularly in health and education, that even today remain unmatched in the rest of the Caribbean. As Trotskyists, we are for the unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against any attempt at capitalist counterrevolution, whether coming from outside or from within. At the same time, we fight for a proletarian political revolution against the Castroite Stalinist bureaucracy.

In the 1960s, this social revolution in the very heart of the Caribbean inspired the creation of the GONG. It had an enormous impact on the Guadeloupean left, including the PCG, which triggered even more colonial repression by the government. In 1966, the PCG delegates to the Tri-continental Conference, organized by the Castro regime, voted for a resolution that

included Guadeloupe in the list of “peoples fighting to free themselves from the traditional colonial yoke.” They were very quickly disavowed by their leadership.

However, the GONG—which was founded in 1963 in opposition to the PCG program of assimilation and, later, “autonomy”—adopted the same Menshevik-Stalinist program as the PCG of revolution by stages based on class collaboration. It declared its historic role to be “to lead the Guadeloupean people to the national democratic revolution in the first stage, and to socialism in the second stage” (*GONG Information*, special issue, January-February 1967). But history has invariably shown, particularly in the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, what this schema means: In the first stage the national bourgeoisie takes power, and in the second stage it massacres the workers who were subordinated to it and who brought it to power.

Repression of Trade Unions and Fighters for Independence

Slavery was abolished in 1848, but Guadeloupean society remained divided by class and race with, at its two poles, the two main classes: on one side the *békés* and “*blancs pays*”—the landowners, sugar factory owners and merchants—and on the other side the overwhelmingly black agricultural workers bound to the land and the workers in the sugar factories. Strikes always took place in January or February, at the outset of the sugar harvest. Notably, there was a general strike in February 1910, which was bloodily repressed. Repression also took many lives in February 1925 and February 1952.

Today the island’s economy is based primarily on services (tourism, civil service). The working class is small but still capable of paralyzing the island, as happened during the 2009 general strike, which lasted 44 days. The capitalists have never

accepted the fact that they had to retreat under the pressure of this powerful strike, which, if not for the chauvinism of the French trade-union leaders, had the potential to spread to France. Gerard Bauvert, secretary of the International Committee Against Repression, calculated that “since 2009 and the great strikes of the LKP [an umbrella group of unionists and other organizations]...more than 100 unionists, mostly from the UGTG [General Union of Workers of Guadeloupe], face criminal charges.” He noted that, given the same proportion of the population, the comparable figure in France would be “15,000 unionists facing prosecution” (*L’Humanité*, 31 May 2017). *Racist colonial French state, hands off Elie Domota and all the other French Caribbean trade unionists! Drop all charges immediately!*

Today, Elie Domota is once again facing charges of “gang violence.” In fact, he is being prosecuted for being one of the main leaders of the 2009 strike, as general secretary of the UGTG and leader of the LKP (Liyannaj kont pwofitasyon or Alliance Against Profiteering). In addition, he is known as a fighter for independence who has struggled for years to fully expose the 1967 massacre.

While the independence movement represents a minority in Guadeloupe, the French colonial state has always fiercely repressed anyone who calls its colonial empire into question, whether they are the pro-independence members of the GONG after May 1967 or more recently LKP members like Domota. Domota was brought to court in Pointe-à-Pitre in May and then in July 2017. The hearing was postponed twice, the second time to March 2018 [he was ordered to pay a 300 euro fine, which he is appealing]. Pushing the prosecution is the current president of the local bosses’ organization, Bruno Blandin, a white capitalist. Behind class

Progressive Action, an opposition group in Local 100 led by Tramell Thompson, shares the class collaborationism of the current leadership. Thompson took Utano out for talking about Richards-Stephens’s weight. At the same time, in a Facebook video announcing a vigil organized by Progressive Action on March 21, Thompson called Andy Byford a “genuinely nice guy.” Tell that to transit workers in Toronto, where Byford ran the system before taking over NYCT. Along with introducing minimum-wage jobs and bringing in more transit cops, Byford pushed massive speedup, leading to a rise in deaths on the job, while going hard after the Amalgamated Transit Union (see “New NYC Transit Boss: Union Buster,” WV No. 1127, 9 February).

Labor needs a leadership based on the policy of class struggle, unleashing union power independent of and in opposition to the capitalist rulers and their government. Workers need their own party—a multi-racial workers party that fights to overturn the system of production for profit and replace it with a socialized economy under a workers government. When those who labor rule, the immense riches today pocketed by a tiny class of exploiters will be put to work to rebuild this society and its decayed infrastructure. That will be the most fitting memorial to all the victims of capitalist industrial murder. ■



Sipa
Union leader Elie Domota, who faces anti-union prosecution, addresses meeting during 2009 Guadeloupe general strike.

conflicts in the French Caribbean, the question of racial oppression looms. As for the *békés*, the point is to *expropriate* them, and that requires the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

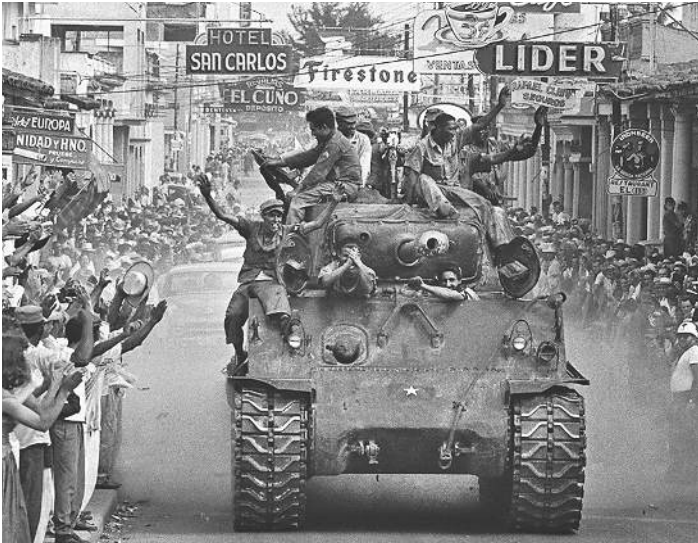
For Permanent Revolution! For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party in Guadeloupe!

Our perspective for Guadeloupe is that of Trotsky’s permanent revolution, which is summarized in the Transitional Program (1938):

“Colonial and semi-colonial countries are backward countries by their very essence. But backward countries are part of a world dominated by imperialism. Their development, therefore, has a *combined* character: the most primitive economic forms are combined with the last word in capitalist technique and culture. In like manner are defined the political strivings of the proletariat of backward countries: the struggle for the most elementary achievements of national independence and bourgeois democracy is combined with the socialist struggle against world imperialism. Democratic slogans, transitional demands and the problems of the socialist revolution are not divided into separate historical epochs in this struggle, but stem directly from one another.”

This is why we as Marxists support struggles against colonial power and for independence, including when these struggles are led by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist forces, while we fight for a proletarian leadership.

In Guadeloupe and Martinique, as in the other French colonies, it is necessary to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties, tribunes of the people and the oppressed, with a proletarian internationalist program. Our perspective is the establishment of workers power. *For a reformed Fourth International!* ■



Glimm Magnum

Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces drive toward Havana, 1959. Cuban Revolution inspired Guadeloupean leftists.

Gun Control...

(continued from page 1)

learn to use arms, to acquire arms, only deserves to be treated like slaves.”

Ultimately the issue of gun control is this: do you trust this consummately violent state, based on vicious exploitation and racial oppression, to have a monopoly of arms? The purpose of the capitalist state and its armed bodies of men—the local and federal police, the prison guards, the National Guard, the military—is to maintain the rule of the tiny class of exploiters against the working class and the oppressed.

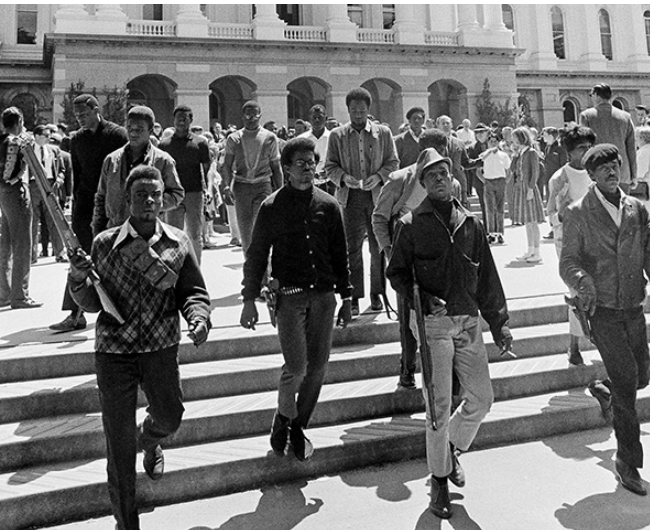
The mass murderers in Washington represent the world’s most powerful imperialist state, inflicting unprecedented carnage—from the Korean War to Vietnam and Iraq, over seven million dead. Meanwhile, their police thugs on America’s streets kill some 1,000 people a year, many for the “crime” of being black. A January article in the black magazine *The Root* notes: “Cops killed more Americans in 2017 than terrorists did (four). They killed more citizens than airplanes (13 deaths worldwide), mass shooters (428 deaths) and Chicago’s ‘top gang thugs’ (675 Chicago homicides).” To the capitalist rulers, the lives of the black and Latino poor are considered expendable. When protesters demonstrate against racist cop terror, they receive no celebrity fanfare or compassion from the media or politicians.

Disarming the Oppressed

Capitalist America is riddled with examples of black people, Latinos and Native Americans fiercely repressed or massacred by government forces, and of workers shot down for striking or fighting to unionize. To this day, longshoremen on the West Coast commemorate “Bloody Thursday,” the day during the 1934 waterfront strike when thousands of strikers engaged in pitched battles with the police. After hours of fighting, the strikers retreated and were ambushed by cops. Over 70 workers were shot, most in the back, and two were killed.

A history of gun control shows how the bourgeoisie tries to quell any resistance to its rule, particularly in periods of social struggle. The first time the Supreme Court directly and explicitly curtailed the Second Amendment was the 1886 *Presser v. Illinois* decision, when it ruled that militant workers in Chicago could not form armed militias. In 1934, the U.S. government banned automatic weapons when workers were striking during the Great Depression. When the Black Panthers marched with loaded firearms, the federal gun control act was pushed forward to ward off black self-defense against racist police, especially in the face of the ghetto uprisings in 1968.

Gun control advocates present the campaign against semiautomatic rifles as a “reasonable” restriction on a weapon of war. The very term bandied about by liberals and the media to describe these rifles—“assault weapons”—is part of a political campaign to demonize anyone who would purchase them as intent on committing evil. Once the capitalist government is given an inch to restrict gun rights, it will take a mile. Case in point:



AP

Armed self-defense has long been crucial to black and labor struggles. Left: Black Panthers mobilize against gun control bill in Sacramento, 1967.



Dale Payne

Right: West Virginia miners in Eskdale strike for union recognition during bloody “Mine Wars,” 1912.

this week a ban on bump stock rifle attachments in Chicago was coupled with a ban of civilian bulletproof vests, making it easier for police to execute their victims. With the highest rate of gun ownership in the world, the American population is not about to give up its arms. But what the liberals and Democrats are pushing is to chip away at this constitutional right. Retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stephens spelled out the real goal of the anti-gun agenda when he recently called to repeal the Second Amendment. If this comes to pass, only the cops, criminals, crazies and Klan will be armed.

The push for more “background checks” gives the Feds and cops greater power to determine the “good” gun owners from the “bad.” In 1956, the icon of nonviolence, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was deemed “unsuitable” and denied a concealed carry permit when he applied after his house was bombed. The people weeded out by the state will be among those who have been swept up in the racist “war on drugs,” forever branded felons or criminals even for petty misdemeanors.

Background checks serve as another tool to identify and go after those the government perceives to be potential opponents of its class rule. Take the case of Rakem Balogun, a black man in Texas placed under FBI scrutiny for his political views and advocacy of armed self-defense. Targeted by the government as a “black identity extremist,” Balogun was deemed a “threat to the community” and faces up to ten years in prison for unlawful possession of a firearm (see “FBI Targets Black Activists,” WV No. 1128, 23 February).

Meanwhile, the Parkland killer, Nikolas Cruz, had no problem passing background checks. Cruz is an avowed racist who was known by the FBI and the state for making threats. He publicly talked about killing Mexicans, hating Jews and putting black people back in chains—a fact underplayed by the media. In many ways, he is a quintessential product of this sick, racist society.

For the Right of Black Armed Self-Defense!

Revolutionary Marxists defend the right to bear arms from the standpoint of the fight for liberating the working class, black people and all the oppressed. The

Second Amendment, derived from the 1689 English Bill of Rights, came out of the American Revolution against British colonial rule in the 18th century. The calls to ban semiautomatics attack the very core of the Second Amendment. As we wrote in “The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 43-44, Summer 1989):

“The constitutional right is not about hunting or target practice; the American colonial revolutionaries wanted the whole people armed, centering on military arms—in today’s terms something like the AK-47 [or the AR-15]—in order to be able to *kill British soldiers*, and to forestall the threat of any standing army, which they rightly regarded as the bane of liberty and the basis of tyranny.”

In fact, a crucial part of the Second Amendment has already been taken away from the populace with the banning of automatic weapons.

In a country founded on the near-complete genocide of the indigenous population and on black chattel slavery, which was codified in the Constitution, gun rights were granted only to white, property-owning males. The exclusion of citizenship for black people was justified in the infamous 1857 Dred Scott Supreme Court decision by noting that if black men were citizens they could “keep and carry arms wherever they went.”

A March 9 op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* titled, “Gun Rights Are About Keeping White Men on Top” argues that white men were and remain the only beneficiaries of the right to bear arms. Indeed, the capitalist state has long sought to disarm black people in order to fully subjugate them. But this is not an argument against the Second Amendment—it is an argument against gun control.

Great abolitionists like John Brown and Frederick Douglass knew that only force of arms could defeat the slavery. After the Civil War, black people became citizens, and the approximately 200,000 black Union troops held onto their arms as long as they could. Soon thereafter, black people were stripped of their newly won freedoms, including guns, through racist “Black Codes.” After the defeat of Reconstruction, as race-terror swept the South, anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells wrote about the need for self-defense: “A Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give.”

There is a long tradition of black armed self-defense. In the 1930s, Southern union organizers and sharecroppers defended themselves with arms. During the 1950s and ’60s, Robert F. Williams in Monroe, North Carolina, and the Deacons for Defense and Justice in Louisiana organized armed self-defense to combat Klan terror. Many black soldiers returning from Korea and Vietnam refused to put their guns down and used their military training to struggle against Jim Crow; some joined the Black Power movement. As Charles E. Cobb Jr. elaborates in his book, *This Nonviolent Stuff’ll Get You Killed*, guns kept black people alive during the civil rights movement.

Although nearly a third of Americans possess at least one gun, those standing up for the Second Amendment are por-

trayed by liberals as white racist yahoos out to hunt black people and immigrants. This perception has been reinforced by the fact that with the election of Trump, neo-Nazis and white-supremacists have been crawling out of their holes. In this context, many black people know full well that they need guns to defend themselves.

Membership in the National African-American Gun Association, known as NAAGA, has grown considerably in the last period. One pro-gun group outside of Chicago, named the 761st Gun Club after a black tank battalion in World War Two, describes itself as “unapologetically pro-black.” In Cleveland, a pastor of Fellowship Church of God promotes teaching congregants how to protect themselves with guns, which he sees as essential after the Charleston massacre. Another initiative in Ohio called the Brown Girls Project teaches black women how to legally purchase and use firearms.

This butts heads with black Democrats, who push gun control as an “answer” to crime in the inner cities and segregated ghettos. They cynically play off the fact that black people are the main victims of gun violence, living in the hopeless hell-holes that capitalism has condemned them to. Black politicians have peddled, with some effect, the lie that gun control is the way to survive the mean streets of America’s ghettos.

The black mayors and officials in power have served their bourgeois masters by seeking to keep a lid on black discontent. Thus, they supported government policies, such as the 1970s “war on crime,” the subsequent “war on drugs,” and Bill Clinton’s 1994 federal crime bill, which vastly increased mass incarceration and the number of cops on the streets. The ’94 legislation included a ban on semiautomatic weapons, inventing the specter of military-grade rifles in the hands of “gang members.” This was a racist lie, akin to Hillary Clinton describing black youth as “superpredators.” One New Jersey police chief testified before Congress at the time: “Officers are more likely to confront an escaped tiger from the local zoo than to confront an assault rifle in the hands of a drug-crazed killer on the streets.”

Recently, activist and hip-hop artist Killer Mike got heat for an interview with the National Rifle Association (NRA) in which he adamantly advocated black gun rights. Pointing to the hypocrisy of those Democrats who rally behind gun control but won’t fight to address poverty in the ghettos, the rapper slammed anti-Trump liberals: “I’m just not willing to accept you telling me on Monday that my president is Hitler and then telling me Tuesday to disarm. That didn’t go well for Jewish people when Hitler was in reign in Germany; why would I repeat the same mistake?” The interview was edited down and released by the NRA in the lead-up to the nationwide “March for Our Lives.” Accused of providing fodder to the NRA—whose CEO gave a foaming-at-the-mouth speech after the Parkland shooting against an alleged takeover of schools by communist sympathizers—Killer Mike was compelled to apologize.

The NRA is the largest group in the

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Germany Seizes Carles Puigdemont

Free Catalan *Independentistes* Now!

The following article was written in collaboration with the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, German section of the International Communist League.

On the morning of Sunday, March 25, the European Union (EU), which is dominated by German imperialism, showed its true, ugly face. In one of its first acts, the new German coalition government of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and the Social Democratic Party arrested the exiled president of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, at an *autobahn* rest stop near Schleswig and threw him in prison. The Spanish state has charged 13 leading representatives of the Catalan independence movement, including Puigdemont, with “rebellion.” Using an EU-wide arrest warrant, Spain is demanding the extradition of not just Puigdemont but also his former ministers: Clara Ponsatí, who works at a Scottish university, and Antoni Comín, Lluís Puig and Meritxell Serret, who are in Belgium. Relying on a separate international arrest warrant, Spain is also demanding that Switzerland extradite Marta Rovira, General Secretary of the Esquerra Republicana (Republican Left party).

The SpAD and the ICL join in protesting the arrest of and charges against Carles Puigdemont, leader of the Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català, and the other leaders of the Catalan independence movement. This persecution of Catalan bourgeois nationalists is part of the broad crackdown on the oppressed Catalan



Bloomberg

March 25: Mass rally in Barcelona demands freedom for Catalan independence leaders following Puigdemont’s arrest by German police.

nation and its working class. Indeed, protests in Catalonia demanding the release of Puigdemont and the others have been brutally suppressed by the police.

As proletarian internationalists, we demand the *immediate release of Carles Puigdemont and all Catalan and Basque independence activists!* Both North and South of the Pyrenees mountain range that divides Spain and France, we are for the independence of Catalonia and the Basque Country and for workers republics. As for the EU, it is a reactionary con-

glomerate under the leadership of German imperialism, assisted by France; it is an enemy of the working classes and the dependent countries of Europe. We say: *Down with the European Arrest Warrant! Down with the EU!*

Puigdemont lived in exile in Belgium for months after the Spanish central government hounded and threatened him with imprisonment of up to 30 years. His “crime” was that he organized a referendum on Catalonia’s independence last October and declared independence after

some 90 percent of voters, braving the attacks of the Spanish police, voted in favor.

Puigdemont was arrested as he returned from a tour of Switzerland and Finland, where he had held discussions on support for Catalan independence. Clearly expecting that Puigdemont would be crossing Germany on his return, the Spanish government issued a new EU arrest warrant on March 23. With the Spanish and German intelligence services and police authorities closely cooperating, the secret service kept tabs on Puigdemont’s itinerary. Central to these actions was a liaison officer of Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office in Madrid. The plot by the German and Spanish states serves their common purpose of beheading and smashing the Catalan independence movement, with the aim of preserving the Spanish prison house of peoples and maintaining the increasingly repressive, German-dominated EU intact. Aware that a breakup of Spain would threaten an implosion of the EU, German chancellor Angela Merkel has repeatedly made clear that she opposes the independence of Catalonia.

The Spanish newspaper *El País* reported on the good “police collaboration.” This good collaboration between German imperialism and Spain’s capitalist rulers in the suppression of Catalans has a history. In 1940, following the occupation of France, the Gestapo handed former Catalan president Lluís Companys over to Spanish dictator Generalissimo Franco. Companys was brutally tortured and executed by a firing squad. Last year, the spokesman of Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy’s Partido Popular, Pablo Casado, stated that there was “nothing to negotiate” with the Catalan government. He stated that Puigdemont could “end up like” Companys, an open threat of torture and murder (*Telepolis*, 10 October 2017).

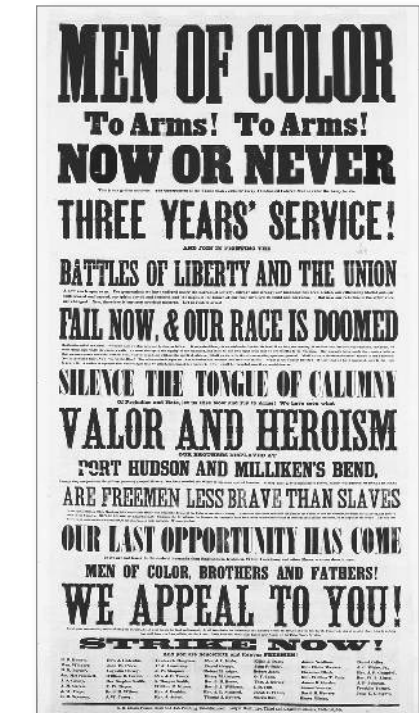
Fighting against the exploitative and repressive EU is in the most fundamental interest of the workers movement in Germany. Ultimately, it will be necessary for the German proletariat to bring down its “own” imperialist rulers through socialist revolution. Throughout Europe and internationally, we seek to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, that champion the just struggles of oppressed nations against their oppressors as crucial levers to advance the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against the capitalist rulers. For a Socialist United States of Europe, united on a voluntary basis! ■

country committed to the defense of the Second Amendment. It is simultaneously portrayed as a group of militia-style cowboy reactionaries, an image the organization certainly does little to counter. The NRA is pro-cop, so it vilifies Black Lives Matter activists as violent hoodlums. The NRA never would see fit to defend someone like Philando Castile, who in 2016 was executed after informing a Minnesota cop that he had a legal firearm on him. Instead, the NRA denounced Castile for having marijuana in his possession.

The proposal by the Trump administration and the NRA to turn underpaid and overworked teachers into police auxiliaries is a recipe for further militarizing the schools. Segregated and impoverished schools are already patrolled by armed guards and replete with metal detectors, resembling daytime prisons. Recently, black and minority students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas have protested the “police state” environment at their high school, and have opposed more security on campuses, which is a demand put forward by the “March for Our Lives” manifesto.

The Capitalist State’s “Socialist” Sycophants

Just as the Democratic Party is trying to get some electoral bang for the buck from the student demonstrations, misleadingly sold as a “grassroots movement,” its waterboys on the left have also jumped on the bandwagon. Many of those (occasionally) posturing as socialists have rallied behind the anti-Trump “resistance” and have joined the liberals in attacking the NRA with the aim of rolling back gun rights. *Jacobin* (February 26), a journal for an array of Democratic Socialists of America supporters and their ilk, goes so far as to condemn anyone on the left for criticizing gun legislation in an article titled, “The Socialist Case for Gun Control.” The piece states: “The failure of the state to safeguard black lives rarely factors into Left opposition to gun control.” Leave it to social democrats with a



Poster from 1863 calls on black men to join Union Army during Civil War.

touching faith in the capitalist state to assume that the cops, courts and prisons are meant to “safeguard black lives”!

For its part, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) appeals to the same forces of repression to determine who gets weapons. In a February 27 article called “How Do Socialists Take on Gun Fundamentalism?” Danny Katch grotesquely raises the call for a “government agency” to take over “gun training and licensing” in order to “undermine the primary recruiting tool of the NRA.” This call to strengthen the state is all part of the ISO joining the Democrats’ “resistance.” A March 13 *Socialist Worker* editorial lays out the ISO’s goal: “a different world from one where Trump and the NRA call the shots”—i.e., a world in which the Democrats reign supreme.

The latest anti-gun diatribe by Socialist Alternative (SAlt) bemoans the fact that the

“establishment Democrats” aren’t doing enough, complaining that they “have been unable to effect any serious change on gun control” (“Student Revolt Shakes America—Struggle Puts NRA on the Run,” 27 March). A separate article after the Parkland shooting touts “a socialist program for safety in schools,” which puts a pink paint job on the liberals’ demands for banning semiautomatic weapons and for strengthening background checks on gun sales.

Without the intention of irony, SAlt calls to build this liberal “movement” promoting gun control with, among other things, “strike action.” Anyone who knows labor history is aware that workers engaged in “strike action” have repeatedly had to defend their picket lines, at times with arms in hand, against armed company goons and scabs. Presumably, SAlt would have told these workers to disarm.

As Lenin insisted in his 1916 piece: “Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie will it be able, without betraying its world-historic mission, to consign all armaments to the scrap-heap. And the proletariat will undoubtedly do this, but *only when this condition has been fulfilled, certainly not before.*” Disarming the bourgeoisie requires sweeping away the capitalist order through proletarian socialist revolution, as the Bolshevik Party did in leading the proletariat of Russia to power a year later in the October Revolution.

While black people formally won armed self-defense and other basic rights with the Civil War that smashed slavery, finishing the fight for black equality and integration demands another social revolution, in which the capitalist exploiters are expropriated and their state shattered. Key to this perspective is the building of a conscious, organized vanguard party to lead the working class in the fight for black liberation. Only the working class, the producers of the wealth of society, can put an end to the horrors of war, oppression and economic misery by taking power and instituting an egalitarian socialist order. ■



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New York Transit: Death Trap for Workers

In the space of one week, two New York City transit workers died on the job: 23-year-old St. Clair Ziare Richards-Stephens and 59-year-old Stephen Livecchi. Both were members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100. Richards-Stephens, a track worker, plummeted to his death at the 125th Street station in East Harlem on March 20. Seven days later, Livecchi, a bus helper, was crushed by a bus at the College Point Depot in Flushing, Queens. After 37 years on the job, he was due to retire soon.

Since 2001, 16 transit workers have been killed performing labor crucial to keeping this city running. Responsibility for the death toll lies with the slave-driving Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bosses, and with the capitalists and their Democratic and Republican politicians who have let the transit system rot while the bondholding banks rake in billions.

Working the night shift, at 4:50 a.m. Richards-Stephens fell headlong from the upper tracks at 125th Street when a dilapidated “protective” wooden railing snapped; he died from head injuries. His company-issued helmet, which did not even come with straps, flew off during his fall. The death of this young black worker, who had been on the job for only six months, was *industrial murder*.

Andy Byford, the new president of New York City Transit (NYCT), which runs the subways, immediately went into damage-

Two Killed in One Week



St. Clair Ziare Richards-Stephens



Stephen A. Livecchi

TWU Local 100 photos

control mode, intoning that “we lost a dear NYCT colleague.” He then had new fiberglass railings installed the day after Richards-Stephens died, including in the area where his crew had been working. This was essentially an admission of guilt by NYCT for its dangerous working conditions. Many transit workers recall the horrific death of subway conductor Janell Bennerson in 2003. Following work rules, she was holding her head outside the conductor’s subway car window as her train

left the station when she was struck and killed by a gate. It was only after Bennerson died that the transit bosses lowered the gate, while blaming Bennerson for her own death.

The anti-union *New York Post* (22 March) gave the transit bosses cover by trying to blame Richards-Stephens for his own death, harping on how the six-foot-four worker weighed 350 pounds. His grieving brother, Addis Kaire, told the simple truth: “This shouldn’t have happened....

You can’t have a railing and not make sure the railing is secure.”

After Richards-Stephens’s death, the union announced a “stand down” for Maintenance of Way workers, during which they suspended work on the tracks. Some response! Transit workers told *Workers Vanguard* that during “stand downs” workers are lectured on safety by the same managers who endanger them daily through speedup and other means. Meanwhile, other NYCT workers as well as contractors were kept working on the tracks.

Any union leadership worthy of the name would have called on the entire membership to stop work in response to the deaths of both Richards-Stephens and Livecchi. Such a leadership would enforce the right of any worker to shut down unsafe worksites on the spot and would establish union safety committees, made up of elected reps and completely independent of management, to fight against hazardous working conditions. The only way that workers, including the MTA’s multiracial workforce, ever won anything was by wielding their collective power. This would require defiance of anti-union laws like New York State’s Taylor Law, which bans strikes by public employees.

In the best of times, track work is especially dangerous in the New York City subway system, which runs 24/7. Repairs have to be made while trains roll along a

continued on page 5

Zionist Bloodbath in Gaza

APRIL 2—The “Bloody Friday” assault by Israeli troops against Palestinian protesters in Gaza has left at least 18 dead and some 1,500 wounded, nearly half of them by live ammunition. Dozens more have since been injured. All the Palestinians killed and wounded were in Gaza, some shot down for simply seeking to plant their national flag on their own land. It was the worst single massacre since the 51-day Israeli assault on Gaza in 2014 in which over 2,000 Palestinians were slain.

The March 30 attack was a pre-planned bloodbath against a defenseless population trapped in Gaza, an open-air concentration camp, imprisoned on all sides by Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. In the days leading up to the protests, which numbered some 30,000 Palestinian men, women and children, the Israeli army deployed 100 snipers and several infantry brigades and chillingly made clear that there would be blood. After the massacre, a tweet on the Israeli military’s official account—later deleted—coldly stated: “Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed.” The slaughter can be seen on social media: a youth running alongside two others suddenly falls to the ground with the crack of gunfire; a man shot as he



“Bloody Friday”: Palestinian youth evacuated after being gunned down by Israeli military, March 30.

prayed. Even before protests began, troops opened fire with artillery shells, killing a farmer as he worked his land.

As usual, the U.S. imperialists backed the Israeli government’s mass murder, including by blocking a token United Nations condemnation. For his part, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu enthused: “Well done to our soldiers.” Several hundred Israelis have protested the carnage. In a piece titled,

“The Israel Massacre Forces” (*Haaretz*, 1 April), Israeli journalist Gideon Levy aptly noted: “The killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes. There’s nothing cheaper in Israel than Palestinian blood.”

Palestinian organizers set the protests to begin on March 30, which marks Land Day, when Zionist troops in 1976 shot dead six Palestinians in

Israel demonstrating against the expropriation of Arab land for Jewish settlements. The Gaza protests, known as the Great March of Return, are set to culminate on May 15, Nakba Day, which commemorates the Catastrophe of 1948 when 80 percent of Palestinians were driven out of what became the state of Israel. Adding insult to injury, the U.S. government provocatively plans to move its embassy to Jerusalem in mid May.

We Marxists fully support the right of the dispossessed Palestinian masses to return to the homes, villages and towns from which they were expelled. For this demand to be realized requires the shattering of the Zionist state from within through proletarian revolution. The Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish nations are interpenetrated peoples, both laying claim to the same portion of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of the national rights of one necessarily comes at the expense of the national rights of the other. Only within the context of a socialist federation of the Near East—i.e., the overthrow of capitalist rule throughout the region—can the conflicting national claims of the Palestinians and Israelis be equitably resolved. *Defend the Palestinian people! Hands off Gaza! Down with the blockade! All Israeli troops and settlers out of East Jerusalem and the West Bank!*