

One Year After Charlottesville



Anadolu

Above: August 2017 fascist mobilization in Charlottesville, Virginia, which culminated in the murder of Heather Heyer. Right: August 2018 protest against fascist rally in Washington, D.C.



NurPhoto

Only Labor/Black Power Can Stop the Fascists

On August 12, a score of fascists rallied just outside the White House to celebrate the one-year anniversary of their murderous rampage in Charlottesville, Virginia. Outnumbered by more than 2,000 anti-fascist protesters, these race-terrorists, guarded by an army of police, carried out their rally for “white civil rights”—code for deadly violence against black people, immigrants, Jews, leftists and the integrated union movement. In Charlottesville, where one year ago hundreds of armed fascists waving swastikas and Confederate flags stormed the streets and killed protester Heather Heyer, a state of emergency was declared. Although there was no organized fascist presence, police in riot gear flooded the streets to impede marching by anti-racist activists. Students at the University of Virginia nailed the collusion between the cops and their fascist auxiliaries with a banner reading: “Last Year They Came with Torches, This Year They Come with Badges.”

Fueled by Trump’s racist, anti-immigrant “Make America Great Again” crusade, fascist terror has been on the rise. And the cops, the day-to-day enforcers of capitalist “law and order,” protect the fascist killers. On August 18, the cops accompanied more than 100 fascists marching with guns through downtown Seattle. Two weeks prior, on August 4 in Portland, more than 400 fascists organized by Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys rallied while cops attacked counterprotesters with tear gas and flash grenades. One protester suffered a traumatic brain injury from a grenade that pierced his helmet and



WV Photo

November 1982: Spartacist League initiated 5,000-strong united-front demonstration that mobilized labor and blacks and stopped the KKK from marching in Washington, D.C.

Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party!

penetrated his skull. In Berkeley, a number of those protesting an August 5 “alt-right” rally were arrested and “doxxed” by police who posted their names and mug shots on Twitter. Doxxing leftist and anti-fascist protesters has become routine police procedure, an ominous set-up for lethal violence. We demand: Drop all charges against all anti-fascist protesters!

The fascists are paramilitary gangs whose purpose is the destruction of the

workers movement and carrying out racial and ethnic genocide. Feeding off economic misery and fomenting murderous chauvinism, the fascists recruit mainly from sections of the enraged petty bourgeoisie and unemployed. With class and social struggle at a historic low, the American rulers currently have no need to unleash their fascist thugs against the organized workers movement. But they keep these shock troops in reserve for times of social

crisis, when the normal mechanism of state repression under bourgeois democracy is not enough to restrain the workers’ organizations, black people and the oppressed, and to preserve capitalist rule.

The race-terrorists must be *crushed in the egg*, before they grow into a mass force. The power to do that lies with the working class: integrated trade unions marching at the head of all of the intended victims of the fascists and sweeping these scum off the streets. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution, wrote in the Transitional Program (1938): “The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory—and ends in the street.”

No one should be lulled by the small number of fascists that showed up in Washington, D.C. They got away with their rally, and this will encourage them to commit more acts of racist violence. The counterprotests led by groups like the International Socialist Organization, Black Lives Matter, Democratic Socialists of America and the ANSWER coalition, associated with the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL), did not aim to *stop* the fascists but to channel outrage into impotent “hate not welcome” and “protest against racism” gatherings.

Their strategy to “unite against hate” pushes the deadly illusion that fascism is merely a question of racist ideas. Fascism is not about “hate” or right-wing ideology, but lethal violence, which in this country is directed particularly against black people. The fascists hope to reverse the outcome of the Civil War that smashed black chattel slavery. In D.C., one fascist, after thanking the police for VIP escort service in and out of Washington, called on Trump, the “great white hope,” to address “the interracial rape by

continued on page 7



On Scotland and Self-Determination

25 May 2018

To Workers Vanguard:

Reading the ICL international conference document last summer, I initially drew the conclusion that as a general rule Leninists should not simply uphold the right of oppressed nations within multinational states to self-determination but affirmatively champion their national liberation. But then I considered the case of Scotland (and Wales—are there others?). The peoples in these countries are certainly oppressed within the United Kingdom. Yet despite having an active independence movement, Scotland is hardly mentioned in the conference document as published. In the 2014 referendum, the ICL, while supporting Scotland’s right to self-determination, did not advocate either a yes or no vote on the question of independence.

Assuming the party maintains this position, I would like to know on what grounds it does so in light of its new approach on the national question, and, more generally, when (barring cases of interpenetrated peoples or those where self-determination is legitimately subordinated to other questions) is it correct on true Leninist principles merely to defend an oppressed nation’s right to self-determination without calling for that right to be exercised by way of the formation of a separate national state. In particular, does the new methodology retain or abandon the principle adduced in the Workers Hammer article on the Scottish referendum that support for independence

in a given instance should depend on “the depth of national antagonism” between workers of the nations in question? To back up its conclusion that national lines in Scotland are not hard enough at present to warrant advocating separation, the article cites opinion poll numbers, which strikes me as circular: is it only principled to call for a yes vote on an independence referendum when that side is bound to win? For that matter, hasn’t the independence movement in Quebec lost a couple of referendums over the years?

To be clear, I am not necessarily suggesting that the party revise its position on Scottish independence, but merely asking, for my benefit and that of other readers, whether and to what extent the arguments formerly advanced for it are still judged to hold.

Let me also request an article or series of articles on how the Marxist program on the national question developed historically to replace those by Comrade Seymour repudiated in the conference document.

Fraternally,
Alan H.

WV replies:

Alan refers to the main document from the International Communist League’s Seventh International Conference, “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra,” which details the fight in our party against a longstanding perversion of Leninism on the national question (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 65, Summer 2017). The document stressed that for

the oppressed nations of Quebec, Catalonia and the Basque Country, which have waged bitter struggles, some going back centuries, against their forcible inclusion in multinational states (Canada, Spain and France), communists must fight for their independence as the only correct application of the right to national self-determination.

Alan asks whether this methodology requires correcting the line the Spartacist League/Britain took in the 2014 referendum in Scotland, in which our comrades supported the Scottish people’s right to decide for or against independence but did not advocate one way or the other. That position is consistent with Leninist principles and does not contradict the ICL’s recent conference decision. The right to self-determination—i.e., to political secession—also implies that a nation may choose not to separate. As for opinion polls, they can be an indication, though sometimes distorted, of national sentiment, but they are far from the only criterion for Marxists.

The key differences between Scotland and Quebec (as well as Catalonia and the Basque Country) are rooted in their respective historical development. Quebec was conquered militarily and occupied by Britain following the defeat of the French on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 and further subjugated with the suppression of the 1837-38 Patriote Rebellion. The modern Canadian state is founded upon Anglo-chauvinist oppression of the francophone people and retention of the historically Catholic Québécois nation within its borders. Quebec’s resistance to forcible assimilation has centrally been expressed through defense of the French language (see “Raising the Banner of Leninism,” page 3).

In contrast to the conquest of Quebec—not to mention Ireland—Scotland was co-opted as a junior partner in the British Empire. The 1707 Treaty of Union laid the basis for a two-way deal that was further sealed by the crushing of the 1745 Highland rebellion of the Jacobites, who were backed by the Catholic monarchy in France. In exchange for loyalty to maintaining a Protestant monarchy in Britain, Scottish merchants and aristocrats became partners in the Empire’s accumulation of vast wealth through slavery and brutal exploitation of the colonial masses. Scottish regiments became an essential part of the Empire’s military, serving in the bloody defeat of the French in Quebec and helping enforce colonial rule over India and elsewhere.

Crucially, Scotland (as well as Wales) shares a common language with England, and there are no decisive religious differences dividing the nations. Nonetheless, the Scots were and continue to be oppressed as a nation and retain a strong sense of separate national identity. For example, while the Scots have been known for their high levels of literacy which stem from the 16th-century Reformation, they have long been denigrated as uncouth and incapable of speaking “proper” English. Among the targets of such chauvinism was David Hume, pre-eminent philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment, who wrote: “Some hate me because I am not a Tory, some because I am not a Whig, some because I am not a Christian, and all because I am a Scotsman.”

Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin summed up the Marxist program on the national question as: “Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations” (“The Right of Nations to Self-Determination” [1914]). To apply this program in the concrete, each case of national oppression must be examined in its particulars and in historical context. In this regard, the depth of antagonism between the working classes of the oppressor and

oppressed nations is important. There are precious few examples of common class struggle across the national divide between the working classes of English Canada and Quebec. But the history of the British working class is very different.

Scottish workers, unlike their lords and masters, did not profit from the Empire and from early on were pitched in battle against the British ruling class, Scottish as well as English, forming bonds of solidarity with workers throughout Britain. From the militant strikes that took place in the aftermath of both World War I and the Russian October Revolution to the miners strike of 1984-85, a great many of Britain’s major class battles have been waged together by Scottish, Welsh and English workers, mainly as members of the same trade unions. Scottish and Welsh workers have often played a vanguard role in these struggles. This was in spite of the betrayals by trade-union bureaucrats and Labour Party leaders who, like Jeremy Corbyn today, were loyal to the reactionary United Kingdom and refused to uphold the right of Scotland to self-determination.

The first half of the 1970s saw tumultuous strikes throughout Britain, including by miners, that brought down the Tory government of Edward Heath. Against this backdrop, the SL/B’s 1978 founding document stated: “We are for the *right* of self-determination, but call on the Scottish people to exercise that right by choosing to stay in the same state as the other peoples of Britain” (*Spartacist Britain* No. 1, April 1978). On the other side of the coin, in the context of mass demonstrations against NATO cruise missiles in Britain in the early ’80s, the SL/B evocatively called for a “Scottish workers republic as part of the USSR,” demarcating ourselves from the anti-Soviet, pro-Labour, Unionist politics of the reformists.

National lines hardened under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, particularly following the defeat of the miners strike. On top of the destruction of manufacturing, which had devastating consequences in Scotland, the Thatcher government imposed a hated poll tax first on the Scots, considered a “lesser people” by English chauvinists. Westminster’s contempt gave new life to Scottish nationalism, which had been marginal during the heyday of the Empire. Above all, the Labour Party’s adoption of Thatcherite policies, especially under Tony Blair, drove many Scottish workers into the arms of the nationalists. In 2014, Tory prime minister David Cameron agreed to an independence referendum, arrogantly assuming an overwhelming vote for the Union. The unexpectedly close result (55 percent against and 45 percent for independence, with 85 percent of the electorate voting) was a slap in the face to Westminster. We recognize that the Scots may well opt for separation in the future, in which case we would support that outcome.

The struggle for national liberation can be expressed in anything from fighting for language rights to popular insurrections. The fact that the Spanish government tried to brutally crush the most recent Catalan referendum last October and behead the nationalist movement is just the latest confirmation that independence is the only way for Catalonia to be liberated from Castilian oppression. As the situation with Scotland continues to play out, we will maintain our defense of its right to determine its own course as part of our struggle against the oppressive United Kingdom and for a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles.

With regard to further readings, we recommend that our readers begin by studying Lenin’s writings on the national question, as our party did in hammering out the programmatic substance of the international conference document. ■



TROTSKY

Proletarian Road to Black Freedom

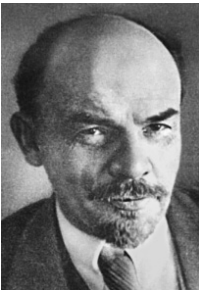
We reprint below an excerpt from a 1944 speech by Edgar Keemer who, as a member of the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, wrote a regular column called “The Negro Struggle” in the *Militant* under the name Charles Jackson (see article on page 4). Addressing the fight against Jim Crow, Keemer emphasized that full equality for black people requires the overthrow of the capitalist order. Even with the end of formal Jim Crow segregation, what Keemer laid out

then is still true today, as black oppression remains the bedrock of American capitalism.

Negroes are denied equality either through official government action or official government lack of action. The government is under control of the ruling class. That class is the capitalist class which comprises only a small minority of the population. These capitalists, through their government agencies and through their control of the means of information, indoctrinate the people with the lie that a man is inferior if the color of his skin is dark. They do this so that they can keep their economic slaves, the workers, white and black, split and fighting among themselves. Thereby they are able to spend their winters in Florida clipping stock coupons while the workers toil in the shops for a mere existence. These leeches suck the life blood of the American working class by setting up the Negro as a straw man and then shouting: “Don’t give a Black a break: give the Black the boot.” By this system of capitalism, race prejudice is made profitable.

Therefore we say that this system—capitalism—is the basic and fundamental enemy of the Negro people. Here is the spring from which flows the vile potion that cascades down to form the final stream of Negro inequality. We have found the source—let us mark it well. This is the reason why the fight against Jim Crow without a fight against capitalism, well intentioned though it may be, is an endless and fruitless fight. To establish Negro equality, we must abolish capitalism.

—“How to Win the Struggle for Negro Equality” (*Militant*, 25 November 1944)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD



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Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada

Raising the Banner of Leninism

We reprint below an article from *Workers Tribune* No. 1 (Summer/Fall 2018), English-language publication of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada. It was translated from *République ouvrière* No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2018). For documents and motions related to the article, please see the issue of *Workers Tribune*.

After launching *République ouvrière* last summer, the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada is now launching a new English-language publication, *Workers Tribune*. These two papers are the direct outcome of our international fight against a longstanding perversion of Leninism on the national question, which had undermined certain aspects of the revolutionary program of the International Communist League (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 65, Summer 2017). This perversion was especially flagrant in Canada, a country defined by the oppression of one nation by another, where our section based in English Canada had long capitulated to the anti-Québécois chauvinism of its own bourgeoisie.

By decisively breaking from these politics, we have laid the basis for building an authentically Leninist party, which places the fight against national oppression at the heart of its program. Such a perspective has never been correctly implemented by any of the groups claiming to be Marxist in Canada. The history of the Canadian left is littered with the wreckage of organizations which crashed on the shoals of the national question. We seek to learn from the past and to correctly apply the lessons of the October 1917 Russian Revolution to the Québécois and Canadian context. Our two publications will be our tools for this, and it is through their pages that we will seek to apply our revolutionary program to reality. In this issue of *WT*, we are reprinting some key documents of our internal struggle, edited for publication, in order to show the process through which we came to reclaim our Marxist continuity on the national question.

The publication of two separate papers, one for English-speaking Canada and the other for Quebec, flows from our understanding that the Leninist vanguard has specific tasks in the oppressor nation and in the oppressed nation. Quebec was conquered by force and militarily occu-



For Quebec Independence and Socialism!

pied by the British Empire in 1759-60. The position of French Canadians as an oppressed national minority was later consolidated with the bloody repression of the democratic revolution of the Patriotes in 1837-38. The blood of the Patriotes and the oppression of francophones are the mortar with which the modern Canadian state was built. This understanding must be the foundation for any revolutionary perspective in this reactionary state, held together by the oppression of Quebec and by the British monarchy.

Our two papers represent our perspective of building two separate parties in two separate states. In the absence of an independent Quebec, our current task is to build a binational revolutionary party which fights for Quebec's national liberation and for socialism. The building of such a party is an integral part of the ICL's fight to reforge the Fourth Interna-

tional. The communist movement is by definition internationalist, and it is essential that the proletariat possess an international party that unifies the workers across national divisions and coordinates the interdependent struggles of the workers of all countries.

For a Workers Republic of Quebec!

Taking the same name as the paper of the celebrated Irish revolutionary James Connolly, *République ouvrière* (Workers Republic) seeks to be the voice of Leninism in Quebec. Quebec independence is a just cause which we defend without preconditions, whether under capitalism or in a workers state. As the left-nationalist intellectual Pierre Falardeau said in an interview:

"Freedom has value in itself, women's liberation is not for something, it is pos-

itive in itself. So, the freedom of peoples is the same, we shouldn't put.... For me, if you put conditions on this, you're not progressive, you're an asshole."

Unlike the nationalists, we do not think that the proletariat and the bourgeoisie of a given nation share common interests, and we seek to channel the fight against national oppression along class lines. Since the 1970s, the hard fights waged by the Québécois proletariat have been endlessly deflected by the union bureaucracy into support for the Parti Québécois [PQ]. The workers of Quebec have interests directly counterposed to those of the parties of the Quebec bourgeoisie, whether the PQ, the Liberal Party or the right-wing Coalition Avenir Québec. *RO* will wage a bitter struggle to break the chains that continue to tie the workers to the nationalist bourgeoisie, chains that have led them to countless defeats.

In contrast to most of the Quebec left, we know that nothing good can be expected from the populists of Québec Solidaire. QS is not a "lesser evil" compared to the parties of the bourgeoisie and it fundamentally shares the same program, seeking only to apply a few cosmetic measures to this rotting capitalist system. We must expose the dead end that is QS, along with its pseudo-Marxist waterboys. Québécois workers cannot be truly free in a "left" capitalist Quebec. What is necessary is a republic where the workers are in power. This perspective is expressed in our slogan: *For independence and socialism!*

Workers Tribune: Marxist, Anglophone, Defender of Quebec

Apart from *Spartacist*, our international journal, *Spartacist Canada* has been the main paper of our tendency in Canada since 1975. Thus it was an important link to revolutionary continuity on a series of key questions for the international proletariat. *SC* was unique in Canada in its fight against capitalist restoration in the USSR and for the defense of the gains of the remaining deformed workers states (China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos). *SC* fought against illusions in the social-democratic NDP [New Democratic Party], exposed the Canadian bourgeoisie's

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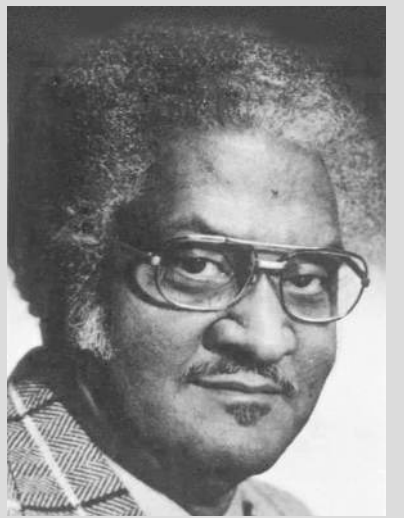
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The Story of Ed Keemer Tribute to Black Socialist and Abortion Doctor



Vinco Press

by Ruth Ryan

Dr. Edgar Keemer was a courageous black physician who performed thousands of abortions for poor and desperate women under conditions of complete illegality for decades before the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. His story, which has largely been lost to history, is detailed in his autobiography, *Confessions of a Pro-Life Abortionist* (1980), unfortunately out of print. It is an inspiring account of the fight not only for women's rights but also for black freedom and the socialist liberation of humanity. Imprisoned for his defiance of anti-abortion laws and hauled into court for refusing to bow to the Jim Crow racism of the military in World War II, Keemer was also, for a time, a member of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). There he was known for his real flair for bringing revolutionary Marxist politics to black workers who were among the most militant fighters in the struggle for industrial unions.

Keemer was born in Washington, D.C., in 1913, and learned the names and life histories of his slave ancestors as well as the story of his father's uncle who was lynched in 1875. Against all odds, his father, who came from a poor rural background, studied chemistry and became a pharmacology professor. Inheriting his father's defiance of racial injustice, when Keemer was confronted with Jim Crow segregation as a school boy in Nashville, he refused to sit in the "colored" seats on the city's buses. Instead, for seven years, he walked three miles each way to and from school.

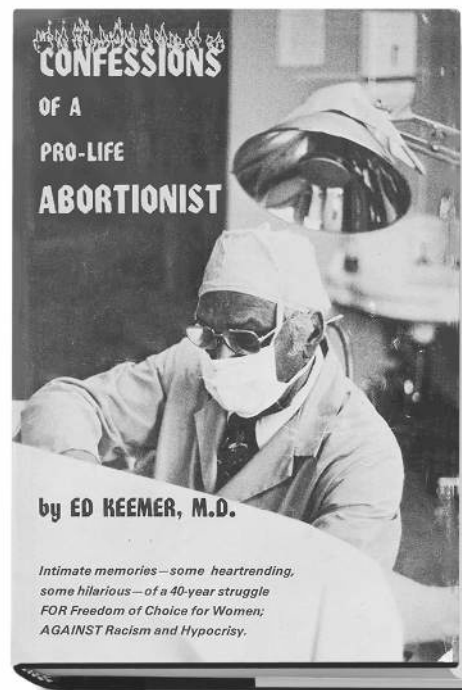
Keemer managed to graduate from college and medical school under the crushing conditions of the Great Depression, standing up to the racist taunts of white medical students who called him "boy" and "Sam." Then, as a practicing physician in Indiana, he was routinely excluded from pub-

lic accommodations, denied membership in the local medical society and refused hospital admitting privileges. He and his wife, also a physician, lived in poverty as most of their rural patients, both black and white, could not afford to pay.

Early in their practice in Indiana, a 19-year-old woman, daughter of a preacher, asked for an abortion, threatening to kill

could make a living. Additionally, the county welfare system was paying for doctors' visits.

Keemer set up a practice in Detroit that included performing abortions. At first, his patients were the relatives of black physicians. But, since he was the only physician performing safe abortions in a clean clinical setting, the referrals multiplied.



Left: Ed Keemer's autobiography recounts his lifelong struggle for women's and black rights. Right: Keemer's pamphlet against Jim Crow, written under the pen name Charles Jackson, was published by the Socialist Workers Party and sold 10,000 copies in three weeks.



herself if the Keemers would not help end her pregnancy. Keemer recounted that, to his shame and against his wife's pleading, he refused. The young woman carried out her deadly promise that same night. Keemer soon came to understand that his patient was the woman, not the embryo. Describing what he means by "pro-life abortionist," he wrote in his autobiography: "Slowly the realization emerged that by *not* performing that abortion, I had committed more of a criminal act by far than terminating her early pregnancy would have been. I had taken an oath to *save* human lives when I became a doctor, not to destroy them."

Vowing that he would oblige the next time a desperate patient asked for an abortion, Keemer went to the top abortionist on the East Coast, "Dr. G," for training and supplies. At the time, vacuum aspiration was not available and dilation and curettage required anesthesia. The other method was the application of Leunbach's Paste which, injected across the cervix into the uterus, precipitated a miscarriage within 24 hours. Keemer enhanced the composition of the paste in collaboration with his father and improved the sterility of the technique. He also added a next-day home visit to the patient to make sure all went as expected.

In the late 1930s, Keemer went to New York City looking for a paying medical practice that would include hospital privileges. He found his colleagues—black doctors—working as railway porters at night to make ends meet. Chicago was no better. It was in Detroit, where tens of thousands of auto workers had been unionized as a result of the great sit-down strikes of 1936-37, that Keemer found he

Considering it his particular duty to assist poor and working-class women, Keemer described his patients: indigent women for whom a third or fifth or seventh child would be a disaster; women who would lose their jobs and homes by continuing a pregnancy; young women unable to finish their education who would raise a child in abject poverty; women who would resort to back-alley abortions or attempt self-abortion that could end in mutilation, infection and death.

In her book *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (1997), Professor Leslie Reagan wrote of Keemer's practice:

"The fee Keemer charged for his first abortion in the late 1930s was \$15; by the 1960s he charged on a sliding scale up to \$125. If the procedure failed, Keemer returned the fee. In the unusual case where a dilation and curettage was needed, Keemer sent the woman to the hospital, called in a specialist, and paid all fees as well as any money lost by the patient in missing work. Keemer protected his patients by providing after-care; his sense of financial responsibility protected him from complaints and legal interference."

Defying the Jim Crow Military

During World War II, Keemer received a notification letter, sent to doctors at the time, instructing them either to enlist in the military as a physician or else be drafted into the Army as a private. Keemer went to enlist as a physician in the Navy but was ridiculed with racial slurs and told that as a black man he could only mop floors or work in the kitchen. When he was later drafted into the Army as a private, Keemer refused induction, stating, "I

will not be drafted as a private since I have been turned down as an officer in the navy because of my color. I'll go to jail first."

He came under enormous pressure to submit, and not only from FBI interrogation. He was urged to give in from all sides. Keemer recalled a local NAACP leader arguing: "God damn it, Keemer, this system has flaws, but it's the best in the world and some of us Negroes are doing quite well by it. Don't spoil it for us." He received an equally patriotic appeal from a representative of the reformist Communist Party (CP).

After June 1941, under the direction of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, the CP in the U.S. peddled the lie that World War II was a "great democratic war against fascism" and was among the most rabid supporters of American imperialism. Having long abandoned any shred of Marxist class principle, the Stalinist CP championed government strikebreaking, supported the internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps and, as they did in Keemer's case, opposed the fight against Jim Crow segregation in the military. In contrast, as Keemer recounted, only one person "came not to lecture me but to help me win my struggle. He was a member of the Socialist Workers Party."

Unlike the CP, the Trotskyists of the SWP remained true to the program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism. The SWP recognized that World War II, like World War I, was a conflict between the imperialist powers to redistribute the world. Calling for the defeat of all the imperialist combatants, the SWP at the same time steadfastly fought for the defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state despite its Stalinist bureaucratic misleaders. On the home front in the U.S., the Trotskyists championed the cause of working-class struggle, the fight for black rights and the defense of all the oppressed.

The SWP referred Keemer to an ACLU lawyer, who went after the draft board for racial discrimination. Newspapers ran stories about his case and letters came from other black people congratulating him on his stand. As Keemer wrote: "The ones that moved me most came from black soldiers overseas who informed me that racism was being practiced even on the front lines in this so-called 'war against racist Nazi Germany.'" When Keemer's case finally went to court, the prosecutor moved to dismiss the charges. The draft board dropped the induction order. But the FBI continued to hound Keemer and pump his friends and associates for information about him. Keemer was characteristically unintimidated.

Inside the Socialist Workers Party

Keemer's discussions with SWP members convinced him that racial oppression and imperialist war were inherent to the capitalist system. He joined the party in 1943, expressing his commitment to the fight to replace "capitalism with socialism wherein every man and every woman would be guaranteed a satisfying function in society and no person would be allowed to parasitize another."

Under the pen name Charles Jackson, Keemer wrote weekly articles in the SWP's newspaper, the *Militant*, some of which are reprinted in a collection of writings from the SWP press called *Fighting*



Bettmann

1944: Police raid apartment where an illegal abortion was being performed, removing patient and arresting doctor.

Racism in World War II (1980). His writings illustrated the profound contradiction between the American rulers’ false claim of defending “democracy” and the brutal reality of workers being sent to die in the bosses’ war for imperialist plunder and domination. In “The Case of Milton Henry” (6 May 1944) about a black second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps who was court-martialed and discharged, Keemer wrote:

“The segregated, second-class, Jim Crow army ‘for Negroes’ is a dead giveaway to the hypocritical character of the high-sounding phrases such as ‘liberation of oppressed people,’ ‘four freedoms,’ etc., which are being applied to this world-wide slaughter.”

Other articles by Keemer included: “Plight of Japanese-Americans” protesting the mass internment of Japanese Americans; “Hellish Homecoming” on the shameful treatment of black servicemen arriving home after WWII; and “Nigerian Workers Set the Tune” about strikes and revolts against colonial rule in Africa. Keemer’s pamphlet *A Practical Program to Kill Jim Crow* sold 10,000 copies in three weeks, a record for the SWP. This fact was noted in the FBI records that Keemer acquired decades later under the Freedom of Information Act.

Keemer’s autobiography describes the physical attacks on SWP members doing political work under the hyper-patriotic, repressive conditions of World War II. He recalled chairing a party meeting when a firebomb was thrown up the stairway and attendees narrowly escaped death. Eighteen of his comrades, leaders of the SWP and the Minneapolis Teamsters Local 544, were imprisoned for their opposition to the war. Throughout this time, Keemer continued to work three days a week as a doctor, still performing abortions.

By 1946 Keemer had built a powerful SWP local in Detroit centered on militant black workers. He proposed that the party launch an independent organization committed to the struggle for black equality—a transitional organization to address the felt needs of black people and to recruit them to a fighting Trotskyist program. Keemer’s proposal was referred to the SWP’s Trotsky School meeting where members of the National Committee, the party’s leadership body, were in attendance. It was roundly rejected.

Instead, the party adopted a doomed policy of joining the thoroughly legalistic, petty-bourgeois NAACP—the same NAACP that had urged Keemer to capitulate and be drafted as a private in the Jim Crow Army. Black militants who had broken with the liberal conciliationism of the NAACP in order to become Marxists were reluctant to pursue work in that organization. Not long after his proposal was defeated, Keemer resigned from the SWP, expressing his demoralization “that the party was making little headway.”

One SWP National Committee member who was dissatisfied with the rejection of Keemer’s proposal and the party’s orientation to the NAACP was Richard Fraser.



Fraser family

Richard S. Fraser, Keemer’s comrade while in the SWP, pioneered Trotskyist understanding of black oppression in the U.S. Selected writings by Fraser are available in *Prometheus Research Series No. 3*.

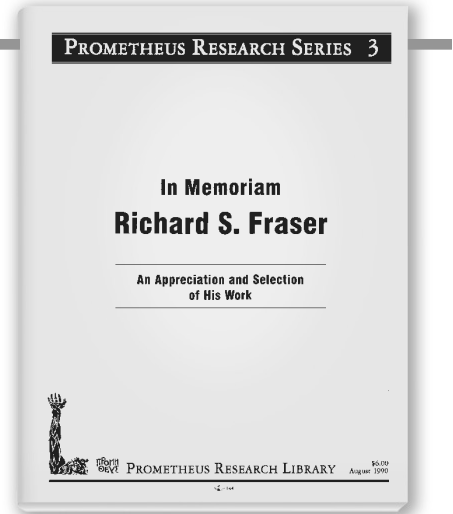
As he wrote, “The basic elements in the NAACP argument, which had been put forward by all the leading people, was that they couldn’t believe or admit to the maturity of the existing consciousness among the hundreds and thousands of blacks, who were militantly pressing toward integration” (“On Transitional Organizations” [1983] printed in “In Memoriam, Richard S. Fraser,” *Prometheus Research Series No. 3*, August 1990). Fraser’s concerns led him to undertake a serious study of black oppression in the U.S., concluding that the SWP lacked a coherent program which corresponded to the actual living struggle of black people for integration and equality.

Against the liberal integrationists who looked to pressure the racist, bourgeois rulers to grant equality for black people, and also against the despairing program of black nationalism, Fraser argued that the only road to black liberation lies in the revolutionary proletarian struggle to overthrow the capitalist system in which the vicious segregation and oppression of black people are rooted. [For more information, see “In Defense of Revolutionary Integrationism,” *Spartacist* (English Edition) No. 49-50, Winter 1993-94.] Fraser was a mentor to the Spartacist League on this strategic question, and we carry forward his program of revolutionary integrationism.

After leaving the SWP, Keemer still considered himself a “sympathizer with international socialism.” He redoubled his medical practice, continuing to risk his freedom and his medical license by performing abortions, which had become the mainstay of his practice.

From Jailed Abortion “Conspirator” to Vindicated Hero

In 1956, Detroit homicide detectives raided Keemer’s clinic and arrested him for conspiracy to perform abortions. The case came before a fiercely conservative Roman Catholic judge, and Keemer’s patients were threatened with five years in prison unless they testified against him.



Only four women agreed, three of whom testified that the abortions were performed to save their lives. The prosecution could not find a single doctor to testify against Keemer. However, one white female patient was relentlessly bullied by the prosecution until she agreed that she was unsure whether it was a speculum or “something” else that had been inserted in her vagina during treatment. The prosecutor’s insinuation of rape was an explosive appeal to white racism. Keemer was convicted and sentenced to up to five years in prison and his medical license revoked.

After a month in the notorious Jackson Prison, he was transferred to the Detroit

plot to decrease the black population and the black vote.

Keemer also took on the anti-woman chauvinism of the black nationalists. Addressing their meetings, he argued that women, not men, have the right to choose: “If a sister chooses to defer her family until later, she goddamned well has a right to the same safe and legal treatment as a middle-class white woman.” Taking on the retrograde idea that the primary role of women was to breed more black children, Keemer exposed the nationalists for relegating black women to the same role of forced childbearing that had enriched the slaveholders. At the same time, he vigorously opposed forced abortion and forced sterilization. In one 1973 letter published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Keemer denounced the forced sterilization of eleven teenagers in a federally funded birth control clinic in Alabama.

By 1972, New York and California had legalized abortion, and Michigan was having a referendum to do the same. Ten days before the vote, Keemer’s office was raided and patients, staff, doctors and nurses were arrested. The abortion referendum failed, but there was an outpouring of support for Keemer. His patients filed suit against the Catholic prosecutor and the five cops responsible for the arrests, and they won.

In the context of mass mobilizations for women’s rights and ongoing protests against the Vietnam War, the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1973 landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion in the first trimester. Congratulations to Keemer



1972: Women and Revolution activists around the Spartacist League at abortion-rights demonstration in Boston.

House of Corrections. Here a “high prison officer” arranged for Keemer to perform an abortion on the officer’s daughter. This was not the first time that a government official, including police, referred family members to Keemer for a safe abortion. In prison, Keemer taught reading classes, worked as a librarian and assisted in group therapy for drug addicts (as well as fermenting “spud juice” moonshine in the attic over the library). After 14 months behind bars, he was paroled but barred from working in the medical field in any capacity.

In the 1960s, Keemer participated in civil rights marches in Atlanta and Birmingham and met with Malcolm X. Recalling his conversations with young civil rights activists, he wrote of being “struck by their militant attitudes,” concluding “that the nonviolent strategy of Martin Luther King would not win support of the militant youth.”

Times were changing. After Keemer repeatedly petitioned to have his Michigan medical license restored, the medical board eventually gave him that victory, determining that he should never have been convicted in the first place. Back in Detroit, Keemer resumed performing abortions and became active in the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws. For the first time, Keemer realized the parallels between women’s oppression and black oppression. He aggressively addressed the argument, still heard today, that abortion is genocide against black people. Among others in the civil rights movement, Jesse Jackson and Dick Gregory argued that abortion was a

poured in and he basked in the glow of vindication, only regretting that his father, who had supported him throughout his life, had not lived to see it. Nonetheless, Keemer warned: “I can’t believe that the struggle will be over and that they will just lie down and give up. We can expect them to resort to all kinds of means to bypass and to defeat this new-won freedom for women.” No sooner had abortion been legalized than the war against it commenced—from the halls of Congress to state legislatures, and the firebombing of clinics and murder of abortion doctors by anti-abortion fanatics. Today, the limited access to abortion granted in 1973 hangs by a thread.

Dr. Ed Keemer had a profound understanding that the denial of access to safe, legal abortion especially targets poor, minority and working-class women. According to Keemer’s autobiography, he performed some 30,000 abortions under conditions of illegality, defiantly risking his career, his freedom and his life to help these women. It is a fitting juncture to resurrect the story of his life to inform and inspire a new generation with the understanding that any gains for women under capitalism can only be won through mass social struggle. And these gains can be extended and deepened only when the capitalist system in which exploitation, black oppression and the subordination of women are rooted has been overthrown. Only in an egalitarian socialist society will every man and woman, in Keemer’s words, “be guaranteed a satisfying function in society and no person would be allowed to parasitize another.” ■

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No. 26

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We Need a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!



Spremo/Toronto Star



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Left: Police repression against protesters demanding that Montreal's English-language McGill University be turned into a French-language institution, March 1969. Right: Canadian troops occupy Montreal during October Crisis in 1970. Quebec's Quiet Revolution broke hold of Catholic church and saw spike in pro-independence sentiment and left-wing politics.

Quebec and Canada...

(continued from page 3)

racism and hypocrisy toward immigrants and denounced its military interventions abroad. We proudly defend this aspect of our heritage and lay claim to it. However, we cannot continue to publish a paper that throughout its existence was incapable of putting forward a consistent Leninist approach on the strategic question in Canada: the Quebec national question. Until 1995, its articles on Quebec openly capitulated to the chauvinism of the anglophone bourgeoisie and put forward an assimilationist position that defended the oppression of Quebec.

We finally adopted a line in favour of independence in 1995, following a fight led by comrade Robertson, the founder of our international tendency. Even though this change represented a qualitative improvement of our program, the conclusions of that fight had never really been implemented and the section had not broken definitively with its Anglo-chauvinist framework. *Spartacist Canada* is also not an adequate name for a paper that puts forward the perspective of dismantling the unity of Canada through Quebec independence. Thus we are launching *Workers Tribune* to reclaim Leninism and break decisively with this Anglo-chauvinist past. This paper is founded on the principle that “a nation cannot become free and at the same time continue to oppress other nations”—a quotation from a speech against the oppression of Poland given by Friedrich Engels in 1847 that we are proudly displaying on the *WT* masthead.

The Canadian bourgeoisie maintains its ideological hold on the workers of English Canada through sacrosanct Canadian

chauvinist unity. This poison is loyally transmitted into the working class through the NDP social democrats and the union bureaucracy. The English Canadian proletariat must at all costs defend the rights of Quebec, and champion Quebec independence if it wants to break politically from its own bourgeoisie and lead a successful fight for its own liberation. As Lenin said:

“The proletariat of the oppressor nations must not confine themselves to general, stereotyped phrases against annexation and in favour of the equality of nations in general, such as any pacifist bourgeois will repeat.... The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by ‘their own’ nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words....”

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

The question of Quebec's national oppression goes hand-in-hand with the British monarchy: these are the two elements that make Canada what it is today and without which it would in fact have little reason to exist. That doesn't prevent the reformist left from embracing the lie of a “progressive” Canada and burying the fact that the head of state is, to cite her official title, “Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith” (loyally represented by the governor general). *WT* has the duty to emphasize the reactionary role of the institutions of the monarchy and will work relentlessly to lead the working-class fight to abolish these relics of the Middle Ages. The power of the monarchy is far from being purely symbolic, and it has at its disposal an entire arsenal of anti-democratic measures. Notably, the governor general has the power to dismiss an elected government and dissolve parliament, as well as the power to

decree emergency measures to suspend democratic freedoms. These powers were invoked during the 1970 October Crisis to repress the Québécois workers movement, supporters of independence and the courageous militants of the Front de libération du Québec. **Abolish the monarchy!**

WT will also expose the Trudeauite lie of multiculturalism, which, under the cover of a great mosaic that is supposedly open and inclusive, in fact aims to assimilate Quebec, while burying the brutal oppression of immigrants in this country. The anglophone bourgeois media constantly tries to portray the movement for independence and Quebec's national rights as fundamentally racist. Our newspapers will denounce this Quebec-bashing, while opposing the very real racist backwardness that exists in Quebec and in Canada, as in all capitalist societies. Our articles will be in the vanguard of the fight to mobilize the workers movement in defense of ethnic minorities. **Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

Workers Tribune and *République ouvrière* thus embody the conception that communists must fight as a tribune of the people. As Lenin said:

“The Social-Democrat's ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

— *What Is To Be Done?*, 1902

Canadian capitalism, based on the brutal oppression of the whole working class, is also marked by the special oppression of the Quebec nation, Indigenous peoples, immigrants and women. Thus the interim task of building a binational party goes hand-in-hand with that of constructing a leadership composed of 70 percent Québécois and oppressed minorities.

The Fight Against Anglo Chauvinism

The reason we now have the basis to construct a binational organization and have been able to correct our programmatic deficiencies is that for the first time we have a real existence in Quebec. Following the 2012 student strike, the Trotskyist League recruited a group of student activists to the revolutionary program of the ICL. Our Montreal comrades were recruited to our deficient program on the national question, but what the section had written about Quebec before our 1995 line change was hidden from them. In the summer and fall of 2016, the Canadian section was shaken by an important internal struggle. With international help, our Montreal comrades read for the first time certain pre-1995 articles, notably the article “Bilingual Air Traffic Control Dispute Rocks Canada” (*SC* No. 8, September

1976). This article was well known in the ICL and was considered for a long time as a model for its treatment of the Quebec national question.

In 1976, the English-speaking air traffic controllers and pilots of CATCA and CALPA (Canadian Air Traffic Control Association and Canadian Air Line Pilots Association) called a strike against the introduction of bilingualism in air communications. The French-speaking workers (organized in the Association des Gens de l'Air) refused to join the strike and fought for bilingualism in air traffic control. This issue raised two questions: the question of safety and the question of the linguistic oppression of French speakers. The fight for the right to speak French at work was one of the motor forces of the [1960s] Quiet Revolution, and the right of air traffic control workers to speak French among their colleagues (outside of air traffic communications) is elementary. But in this particular case, this legitimate struggle also confronted a question of safety, because it is in fact safer and more rational to have a single language for air traffic control. Rather than explaining this problem starting from opposition to national oppression, the article expresses complete contempt for the linguistic aspirations of the Québécois and capitulates to Anglo chauvinism:

“The Quebec nationalists' demand for French unilingualism in Quebec demonstrates their willingness to sacrifice the fight against oppression of French-speakers throughout Canada in exchange for the ‘right’ to impose French in one province. This position has profoundly reactionary consequences, in effect linguistically ghettoizing Quebec and depriving French speakers in the province of any access to English, the dominant language of the North American political economy.”

On reading this article, the Québécois comrades were outraged and wrote a document denouncing its Anglo chauvinism, while also defending bilingualism in air traffic control. Though they were right about the central question, the utter insensitivity of the article, they did not distinguish the question of language from that of safety. Recognizing the chauvinism of the article, the international comrades Coelho and Robertson were able to convince the comrades of the need for *one* language for air traffic control. This convergence, as well as the support of some anglophone cadres, allowed us to lay the basis for reorganizing a genuinely binational section in Quebec and Canada. It was this principled fusion that was the lever for later extending the fight on the national question to the International.

A major bone of contention was that even if the ICL was not for independence prior to 1995, it had nevertheless always defended Quebec's right to self-determination, an idea that was defended by many of the International's historic cadres. In reality, at every key moment, we opposed the exercise of this right. Though comrade Robertson first raised in 1976 that it was necessary to stand for Quebec independence, this was unanimously rejected by the rest of the international leadership. In 1977, we published

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the conclusions of this discussion, reaffirming our line *against* independence. Then, when the question was posed concretely by the 1980 referendum [on Quebec independence], the Trotskyist League called for a boycott. For Marxists, a boycott is an active tactic which looks to invalidate the result of the vote. In 1907, Lenin explained that:

“Boycott is the most decisive means of struggle, which rejects not the form of organisation of the given institution, but its very existence. Boycott is a declaration of open war against the old regime, a direct attack upon it.”
— “Against Boycott”

With this line, not only were we defending keeping Quebec within the oppressive framework of Canada, but we were also calling for mobilizing the Anglo-Canadian working class *behind its own bourgeoisie* to *smash* the Quebec referendum. The Trotskyist League did not defend self-determination any more than Trudeau did. From the time of the Conquest, the only principled position for revolutionaries was to call for independence for Quebec. In the 1980 referendum it was imperative to call for the victory of the “yes” vote.

This refusal to defend the Quebec nation’s right to exist was very clearly expressed in our earlier articles on the language question, where we vehemently opposed Law 101. In defending “bilingualism,” *SC* in fact defended the privileges of English and accepted the inevitability of forced assimilation of the Québécois. This political position remained intact despite our line change in favour of independence in 1995; it was only in the course of our international struggle that we broke decisively with this program.

French has always been a dirty language in the eyes of the anglophone ruling class. For a long time there was no question of speaking it in government and the business world: “Speak White!” The anglophone elite had an explicit assimilationist policy toward Quebec and sought to reduce the weight of French speakers through an influx of immigrants who would be integrated in English. With a



Behrmann

July 1965:
Pro-independence
protest on
anglophone-
nationalist
Dominion Day
in Montreal.

minority of francophones, no risk of separation. Law 101, adopted by the Quebec government, allows for the maintenance of a francophone majority while remaining in the framework of the Canadian Confederation. As Leninists, we understand that the equality of languages requires a fight against privileges for the *dominant* language. To this day, English has never lost its status as the language of the oppressors in Quebec. Thus we defend Law 101 and support immigrants being integrated in Quebec by learning French, while raising the demand for free, quality language instruction. Law 101 is nonetheless only a partial expression of the right of self-determination. The only viable solution remains independence.

Reclaiming Our
Leninist Continuity

Quebec is a drop of francophone water in an anglophone ocean. However, the

Québécois proletariat is one of the most militant on the continent. While the unionization rate is about 10 percent in the U.S. and nearly 30 percent in English Canada, in Quebec it is nearly 40 percent. The history of class struggle shows that Quebec could well be the weak link of capitalism in North America. But unlocking the revolutionary potential of the working class cannot be accomplished without a vanguard party. The ICL’s struggle against the chauvinist Hydra and the publication of our new newspapers are laying the programmatic base for building such revolutionary parties in Quebec and Canada. The tasks that our modest nucleus confronts are enormous. We must undertake the work that should have been done from the beginning of our 40 years as a section, by studying and applying to Quebec the Marxist principles on essential questions such as a workers party, women’s oppression and the nature of the Canadian state.

Fascists...

(continued from page 1)

black men of 40,000 white women every year.” Defense of “white womanhood” has long been the battle cry for KKK lynch-mob terror.

The liberal politics of the D.C. protests against the fascists were captured in the numerous signs such as, “Bigotry Has No Place in Our Democracy.” Such pleas fit neatly into the Democratic Party’s portrayal of the bigoted Trump administration as some “un-American” aberration. Far from it. This country was founded on the genocide of Native Americans and built on the backs of black slaves. Racial oppression is at the core of the American capitalist order, whether administered by Republicans or Democrats.

For its part, the bourgeois media gave loads of airtime to the fascist filth around the time of the rally. The liberals at National Public Radio provided a platform for Jason Kessler, the organizer of this year’s “Unite The Right 2” protest as well as last year’s Charlottesville horror, in the name of presenting his views. Fascist “views” are expressed through lynch ropes, bullets and gas chambers. Militants who buy the liberals’ “free speech” argument must be warned, as our forebears in the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party stressed in *Socialist Appeal* (3 March 1939): “The workers who spend all their time and energy in the abstract discussion of the Nazis’ ‘democratic rights’... will end their discussion under a Fascist club in a concentration camp.”

The mostly black Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689, which operates D.C.’s transit system, had the power to stop the fascists from even getting to their rally site. After transit management made plans to provide special train service for the fascists, Local 689 president Jackie Jeter blew the whistle, declaring that the

union will “draw the line at giving special accommodation to hate groups and hate speech.” But these were empty words.

Management did run a special train with a designated car to get the fascists and a gaggle of press from the Vienna station in suburban Virginia to D.C. And the union leadership did *nothing* to stop this. Two top union officials were present at the Vienna station when service was provided to the fascist killers, and one even boarded the train to “witness” the scene. After the rally, the fascists were transported back to safety the same way. Black workers operating those trains described feeling “crushed” and “devastated.” They were betrayed by their own union leaders.

Jeter has tried to cover up the union tops’ treachery by placing the blame on transit general manager Paul Wiedefeld, who had claimed that the plans had been scrapped. Wailing that he “lied,” she calls for his firing. Jeter said the union will “talk to politicians” and organize “as tax payers” so that this doesn’t happen again.

These labor bureaucrats have no intention or clue how to organize real union power! The ATU should have shut down the train, literally stopping the fascists and their police escorts in their tracks. Jeter, who heads the Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO, had the connections with other labor forces to back up such actions. Other integrated D.C.-area unions such as the Teamsters, Postal Workers and Laborers could have been mobilized to show up at Vienna station and make sure the train didn’t run. What could have been a much-needed victory for labor and minorities ended in a demoralizing defeat because of the labor tops’ reliance on the bosses’ word and the capitalist politicians’ good graces. This class-collaborationist program has disarmed the unions in the face of the bosses’ decades-long class war, which has led to the driving down of wages, benefits and working conditions.

The power that workers have to stop the fascists was shown in a small but real way in Washington, D.C., in November 1982, when the Spartacist League initiated a united-front labor/black mobilization against a planned KKK march called against immigrants. Some 250,000 leaflets proclaiming “STOP THE KKK! Be where the Klan says they’re going to start their march!” were distributed. The action was endorsed by over 70 union officials, exec boards and union locals around the country. Some 5,000 people, including many black D.C. residents whose families had firsthand experience with the terror of Southern nightriders, came out behind the power of the organized labor movement, *stopped the Klan* and took over the streets for a victory celebration.

At the recent D.C. counterprotest, one black demonstrator who bought a subscription to *Workers Vanguard* said with pride, “You know we stopped them in 1982.” There is a reason why the memory of this action resonates in the city to this day. Our purpose was not only to spike a dangerous fascist threat but to promote among labor and black militants an understanding of the social power of the working class and the need for a revolutionary workers party, one built in political opposition to both the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties.

The 1982 success required a constant political battle against Democrats like black D.C. mayor Marion Barry, whose cops did everything they could to try to intimidate the anti-Klan protesters. It also required combating the reformists of Workers World (from which the PSL later split), who tried but failed to sabotage the labor/black mobilization by organizing a diversionary rally well away from the Klan’s intended march route. Our mobilization showed in embryo how a workers party in this country could act as a tribune of the people and fight on behalf of all the oppressed, with labor at the head

The first issue of *Iskra* (1900) was a clear declaration of Lenin’s group’s reason for existing—of the need for a solid Marxist party composed of professional revolutionaries, defined in opposition to revisionist and reformist ideas, especially the widespread economism of that period. The *Militant* No. 1 (1928) put forward a sharp defense of the program of Trotsky’s Left Opposition, against opportunism and Stalinist bureaucratism and for a Leninist party. Practically all of the first issue of *Spartacist* (1964) was a defense of Marxism on Cuba, the black question and, fundamentally, the need for an authentic Trotskyist leadership against the rapidly degenerating U.S. Socialist Workers Party, whose leadership had just expelled us because of our principled struggle to uphold the Leninist program. Each of these newspapers was committed to defending the continuity of authentic Marxism.

RO and *WT* claim this heritage. However, in *RO* No. 1, the introduction of our new paper was subordinated to other articles—programmatically correct in themselves—which we thought were more relevant at the time. This decision showed a weakness in our understanding of the central importance of a Leninist vanguard party: for Marxists in Canada, nothing is more important than the publication of a francophone Trotskyist press that fights to make the struggle for Quebec national liberation a motor force for workers revolution. With the second issue of *RO*, and now the launch of *WT*, we have corrected that error. Like our predecessors, we set ourselves the task of cohering around our program a nucleus of cadres dedicated to national liberation, socialist revolution and the fight to reforge the Fourth International. ■

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of minorities and the poor in struggle against the common capitalist enemy.

We noted last year in the lead-up to the fascist mobilization in Charlottesville:

“Today, the idea that organized labor would mobilize its power in its own interests, as well as in opposition to the fascists, might seem fantastical, particularly to youth who have seen little to no union struggle. Responsibility for this situation lies with the trade-union misleaders, who have shackled the social power of the working class to the interests of their capitalist exploiters, particularly through the Democratic Party.”

—“‘Alt-Right’ Fascists: Shock Troops for Racist Genocide,”
WV No. 1115, 28 July 2017

Playing off Trump’s overt anti-immigrant bigotry and dog-whistle appeals to anti-black racism, Democratic Party liberals are dusting off their phony image as the friend of blacks, women and workers, the better to gain a majority in Congress and retake the White House. But make no mistake. The Democrats in office will offer workers and the oppressed continuing U.S. imperialist terror abroad and racist cop repression and attacks on working conditions here at home. This is exactly what happened under Obama, whose own attacks on working people, immigrants and the oppressed set the stage for the rise of Trump reaction.

A serious fight to put an end to fascism must be based on a revolutionary proletarian perspective to do away with the capitalist order that breeds the fascist scum. In this country, the fight for black liberation through socialist revolution is the key to winning liberation for all the exploited and oppressed. The Spartacist League/U.S. is dedicated to building a multiracial workers party to fight for a workers government, which will complete the unfinished tasks of the Civil War by ripping the means of production out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters and establishing a socialist egalitarian society. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

As Democrats Push “Russiagate” Hysteria Facebook Censorship and Surveillance

AUGUST 21—After it was revealed that Facebook handed over the private information of some 87 million users without their consent to the political data firm Cambridge Analytica, CEO Mark Zuckerberg came before Congress in April to assure lawmakers, especially Democrats, that his company would self-regulate against “fake news” and “bad actors.” Coming amid the Democratic-fueled hysteria against “Russian meddling” in the 2016 elections, Zuckerberg’s message to politicians was clear: we will carry out surveillance and censorship for you. And Facebook is doing it.

In late July, with the midterm elections approaching, Facebook deleted the event page for the “No Unite The Right 2” protest in Washington, D.C., which was called in response to fascist rallies over the August 11-12 weekend. Over 3,000 users who indicated interest in the anti-fascist event received notices claiming that it was created by “fake accounts.” But the event was real, and the page Facebook deleted was one of the main announcements for it. The shutdown of the anti-fascist event page, which had been used by activists including Black Lives Matter, was the centerpiece of Facebook’s announcement trumpeting its closure of 32 pages and accounts for “coordinated inauthentic behavior.” The implication was that they were of Russian origin, although not even Facebook can define what “inauthentic” exactly means. The content shared by the users was generally left-liberal, with pages like “Black Elevation,” “Aztlán Warriors” and “Resisters.” As we go to press, Facebook announced it had taken down another 652 “fake accounts,” linking them to a purported new “political influence campaign” with ties to Russia and Iran.

Facebook shut down the initial 32 pages in collaboration with the Digital Forensics Research Lab (DFRL), which ominously depicted them as “designed to catalyze the most incendiary impulses of political sentiment.” DFRL is an arm of the Atlantic Council, which Facebook teamed up with in order to “prevent our service from being abused during elections” and



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg (far right) meets with chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, and other Defense Department officials to collaborate on cybersecurity in 2012. Inset: Facebook removed post for recent anti-fascist protest, claiming it was “fake.”

to monitor “misinformation and foreign interference.” A pro-U.S. think tank with ties to NATO, the Atlantic Council includes certified war criminals like Henry Kissinger and former CIA chief Michael Hayden on its board of directors.

Meanwhile, Facebook has knowingly hosted the “inauthentic” accounts set up by police departments around the country to spy on activists. It came out this month that the Memphis Police Department had set up a fake profile for at least two years to track and entrap black organizations and activists. A 2013 study indicated that more than half of the police departments polled admitted to using such phony profiles (the figure is likely much higher).

After Facebook removed the pages in July, Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, encouraged further censorship in the name of fighting “foreign bad actors” who are “dividing us along political and ideological lines, to the detriment of our cherished democratic system.” This is part of the endless effort to paint working people and minorities who didn’t vote for Hillary Clinton in 2016 as dupes of Russian bots working for Trump’s victory. In fact, it was one of the jewels of America’s “cherished democratic system,” the Electoral College, that denied Clinton her crown despite her winning the popular vote.

The “Russiagate” hysteria, including the investigation into Trump’s “collusion” with Russian president Vladimir Putin, is a lot of smoke and mirrors to obscure the fact that the U.S. capitalist system is based on the brutal exploitation of the working class and racist oppression and

violence. The notion that working people who can barely make ends meet are angry at the Washington establishment because of some fake social media accounts is both absurd and obscene. Likewise, in a country built on the backs of black slaves, and where the majority of black people remain subjugated at the bottom of society, it doesn’t take “foreign bad actors” for black people to know that they’re in the gun sights of the killer cops.

Supposed electoral meddling by Russia should not matter one bit to the U.S. working class. Deceit, manipulation and hypocrisy are used by the capitalist rulers—represented by both Democrats and Republicans—to maintain their system of wage slavery, black oppression and global imperialist domination. As for “influencing” elections, the U.S. imperialists are unrivaled in such “regime change,” like bloody coups and invasions. As part of opposing its own exploiters, the working class must stand against U.S. imperialist sanctions against Russia.

Behind the lurid tales of a Kremlin puppet in the White House lies a real threat. The Democrats are seizing on legitimate revulsion toward Trump to promote the murderous FBI and CIA as defenders of “democracy” and to push for increased government surveillance and censorship. Earlier this month, many liberals cheered when Facebook, YouTube (owned by Google) and Apple podcasts, among others, banned Alex Jones’s loony far-right, conspiracy-peddling *Infowars*. These tech conglomerates, which are virtual monopolies, have ordained themselves arbiters of what is sacred or pro-

fane for American eyes and ears.

The growing trend to censor media content, including against reactionaries like Jones, is ominous and will always redound against leftists, minorities and any perceived opponent of the U.S. rulers. Facebook, in collaboration with the Israeli government, has just this year shut down at least 500 accounts of Palestinian journalists and publications, including the Safa Palestinian Press Agency, grotesquely equating advocacy of Palestinian rights with anti-Jewish “hate speech.” Meanwhile, Zuckerberg treats accounts denying the Nazi Holocaust as merely “things that different people get wrong.”

Leftists who post material that the Facebook czar disagrees with may find themselves part of a scene from Kafka’s *Trial*. One article on the International Socialist Organization’s *Socialist Worker* website (7 August) by Dana Cloud, a professor at Syracuse University, described what happened when she tried to run a Facebook ad for an anti-I.C.E. protest. Initially denied because her account was not “authorized for ads with political content,” she was then required to hand over all her personal information to Facebook, which all but assures that it will be handed over to the government. When she put a *Socialist Worker* post on her page, she was warned that it might be “divisive” and sponsored by a foreign power. Although *Socialist Worker*—socialist in name only—criticizes some aspects of censorship, it had given credence to the “genuine concerns raised by the issue of Twitter bots and fake accounts” (12 October 2017), adding its own fuel to the fire.

Democracy under capitalism is a fig leaf for the class dictatorship of the capitalists. “Equality before the law” serves as a cloak for the class division of society, where, as Anatole France quipped, the rich and poor are forbidden alike from sleeping under a bridge or stealing a loaf of bread. To promote their interests, the rulers rely on their kept media, from print and television news to the likes of Facebook. Following the overthrow of bourgeois rule by the working class in the 1917 October Revolution, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained the policy of the newly founded workers state toward the press:

“For the bourgeoisie, freedom of the press meant freedom for the rich to publish and for the capitalists to control the newspapers, a practice which in all countries, including even the freest, produced a corrupt press.

“For the workers’ and peasants’ government, freedom of the press means liberation of the press from capitalist oppression, and public ownership of paper mills and printing presses.”

—“Draft Resolution on Freedom of the Press,” 4 November 1917

Above all, the bourgeoisie has the armed force of the capitalist state—its cops, prisons and military—to enforce its rule. The precondition for a genuinely free society, including the eradication of exploitation, racial oppression and imperialist war, is the expropriation of the means of production from the wealthy few capitalists through working-class revolution. ■



Reuters

“Foreign interference” anyone? Obama welcomes Ukraine president-elect Petro Poroshenko in June 2014 following U.S. imperialist-backed coup, spearheaded by fascists.