

Trump, Democrats Push “Regime Change”

U.S. Imperialism Hands Off Venezuela!



Caracas, January 31: Pro-government oil workers denounce Washington's attempt to oust bourgeois-populist regime of Nicolás Maduro, install Juan Guaidó (top left). U.S. national security adviser John Bolton (bottom left) announcing sanctions against Venezuelan state-owned oil company, January 28. Down with all U.S. sanctions against Venezuela!

Reuters (top left); Reuters (bottom left); Jhonn Zerpa/Miraflores Press Office

FEBRUARY 4—The U.S. imperialists' transparent attempt to engineer the overthrow of Nicolás Maduro's bourgeois-populist regime in Venezuela is a dire threat to the workers and poor. On January 23, Juan Guaidó, head of the opposition National Assembly, declared himself president and was quickly recognized by the U.S., Canada and a host of Latin American states. Five days later, the Trump administration, having already intoned that the “military option” remains on the table, leveled sanctions against the state oil company PDVSA, which accounts for nearly all of Venezuela's hard currency. This will vastly worsen shortages of food and medicine for the impoverished urban and rural masses while further crippling the country's one economic asset.

The White House then declared that Venezuela's financial assets abroad now belonged to the Guaidó cabal. The Bank of England added to this state-sponsored larceny by withholding \$1.2 billion's worth of Venezuela's gold. A growing chorus of European imperialists has joined calls for new elections to force “regime change.”

The U.S. effort to topple Maduro is backed by both the Democratic and Republican parties, whose attempts to unseat the Venezuelan regime date back to a failed coup attempt in 2002 against Hugo Chávez. Like his handpicked successor Maduro, Chávez was a bonapartist capitalist ruler. But in that capacity, he used oil revenues to fund social reforms that benefited the urban and rural poor and further earned Washington's animosity by denouncing U.S. military interventions and bucking its policies in Latin America.

In particular, beginning with Chávez, Caracas established close ties with Havana and has provided its Stalinist regime with oil, helping keep the Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers state afloat in the face of relentless U.S. im-

perialist hostility. The campaign to drive out Maduro also aims to further starve Cuba, which has been subjected to nearly 60 years of economic blockade, and to foment capitalist counterrevolution on the island. Unlike in Venezuela, in Cuba the bourgeoisie was expropriated as a class in the years following the 1959 Revolution led by Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces. It is crucial for the international proletariat to stand for the unconditional military defense of Cuba against imperialism and counterrevolution.

In addition, the Trump White House is angling against the Chinese deformed workers state, which along with capitalist Russia, provided Maduro with loans after Venezuela's economy went into a tailspin a few years ago. The Russian and Chinese governments both voiced opposition to Washington's provocations. The Beijing regime, which is being repaid with oil, has also held discussions with Guaidó, who has offered to respect Venezuela's agreements with China.

The working class in the U.S. has a particular duty to oppose the imperialist machinations of its ruling class, which for over a century has slashed a long and bloody trail of wars, military coups, death squads and embargoes to keep Latin America under its jackboot. Opposing economic sanctions as well as any military intervention in Venezuela would strengthen the hand of U.S. workers in waging class struggle against the racist capitalist rulers at home. It is also in the interests of working people to demand: cancel Venezuela's debt to the U.S.!

As Marxists, our opposition to U.S. intervention in Venezuela does not imply the least political support to the bourgeois Maduro regime. At the same time as Washington has increased starvation sanctions, imperialist propagandists point to Venezuela's hyperinflation, shortages of necessities and collapse of the oil industry as proof of the failure of “socialism.” In fact, there was nothing socialist about the

“Bolivarian Revolution.” Taking the reins of the capitalist state apparatus in 1998, Chávez, a former army lieutenant-colonel, was faced with restoring faltering oil profits, the lifeblood of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. He immediately moved to discipline the oil workers union and increase the efficiency of the state-owned industry. These moves earned him support from much of the ruling class, including the bulk of the military high command, which helped restore him to power following the 2002 coup.

It was when Chávez began to use some of the oil revenue to ease the plight of the desperately poor masses that a growing section of the bourgeoisie, which got fat by siphoning off oil profits for themselves, really turned against him. Those lily-white bloodsuckers were horrified that a man of black and indigenous heritage was using some of those funds to finance reforms benefiting poor and dark-skinned Venezuelans. Nevertheless, far from a step toward socialism, the reforms served to defuse the discontent of the workers and poor and ideologically bind them to capitalist rule through Chávez's bourgeois United Socialist Party.

While oil prices remained high and the government was flush with cash, Chávez was able to fend off challenges to his rule and remain popular with working people—as well as with a section of the capitalist class that was doing very well for itself. But with the huge drop in international oil prices between 2014 and 2016,

Maduro has faced an ever-deepening economic crisis. Now, as Guaidó and his U.S. backers stoke unrest, Maduro is relying on the military, the main power in the state apparatus. Chávez and Maduro both sought to secure top officers' loyalty by giving them positions in food distribution, the oil industry and other lucrative businesses. While most of the brass has so far stuck by Maduro, one air force general has thrown down with Guaidó, who, along with his imperialist handlers, is calling on the military to switch sides.

Last week, as right-wing mobilizations continued, oil workers rallied to denounce the U.S. sanctions and defend Maduro. We would oppose any U.S.-backed coup against Maduro and say that the proletariat must come to the fore in struggle against the imperialists and their Venezuelan cronies. But the workers must be organized based on political independence from the Maduro regime and all capitalist forces. The working class has the potential to lead all of the poor and the oppressed in a socialist revolution that sweeps away the capitalist state. That requires the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist party committed to the struggle for workers power from Venezuela to the U.S.

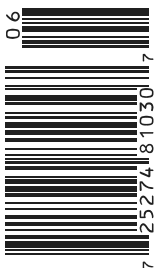
Imperialists' “Democracy” Card

Juan Guaidó, we are told, has rightfully claimed the presidency on the basis that Maduro was not “democratically elected,” and power has therefore passed to the

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Black Liberation Struggle: The Key to American Socialist Revolution

See Page 4



We print below a speech, abridged and edited for publication, by *Spartacist* League speaker Kelly Glass at the *Partisan Defense Committee's* 33rd annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners in New York City on January 26.

Over the last month of the government shutdown, the media would have you believe that there is a major divide between the two capitalist parties. Trump calls to “Make America Great Again,” a return to the days when black people and women supposedly knew their place, and reds were witchhunted. Meanwhile, the Democrats peddle the lie that America is already great...“Make America *America* again.” America’s true legacy is the genocide of the Native Americans and slavery, class exploitation and imperialism. Its legacy is stealing about half of Mexico’s territory, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Haymarket Massacre, the Japanese American internment camps, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the anti-Soviet Cold War, years of slaughtering Vietnamese workers and peasants, wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen...I could go on.

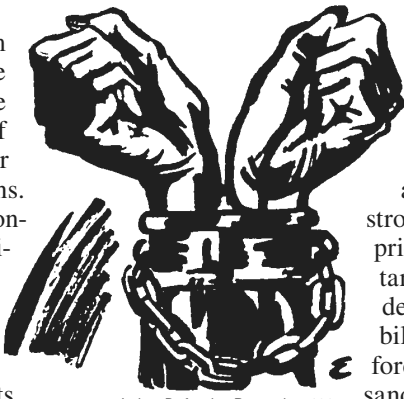
The ruling class of this country is united when it comes to plundering the oppressed peoples of the world, even if they have different ideas about how to carry out their occupations, drone attacks and domination of the Near East and beyond. If anything, the Democrats are *the* party of war. They are often more hawkish and more dangerous because they fool the masses into thinking this is about defending democracy and so-called human rights. When Trump announced that he was pulling U.S. troops out of Syria, Democrats raised a stink.

Join the Fight for a Socialist Future!

Nothing to Lose But Our Chains

And the Democrats, from the Clintons to Bernie Sanders, are among the most vocal promoters of the anti-China trade war and military provocations. Trump’s counterrevolutionary drive against the Chinese deformed workers state is just a continuation of the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia.” The imperialists hate that they don’t have free rein, and want to turn the world’s biggest working state into a sweatshop they can profit from. We defend China unconditionally against imperialism and counterrevolution, while fighting for a workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy.

So now it looks like the government is temporarily reopened, while negotiations



Labor Defender, December 1927

over “border security” continue. Despite this recent lovers’ quarrel, both parties *agree* that whether you call it a wall, a fence or a hedge, strong border protection is a priority. That includes militarization, deportations and detentions. Under Obama, billions went to border enforcement, including thousands more agents and over 700 miles of fencing. The

working class has a direct interest in fighting against deportations and in organizing immigrant workers into the unions with full rights. Many of the people trying to cross the border now are fleeing destitution brought about by U.S. imperialism in their home countries. Every immigrant who has made it here should have full citizenship rights.

It was pretty cheap for the Democrats to cry crocodile tears over the suffering of federal workers during the shutdown, while those in Congress and the Supreme Court judges were still getting their fat paychecks. It’s easy for the Democrats to posture as the friends of the oppressed when standing next to Republicans who openly ponder why white supremacy is offensive. During the shutdown, the main tactic of the Democrats in Congress, including the so-called progressive Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), was to prove themselves *better defenders* of national security by, for example, complaining that airport security agents, border patrol and prison guards were not getting paid. One of the very first votes of newly elected Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a DSAer, was to keep the Department of Homeland Security up and running. Prison guards torture inmates; cops break strikes, kill blacks and terrorize immigrants. We do not consider any of these “law and order” forces to be part of the working class. They should not be in the unions and we wouldn’t support their strikes.

But this shutdown has and will continue to be widely felt by thousands of government workers, as well as Native Americans, people relying on food stamps and government assistance, and the homeless. Here we are in the richest country in the world, and nearly 80 percent of fulltime

workers live paycheck to paycheck, with tens of thousands dying every year because they lack health insurance. Every day, the capitalist rulers starve and deprive their wage slaves of basic human needs.

Is it any wonder that overworked and underpaid teachers are going on strike across the country? From West Virginia to Arizona, and most recently Los Angeles, teachers have fought back against the gutting of public education and the ongoing war against the teachers unions. It’s clear that workers want to fight. The pro-capitalist leadership of the unions holds them back by selling the lie that some progressive politician will come to their rescue. We need a new class-struggle leadership of labor. One that understands that the battle is class against class, that workers organizations must be independent of the bosses’ parties, and that the only way anything has ever been won in this country is through hard-fought struggle, not by begging politicians.

What we really need is workers power—a workers government that will seize industry and finance from the capitalists and build a planned, socialist order. For this, the workers need their own party with an internationalist, revolutionary program. This party will be, in the spirit of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, a *tribune of the people*, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, painting a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation.

My favorite slogan is actually on that sign over there—“Finish the Civil War!” Being from the South, I knew right away how powerful this slogan was. Some 150 years ago, a bloody Civil War—the Second American Revolution—successfully smashed black chattel slavery. In the words of Frederick Douglass, “It is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.” Indeed. But the promise of black freedom was never fulfilled, and so black oppression continues to be the bedrock of capitalist America. It will take another earthquake, another fire to win black freedom by overthrowing capitalist rule. The fight for black liberation and the fight for socialism will not be won separately. Black workers are slated to play a leading role in the revolutionary party that the Spartacist League is committed to building.

Those who are today behind bars for struggling against racism and capitalist injustice, like Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier, will be honored as fighters on the road to liberation. I’d like to end with the last lines of the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels in 1847, which I encourage everyone to read and reread. “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.” ■



TROTSKY

Defend the Gains of the Cuban Revolution!

Sixty years ago, in January 1959, a petty-bourgeois guerrilla movement in Cuba overthrew the Batista capitalist regime and in 1960-61 expropriated the bourgeoisie, creating a bureaucratically deformed workers state. Revolutionaries in the U.S. have a special duty to defend the Cuban Revolution against capitalist restoration and U.S. imperialism. Integral to this defense is the Trotskyist call for proletarian political revolution to establish a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. The excerpt below is from a 1961 internal document submitted by our forebears in the Revolutionary Tendency, a minority in the now-reformist Socialist Workers Party. The SWP majority gave political support to the Castro-led Stalinist bureaucracy, rejecting the necessity of a Leninist-Trotskyist party and the centrality of the proletariat in the fight for socialist revolution.

14. The Cuban workers and peasants are today confronted with a twofold task: to defend their revolution from the attacks of the U.S. and native counterrevolutionaries, and to defeat and reverse the tendencies toward bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. To confront this task they crucially need the establishment of *workers democracy*. 15. Workers democracy, for us, signifies that all state and administrative officials are elected by and responsible to the working people of city and country through representative institutions of democratic rule. The best historical models for such institutions were the *Soviets* of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the *Workers Councils* of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.... 16. The full victory of every modern revolution, the Cuban revolution included, requires the emergence in a leading role of a mass revolutionary-Marxist party. The small Trotskyist groups, in Cuba and elsewhere, have a vital role as the nucleus of such parties. They can fill this role only if they continually preserve their *political* independence and ability to act, and if they avoid the peril of yielding to non-Marxist and non-proletarian leaderships their own ideological responsibilities and the historic mission of the working class.

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—“The Cuban Revolution,” December 1961, printed in *Spartacist* No. 2 (July-August 1964)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD



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For Workers Revolution in Indonesia!

Independence for West Papua!

**Australasian
SPARTACIST**

We reprint below the second part of an article from Australasian Spartacist No. 236 (Summer 2018/19), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League. Part One appeared in Workers Vanguard No. 1147 (15 January).

PART TWO

The bloody slaughter of 1965-66 was the direct product of the support by the PKI [Communist Party of Indonesia], as well as their Stalinist mentors in Moscow and Beijing, to the bourgeois government of Sukarno. Far from championing national struggles as a motor force for proletarian revolution, the PKI helped to channel the Indonesian masses' deep bitterness at colonialism into support for bourgeois nationalism. After Sukarno's forces crushed its 1948 revolt in the city of Madiun, the PKI gained "respectability" and re-established its prominence as a political party by grotesquely embracing Indonesia's chauvinist claim over West Papua.

In line with Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong's "bloc of four classes" doctrine and the Stalinist quest for "peaceful coexistence" with "progressive, non-aligned" capitalist "friends," the PKI helped to prop up capitalist Indonesia, maintaining its alliance with the weak bourgeoisie by restraining the working class and containing class struggle. Adhering to Sukarno's "Nasakom" popular front, the party leadership preached "joint unity" with Sukarno and his Indonesian National Party to forge a "united national front, including the national bourgeoisie," which would carry out "not socialist but democratic reforms" (see "Lessons of Indonesia 1965," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999).

This treacherous class-collaborationist program stands in stark contrast to the revolutionary internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party in Russia. In many respects, Indonesia then, as today, resembled tsarist Russia, albeit the latter was the weakest link in the imperialist chain. Russia was a multinational state with a narrowly based ruling class, subservient to and dependent on imperialist countries, and with enormous social contradictions between a modern industrial sector and a countryside stamped in pre-capitalist times. The perspective for resolving the fundamental democratic questions posed by such combined and uneven development is provided by the theory of permanent revolution, developed by Leon Trotsky and vindicated by the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution. As Trotsky wrote:

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses."

—*The Permanent Revolution* (1929)

If it is not to be strangled by backwardness and imperialist intervention, the social overturn must be linked to the fight for workers rule in the advanced capitalist countries, like Australia.

Lenin forged the Bolshevik Party in the struggle against Great Russian chauvinism and for national liberation struggles in the tsarist prison house of peoples. The Bolsheviks' championing of the democratic right of self-determination resonated amongst the masses of the oppressed



Papuan student protest in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta demands self-determination for West Papua, December 2016.

nations under tsarism. As Trotsky put it in his powerful *History of the Russian Revolution* (1932), "the national current, like the agrarian, was pouring into the channel of the October revolution." Just as the Bolsheviks' fight for the rights of oppressed nationalities was key to the victory of the 1917 October Revolution, so too championing the national rights of the Melanesian Papuans and other oppressed nationalities will be key to uniting the workers and peasants across the archipelago, including the Javanese masses, in the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of Indonesian capitalism.

The regime issuing from the October Revolution provides a model for what this might look like. In November 1917, the new Soviet government issued the "Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia" setting forth the equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia, the right of self-determination up to secession and the formation of a separate state, abolition of all national and religious privileges, and the free development of all national and ethnic groups inhabiting Russia.

The Russian Revolution was also internationalist in character, the first step on the road to world socialist revolution. It opened the possibility for extension to Europe. However, with the failure of revolutionary opportunities in Europe, most particularly in Germany, the economic backwardness and isolation of the Soviet workers state led to the rise of a nationalist, bureaucratic caste that seized political power from the working class in a political counterrevolution headed by Stalin in 1923-24. With the consolidation of its rule, and the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state, the revolutionary, internationalist program of the Bolsheviks was replaced with the Stalinist

dogma of "socialism in one country" and the illusory pursuit of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. Defending the remaining gains of the revolution, not least the collectivised property forms, Trotskyists stood for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution while fighting for a political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks.

West Papua: "New Order" Prize for 1965 Massacre

U.S., British and Australian imperialism were up to their necks in the blood of the Indonesian people in 1965-66. From the U.S. embassy in Jakarta lists that had been compiled of some 5,000 Communist Party members and sympathisers were passed on to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry to aid the massacres. Radio Australia operating in Indonesia broadcast pro-army propaganda during the killings, urged on by Australia's ambassador to Indonesia, who boasted it was "excellent propaganda and of assistance to the anti-PKI forces." In the wake of the massacres, Australia's prime minister, Harold Holt, gloated to a gathering of the Australian-American Association in New York, "With 500,000 to 1 million Communist sympathisers knocked off, I think it is safe to assume a reorientation has taken place" (*New York Times*, 6 July 1966).

Once in power, Suharto's "New Order" regime reopened Indonesia to foreign capital, and soon many American and European companies had regained control of mines, estates and other enterprises nationalised under Sukarno. The Suharto regime also began selling off West Papua's resources for imperialist exploitation.

In 1967 they signed a contract with the U.S.-based Freeport Sulphur company to begin mining gold and copper at Mt. Ertzberg. In 1968, a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate for Indonesia smugly stated, "The prospects for private foreign investment in extractive industries are fairly good...."

The imperialists' endorsement of the 1969 "Act of Free Choice" in West Papua was a reward for services rendered by Suharto's military in crushing the Indonesian Communists. The military commander in West Papua at the time was the violently anti-Communist CIA-linked Sarwo Edhie, who (having returned from military training in Australia) commanded the paramilitary forces dispatched in 1965 to Central Java to "clean up" and restore order.

For 32 years, Suharto's blood-drenched military regime ruled Indonesia with an iron fist. While Suharto has long gone, Jakarta continues to ride roughshod over the many different peoples across the archipelago. In West Papua, successive regimes have enforced the ongoing military occupation, with at least 15,000 troops stationed there in 2011. There are over 40 administrative regencies across the territory, each with its own police station and military base. There are reportedly plans to increase the number by 70 percent. As one activist put it, "Special forces and intelligence personnel are stationed in virtually every village." The military in West Papua have vested interests in suppressing dissent. Only 25 percent of their budget comes from the central government with the rest made up from fees for services, including providing security at businesses and facilities such as the Grasberg mine.

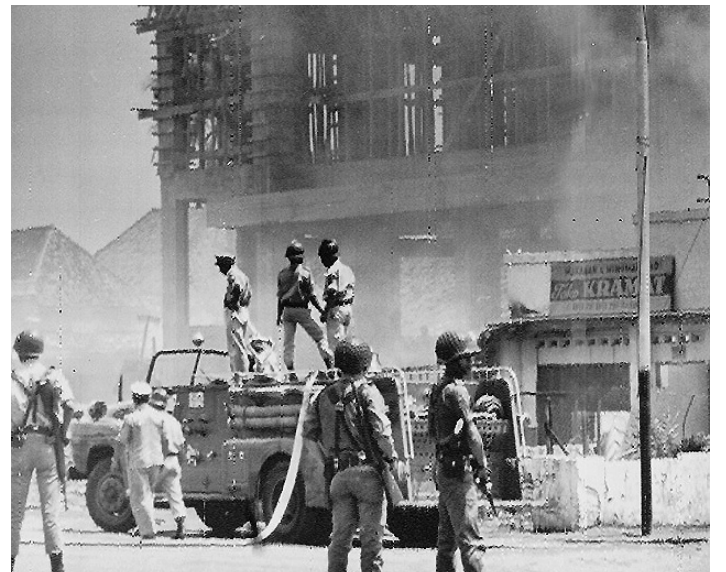
Seeking to "divide and conquer" West Papua, in 2003 Jakarta split the territory into two provinces, called "West Papua" and "Papua." Jakarta also implemented "special autonomy" in a futile attempt to weaken the independence movement but this has only led to greater discontent.

From the beginning, Jakarta has pursued conscious policies designed to assimilate West Papua into the Malayic culture of Indonesia and extinguish the Melanesian Papuan identity with its different languages, religion, social customs and organisation, and agricultural practices. To this end, Jakarta has for decades used its government-sponsored transmigration program to relocate many thousands of people from Java and other islands to West Papua. Significant self-financed transmigration has also occurred over the last decades, particularly from eastern provinces such as Sulawesi and Maluku. Alongside creating a non-Papuan workforce, transmigration has also served "security" objectives, with settlements

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Indonesian nationalist leader Sukarno feted by Mao while visiting China in 1956. Pro-Maoist PKI's alliance with Sukarno paved way for 1965 massacre. Right: Torched remains of PKI Jakarta headquarters, October 1965.



Black Liberation Struggle: The Key to American Socialist Revolution

In observance of Black History month, we are pleased to publish an educational presented in December by comrade Jacob Zorn at a gathering of the Spartacist League in New York.

PART ONE

When I was asked to give a class on the black question, I was somewhat taken aback. The black question covers much ground and is central to both American society as a whole and our own history. I am not going to even pretend to cover the entirety of the history of black oppression in North America, much less the entire world. I want to underscore that being a cadre requires constant political study, and part of this is studying the black question. No class can teach you everything you need to know about the black question.

What do we mean by the “centrality of the black question”? Black oppression is still central to almost everything about culture and society in the United States. Discussions about health care, education, religion, sports, music, food, sex are usually at bottom discussions about race. Much of what makes the United States different from other advanced capitalist countries—the extreme religiosity and superstition, the lack of health care, the weakness of unions—is directly or indirectly due to black oppression. Black oppression hits you in the face a million ways each day.

As Marxists, our goal is to build a party that will lead the multiracial working class in struggle to take power through workers revolution. Racial divisions allow the capitalists to derail class struggle and class consciousness. This is the main reason that the United States is one of the few imperialist countries that does not have a party that speaks, even in a distorted and reformist way, in the name of the working class. In the United States, it is common among black people and white leftists to believe that some sort of ahistorical, metaphysical “white supremacy” applies to all white people, who are seen as irredeemably racist. In the New Left, this took the form of arguing that white workers were “bought off” and enjoyed “white skin privilege,” a notion that is once again in vogue. This is not Marxist: if true,



Mickey Pallas/Center for Creative Photography/University of Arizona Foundation
United Packinghouse Workers of America-CIO rally against wage freeze during Korean War, February 1951.

socialist revolution would be impossible in the United States.

It is certainly true that many white people in the United States have held and still hold some form of racist ideas. But there is a difference between the racism of the ruling class, which *depends* on black oppression to maintain its power, and the racism of white workers, which is an *obstacle* to their class interests. At several times during U.S. history, white working people have fought alongside black working people for their common interests. It is the task of Leninists in the United States to build a party, with a heavily black and Latino leadership, that mobilizes white workers to fight black oppression. This points to the “subjective factor”: communist leadership and interracial class struggle can break down racial (and ethnic) divisions within the working class, raising the consciousness of the proletariat.

Any party which sets out to lead a workers revolution in the United States but which does not fight for black liberation will fail. The struggle against black oppression has proven its ability, time and again, to shake American capitalism to its core. Since the U.S. is at the moment the most powerful imperialist country in the world, the fight for black liberation here is an integral part of the struggle for the liberation of the masses throughout the world. This may appear obvious to us today, but it took the intervention of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky in the 1920s to bring this idea to the Communist movement in this country.

The black question is also key to the development of the fight by our political founders of the Revolutionary Tendency against the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the early 1960s, and hence for the survival of authentic Trotskyism in the world. It is impossible to be a cadre of the International Communist League for the long term, no matter where you are stationed, without having at least a rudimentary understanding of the black question in the United States. The black question is so important for the working class in the U.S. and throughout

the world that it cannot be left to communists just in the United States.

Special Oppression

When we say that black Americans constitute a race-color *caste*, we mean something quite particular. Caste is not just another way of saying *special oppression*. Among academics and reformists of all sorts, a common criticism of Marxism has been that it is “class reductionist,” that is, Marxists don’t understand that there are forms of oppression besides class exploitation. This is false. Just to read Marx and Engels shows that they recognized national oppression and women’s oppression.

The current academic vogue of “intersectionality” obscures an understanding of special oppression. The key insight, as it were, of “intersectionality” is that there are various forms of oppression that intersect each other in different ways and at different angles. In looking at any *individual*, this is surely true. But from a political standpoint it dissolves each person into a mosaic of personal attributes while denying that any of these actually have anything to do with how society is structured. “Intersectionality” either empties any sense of political struggle into the need for mass therapy, or ends up in the old New Left dead end of sectoralism:

black people fight for black people, gays fight for gays, women for women, etc.

Lenin’s *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) explains:

“In a word, every trade-union secretary conducts and helps to conduct ‘the economic struggle against the employers and the government’. It cannot be too strongly maintained that *this is still not* Social-Democracy [as revolutionary Marxists called themselves at the time], that 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.”

Academic critics and pseudo-socialists deny just this: that the multiracial and multiethnic working class can struggle not just for its own benefit but for the liberation of society from all oppression. The working class includes white workers, who also have an interest in overthrowing this racist capitalist system, contrary to the ideology of “white skin privilege.” Lenin understood, however, that the working class would not struggle to overthrow capitalism except under the leadership of revolutionary Marxists. Part of providing this leadership is to stress the need for unity of the working class, and for all workers to champion the fight for black liberation.

Much of this presentation is based on the writings of Richard Fraser, the veteran Trotskyist and scholar of the black question who was a mentor to our founding cadre. He pioneered our analysis and program on this question. But one of the differences that Fraser had with us is our analysis of black oppression as race-color caste oppression. In a 21 April 1984 letter, Fraser wrote, “I have searched in vain in your literature for any theoretical analysis of the Black question which demonstrates that blacks are a *caste*.” This is a fair statement, and I think that it is worth going into the question a bit.

At the July 1963 SWP National Convention, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) supported Fraser’s resolution against George Breitman’s view that the black question was a national question. But the RT submitted a statement that we had some important crit-

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REVISED

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1955-1978

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Otto Huiswoud
(left) and
Claude McKay,
American delegates
to the Fourth
Congress of
the Comintern,
Moscow, 1922.

Beinecke Library

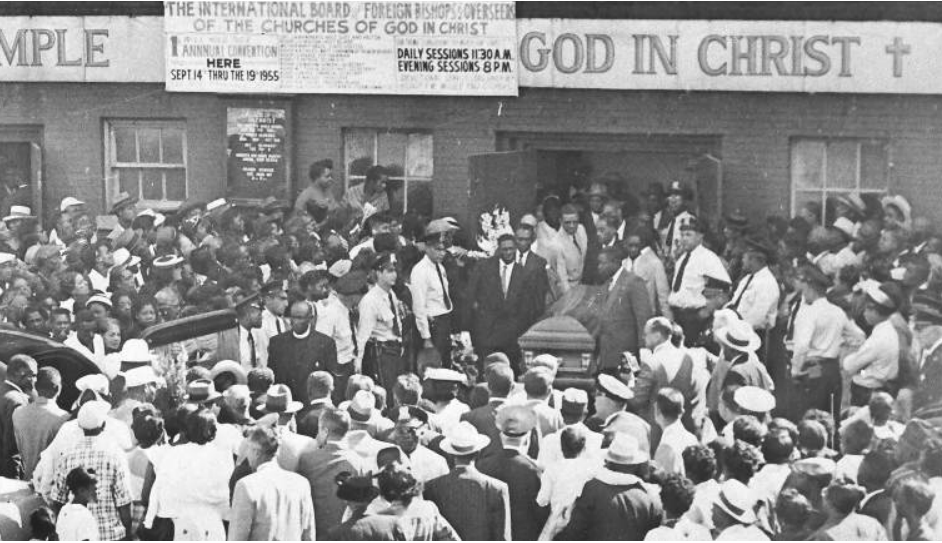


icisms of Fraser, in which we stated: “The Negro people are not a nation; rather they are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.” More than 20 years later, in his polemical letter to us, Fraser claimed that our first use of the concept “race-color caste” came in a passage from a 1969 SDS position paper:

“Are Black people *simply* working-class, in their vast majority? No. They represent a *specially oppressed color caste within the U.S. working class*. There are other such specially oppressed strata, or ‘castes,’ within the working class, and within the petty bourgeoisie as well. The special oppression of Blacks is *qualitatively* similar to that endured by women, youth, many American Indians (some of whom would qualify for a national status in the Marxist sense), and white ethnic minority groups. These examples, too, are predominantly working-class in composition, though sometimes less overwhelmingly so than Blacks. Each of these groups suffers special oppression in addition to the fundamental oppression of the working class under capitalism.”

—“The Secret War Between Brother Klonsky and Stalin (And Who Won),” *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 13, August/September 1969

Comrade Fraser seized upon this formulation (which appeared in a signed article, and which we never repeated) because it wrongly equates black oppression with other forms of special oppression and argues that all forms of special oppression are at bottom caste oppression. He rightly understood this as wrong.



Chicago, 1955: Funeral of 14-year-old black youth Emmett Till, lynched in Mississippi by racist mob for “reckless eyeballing” of white woman. Some 250,000 people viewed body in course of several days.

Consider particularly the case of American Indians, some of whom are wrongly considered nations in the above quote. As Leninists, we fight against *all* forms of oppression. But not every form of special oppression is *strategic* to the workers revolution. A strategic question really has two aspects. First, that the working class cannot come to power without fighting against that particular form of oppression. Second, that it is impossible for capitalism in a particular country to continue to exist without that type of oppression—in other words, this form of oppression is a central prop of bourgeois rule. Without a fight against black oppression, the revolutionary unity of the working class is impossible; without black oppression, the rule of the bourgeoisie in the United States could not exist.

Caste

In the United States, black and white people are essentially culturally the same. This is different from Québécois and English Canadians, for example, who despite having lived under the same state power for more than 250 years still have distinct cultures because they are different nations—unlike black people and white people in the United States. In 1963, Fraser wrote in an unpublished article titled “Revolutionary Integration!”:

“Among the oldest non-native inhabitants of this country, the Negro has contributed a huge share to its wealth, progress and world pre-eminence. He has played heroic and sometimes decisive roles in all of the historically important events. His life is inextricably involved with whites. Precisely because this is his homeland, prejudice and discrimination are infuriating. He has no other home. His Afro-

Americanism doesn’t indicate a previous nationality, for a continent is not a nation, and his culture and customs are not those of any African nations. Indeed, he knows not *where* in Africa his ancestors lived, and often feels strange with Africans (and vice-versa). His affinity for Africa is racial and internationalist.”

In a Los Angeles lecture in 1953, Fraser pointed out: “In spite of the stigma of the black skin...the mutual assimilation of Negro and Anglo-American appears as an overriding law of American historical development which defies the laws of segregation, the prejudice of skin color, and the customs and social relations of the Jim Crow system” (printed in “In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser,” *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, August 1990). Four hundred years after the first people of African descent arrived in Virginia in 1619, two things are clear: their descendants are as American as their white counterparts, and they are still subject to racial oppression.

Despite centuries-long integration of the black population into the American political economy, black people remain *forcibly segregated* at the bottom of society. They are “the outcast[s] and the untouchable[s]...the pariah[s] at the bottom of the social structure,” as Max Shachtman put it in *Communism and the Negro* (1933). As comrade Jim Robertson underlined, “In caste-ridden countries...the invariant criteria for caste is a sexual line of division drawn in blood.” This is what anthropologists call “endogamy.” Alongside every-



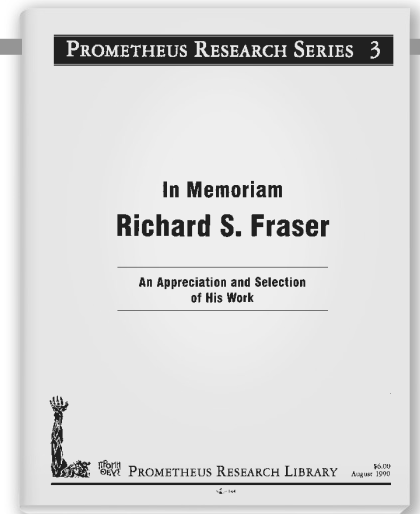
Fraser family

Richard S. Fraser pioneered Trotskyist understanding of black oppression in the U.S. Selected writings by Fraser are available in *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3.

laboratory, one probably would not think of mixing caste into it, since in an abstract sense, caste cuts against the class-centered basis of capitalist society. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote, “Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses...this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms.... Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.” Logically, this process should have destroyed all castes, just as it destroyed the medieval guilds. But this did not happen.

The three examples of caste oppressions that I am familiar with—in India, in Japan and in the United States—all originated in pre-capitalist forms of oppression that the bourgeoisie in each country made use of to bolster its own position as the ruling class. The rise of capitalism led to *legal* emancipation and equality in each country, but in each case, rather than being swept away, caste oppression became an *integral part* of the capitalist system. In all three countries, the capitalist class came to power in a belated, non-“classical” way: in India through British imperialism; in Japan through what we’ve termed a “bourgeois non-democratic revolution” (the 1867-68 Meiji Restoration); and in the U.S. through a belated Civil War (which brought the bourgeoisie to power on a national level). This points to a key aspect of the Marxist approach to caste oppression: since the mechanism of caste oppression is built into the fabric of capitalist society itself, the destruction of the caste system requires the working class to overthrow capitalist rule and take power in its own name. Applied to America, this is the program of *revolutionary integrationism*: the fight for the full integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society.

In writing this class, I searched our website for the term “race-color caste” in



Workers Vanguard over the past dozen years. We have tried in several articles to give a sense of when race-color caste oppression began. We have given conflicting explanations of its origins and the consolidation of black people as a race-color caste: in the period after Bacon’s Rebellion (in 1676); in the existence of slavery generally; the defeat of Reconstruction; the establishment of legalized segregation with the *Plessy* Supreme Court decision in 1896; the defeat of the Populist movement around the same time; and the Great Migration during World War I. Many of these are signed articles or forums. Truth be known, many of these are found in signed articles or forums by me.

There are three key junctures in the formation of race-color caste oppression in the United States. The first was the consolidation of chattel slavery in the late 1600s and early 1700s, when the American concept of race as we know it originated. The second was the consolidation of the black population in the South as a race-color caste after the Civil War destroyed slavery and in the aftermath of the failure of Radical Reconstruction in the late 1800s. Finally, the third key period was the establishment of a national system of race-color caste oppression with the mass migration of black people to the urban North and their integration into the industrial working class, in the early/middle part of the 1900s. The legal abolition of Jim Crow segregation in the 1950s and 1960s did not change the nature of black oppression, but it did change some of its outward forms.

Slavery and the Origins of Capitalism...and Race

Ancient slavery was not race-based. Slavery had largely disappeared during the Middle Ages, but as capitalism developed, it resurrected slavery. Slavery was an integral part of what Marx labeled “primitive
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Spartacist Black History Month Forums

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Fight Against Black Oppression

The Red Summer of 1919: Class Struggle, Racist Terror and Union Busting

CHICAGO
Saturday, February 16, 3 p.m.
University Church
5655 S. University Ave.
(corner of University/56th Street)
For information: (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

BAY AREA
Saturday, March 2, 2:30 p.m.
303 Hudson Street, Lower Level
Oakland
(Berkeley Korean United Methodist Church, at College and Manila Aves.)
For information: (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@fastmail.net

NEW YORK CITY
Saturday, February 23, 3 p.m.
322 West 48th Street, Manhattan
(Between 8th and 9th Aves.—
Take A, C or E to 42nd Street)
For information: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

LOS ANGELES
Sunday, March 3, 4 p.m.
Immanuel Presbyterian Church*
3300 Wilshire Blvd.
(At Berendo St., 2 blocks west of Wilshire/
Vermont stop on Red/Purple Line.
Entrance on Berendo.)
For information: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
*The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

Venezuela...

(continued from page 1)

head of Venezuela’s National Assembly. In fact, the obscure 35-year-old was selected in December to head the Assembly by leaders of his right-wing Popular Will party. Groomed at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., Guaidó is a disciple of Leopoldo López, head of Popular Will. Currently under house arrest, López, who hails from the Venezuelan elite, graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a CIA recruiting ground.

Guaidó prepared his power bid by visiting Washington in December before swinging through neighboring Colombia and Brazil. Colombia’s “democracy” is headed by Iván Duque, one of a long line of right-wing rulers notorious for terrorizing and killing peasants and leftists. Brazil’s is led by Jair Bolsonaro, an admirer of the country’s 1964-85 military dictatorship. Helping direct anti-Maduro operations will be the old Cold Warrior, Elliott Abrams, recently appointed U.S. envoy to Venezuela. In the 1980s, Abrams was a linchpin of the Reagan administration’s anti-Communist dirty wars in Central America and its support for bloody juntas in Argentina and Chile. In 2002, he was a prime mover of the failed coup against Chávez.

While Trump’s Republicans are calling the shots, the Democratic Party is a full partner in the drive to bring Venezuela to heel by driving out Maduro. This includes “socialist” statesman Bernie Sanders, who issued a January 24 statement denouncing Maduro’s “violent crackdown on Venezuelan civil society” and his “fraudulent” re-election last year while also delicately disapproving of the U.S. history of “inappropriately intervening in Latin American countries.” Sanders’s call for “fair elections” is just a means of covering U.S. imperialism’s heavy hand with the glove of “democracy.”

As the parties of U.S. imperialism, the

Democrats and Republicans alike see every inch of land south of the U.S. border as their empire. Sanders might well think that sending in U.S. troops could backfire in Venezuela and spark turmoil throughout Latin America. The way that the Barack Obama administration did things was to impose starvation sanctions and channel funds to the opposition, an approach that Trump simply continued upon taking office. And it’s not as if the Democrats are averse to the “military option,” in Latin America or anywhere else (for example, John F. Kennedy’s 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba; Lyndon Johnson’s 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic; the 2009 Honduras coup supported by Obama; not to speak of the millions killed in the wars in Korea and Vietnam).

Socialist Alternative (SAIt) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which posture as opponents of U.S. imperialism, were gung ho for the Sanders presidential campaign in 2016, with SAIt openly working inside it. These reformist outfits likewise cheered the election of Democratic Party Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). SAIt and the ISO serve as a fifth wheel to those like Sanders and the DSA, whose aim is to get the Democrats back in control of

the imperialist machinery. We in the Spartacist League seek to break labor’s ties to the Democratic Party and to build a revolutionary workers party that links the struggle against U.S. depredations overseas with the fight against wage slavery and racial oppression in the imperialist heartland.

Dead End of Bourgeois Populism

Some reformists, such as the Workers World Party and Party for Socialism and Liberation, have rallied to Venezuela’s defense while continuing to support the Maduro regime and the myth that *chavismo* was the road to “Bolivarian socialism.” One organization that had embraced Chávez, the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods, is distancing itself from Maduro’s increasingly unpopular rule. Having spent a decade advising Chávez on how to run his government, the IMT now proclaims that Venezuela’s woes show “the impossibility of regulating capitalism, and the disaster of policies of state intervention within the limits of capitalism” (marxist.com, 29 January). Meanwhile, its comrades in Venezuela declare that the problem is not the fraudulent Bolivarian Revolution but its “mediocre leaders.”

In contrast to such opportunists, we told the truth about the bourgeois Chávez/Maduro regime from the beginning.

Caracas, March 2015: Protest against Barack Obama’s strengthening of economic sanctions against Venezuelan officials in name of U.S. “national security.” Placard depicting Obama reads: “Fascist, Assassin and Imperialist.”



West Papua...

(continued from page 3)

adjacent to PNG [Papua New Guinea], along with the depopulation of local villages, acting to restrict the cross-border movements of Papuan activists. Reportedly, many transmigrants in these areas are former military personnel. While President Widodo stated in mid-2015 that the transmigration program to West Papua would end, it continues to be encouraged. As one government minister earlier declared, “There is still a lot of land.” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 February 2015).

Following successive waves of settlers, by 2010 the population in West Papua had grown to 3.6 million and was fairly evenly divided between Papuans and non-Papuans. More recent population projections calculate that Papuans may now have become a minority within their own country. However, they continue to occupy the largest geographical area, almost exclusively in the highlands. In the accessible coastal areas, where new settlers predominate, there is a vast mix of ethnicities.

As part of the fight to break the hold of the Indonesian ruling class, Marxists would seek to mobilise the combative Indonesian workers, including those in West Papua, to champion the struggle of the indigenous population for independence. In an independent West Papua, revolutionaries would recognise the right of settlers to remain in the land they have made home. Among those who have moved to West Papua are minorities fleeing religious and ethnic persecution. Many of these people have little reason for allegiance to the Javanese-chauvinist regime in Jakarta and may welcome independence from Indonesia.

For Workers Revolution in Indonesia

In September 2017, exiled Papuan independence leader, Benny Wenda, pre-

sented the United Nations “decolonisation committee” with a petition calling for an internationally supervised referendum for self-determination. The West Papuan People’s Petition had been signed by 1.8 million West Papuans, including reportedly 70 percent of all Papuans and more than 96,000 settlers. The committee chairman predictably refused to consider the petition, declaring his support for Indonesia’s territorial integrity. The campaign then sought to appeal to the UN General Assembly, which met in September/October this year. In the lead-up, independence activists in West Papua organised protests seeking to highlight the plight of West Papuans. These were met with a crackdown by security forces. For over a week security forces systematically arrested, tortured, shot at and killed West Papuans accused of supporting self-determination.

Also appealing to the UN to oversee a new independence referendum is the “Westminster Declaration” of the International Parliamentarians for West Papua, a group co-founded by British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, renowned for *opposing* Scottish independence from his own country. The Declaration has been signed by an array of capitalist politicians internationally. West Papua is a *cause célèbre* for bourgeois liberals, including the capitalist Greens in this country. These “friends of West Papua” would keep Papuans begging to the same United Nations that oversaw the outrageous 1969 “Act of Free Choice” in the first place. The UN is a den of imperialist thieves, their victims and intended victims. Its interests lie in upholding the grinding oppression of the West Papuans under the heel of the Indonesian regime and their imperialist masters. The natural ally of the oppressed Papuan peoples is the working class of Indonesia and internationally.

Like the Bolsheviks, we base our revolutionary program on the political independence of the workers movement. We

fight to forge Leninist-Trotskyist parties, tribunals of the people, that instil in the working class irreconcilable hostility to all the capitalist exploiters and the consciousness of its historic tasks. Led by such a revolutionary workers party, and at the head of all the oppressed, the working class must sweep away the entire capitalist system through socialist revolution, and establish a workers state based on collectivised industry and serving the needs of all.

In 2013, after three West Papuan activists sought refuge in the Australian consulate in Bali, calling for the release of Papuan political prisoners incarcerated by the Indonesian regime, the then prime minister, Tony Abbott, warned that Australia would not “give people a platform to grandstand against Indonesia.” As part of their role in maintaining stability for Australian imperialist profit-making in the region, both Liberal/National Coalition and Labor Party administrations have long defended the territorial integrity of Indonesia. For Australia, backing the Indonesian regime’s oppression in West Papua also serves its interest in keeping unrest from spilling over the border and igniting struggles in its poverty-stricken PNG neo-colony.

Australia has become increasingly jittery about Chinese influence in the region and in PNG in particular. PNG has pushed for Australia to help fund a doubling of its defence force, with the defence chief declaring that China was ready to step in if rebuffed. Recently Australia brokered a deal with PNG (since joined by the U.S.) to redevelop the Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island, where Australia long maintained a notorious offshore refugee detention camp.

Along with its extensive national resources and low-wage labour, Indonesia is of great geo-strategic importance as it sits astride the gate to the Pacific Rim. It forms the southern land mass of the narrow Strait of Malacca through which much of China’s fuel imports are carried

In opposing the 2002 coup attempt, we pointed out that while Chávez had won mass support through his irreverence toward the rich and pride in his indigenous origins, “the role of populists like Chávez is to protect the capitalist order by deflecting the just rage of the oppressed masses” (“CIA Targets Chávez,” WV No. 787, 20 September 2002).

It is a statement of Venezuela’s continued subordination to imperialism that it has exported most of its oil to the U.S. and depends on imports of food, medicine and manufactured goods. In countries of belated capitalist development, the bourgeoisie is too weak, too fearful of the proletariat and too dependent on the world market to break the chains of imperialist subjugation and resolve mass poverty and other burning social questions. Populist reform and neoliberal austerity are two faces of capitalist class rule in such countries, alternating from one to the other under shifting political conditions.

The only way forward is that of permanent revolution, the theory developed and extended by Leon Trotsky, who along with V.I. Lenin was a principal leader of the October 1917 workers revolution in Russia. As Trotsky stressed in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930), the fight must be for “the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”

Workers rule would place on the order of the day not only democratic tasks, such as agrarian revolution that gives land to impoverished Venezuelan peasants, but also such socialist tasks as collectivizing the economy. This would give a mighty impulse to the extension of socialist revolution internationally. Only the victory of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist world can ensure defense of the revolution against bourgeois reaction, eradicate poverty and open the road to a society of material abundance. This is the perspective of the International Communist League as we seek to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

from the Middle East. Ever since the 1949 Revolution swept away capitalist rule in China, the imperialists have sought to destroy the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state by one means or another, in the pursuit of unhindered imperialist exploitation. Today, as part of the U.S.-led military encirclement of China, U.S. and Australian imperialism have been strengthening their military ties with Jakarta.

It is in the interests of the world’s working class and oppressed to defend the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution. A political revolution is necessary in China to sweep away the bureaucratic, nationalist Stalinist regime, which appeases the imperialists, and to establish a government based on genuine workers councils and a revolutionary internationalist program.

In Indonesia, the fight to emancipate the deeply exploited working class is bound up with the struggles of the oppressed minority peoples, of women and the rural poor. Only socialist revolution establishing the dictatorship of the workers, leaning on the poor peasantry, can satisfy the basic needs of the masses: freedom from imperialist subjugation, agrarian revolution, alleviation of poverty, social equality for women and emancipation for oppressed national minorities. This struggle is necessarily internationalist in its outlook. For workers to succeed in this fight requires the building of a multiethnic revolutionary internationalist workers party—an Indonesian section of a reformed Fourth International. Workers in Australia also have a role to play, not simply by standing in class solidarity with the struggles of their Indonesian class brothers and sisters but by forging a Trotskyist party in this country to lead the necessary fight to sweep away the racist Australia ruling class through socialist revolution and establish a workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist Asia. ■

Black History...

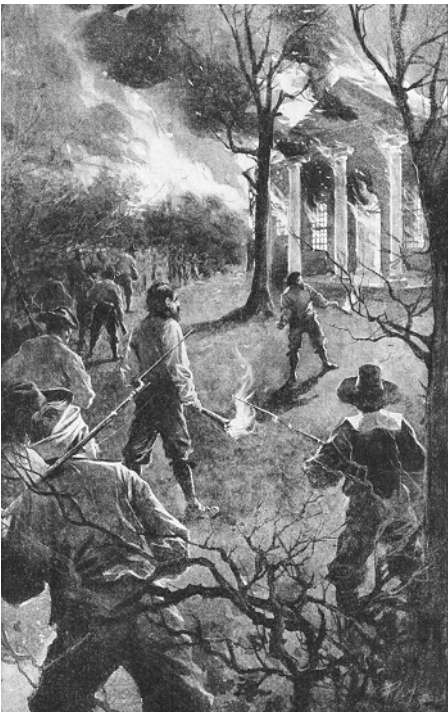
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capital accumulation.” This included the slave trade itself, as well as the production of commodities—especially sugar—in the Americas. Africa was an important market for products that were manufactured in Europe. In the U.S., slavery was the bedrock of capitalism, with the wealth of cotton and other slave-produced products helping the capitalist system get started. To give two examples: Brooks Brothers profited from selling clothing to slaves, while the investment bank Brown Brothers and Co. owned slave plantations.

Race in the United States has always been inseparable from *labor*. Before the slave trade, the English had no concept of race as we understand it. As Fraser put it in an unfinished manuscript from the 1980s called “The Race Concept”: “The fact that slaves were black and masters were white was an accident of history.... Skin color was a fact of life that differed between these two people. That difference had an ancient and interesting origin, but it did not have anything to do with the ability of Europeans to enslave Africans.” The first Europeans to use enslaved Africans as a labor force were most likely the Portuguese, who developed sugar plantations in their colonies off the coast of Africa—for example, the Azores and Madeira—in the mid 1400s.

The English came to use slavery later. The first English slave colonies in the Americas were Barbados and Virginia, but English planters there did not use African slaves at first; they used indentured servants—poor people, criminals, Catholics, Irish, Scotsmen and others not seen as fully human. In the late 1600s and early 1700s, planters in both Barbados and Virginia transitioned to a workforce of black slaves. While the number of Europeans willing to be indentured servants was declining, there was a steady supply of Africans since there was a growing slave trade. Life expectancies were also increasing, which meant that slaves would provide more years of labor, and that indentured servants would survive their indentures and demand the land they had been promised.

In the 1600s, according to one estimate, at least 100,000 indentured servants became free in British North America (Charles Beard, *A Basic History of the United States* [1944]). For the planters, this posed a danger. Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676 underlined that colonial Virginia was a tinderbox ready to explode. Before the American Revolution, Bacon’s Rebellion was the largest popular rising in the colonies. Under the leadership of Nathaniel Bacon, thousands of Virginians—including indentured servants and slaves—rose up against Governor William Berkeley, accusing him of being too friendly with the Indians. This shook the planter elite,



Getty

Burning of Jamestown during Bacon’s Rebellion, 1676.

and they wanted to drive a wedge between white servants and black slaves. In the decades after Bacon’s Rebellion, black slaves became the dominant labor force in Virginia and skin color became a way of telling one’s place in society. Without glorifying Bacon, this episode underlines that race has always played a role in divid-

ing the working people and stabilizing the rule of a small ruling class.

The consolidation of slavery gave rise to the concept of what was known as the “Negro” and “white” races. This was part of what Fraser referred to as the process of “how a social difference got transformed into a biological difference.” This color line became *permanent* and *hereditary*. Black slaves remained black slaves, as did their children and grandchildren. Unlike in ancient Rome, when an enslaved woman had a child, that child was also enslaved. Robert Beverley, a Virginia planter, published a book in 1705 that contains a chapter called “Of the Servants and Slaves in Virginia.” This chapter is a useful guide to the difference between indentured servants and slaves. It begins: “Their Servants, they distinguish by the Names of Slaves for Life, and Servants for a time. Slaves are the Negroes, and their Posterity, following the condition of the Mother.... They are call’d Slaves...because it is for Life.”

Black skin became a mark of permanent servitude, and was reflected as such in law. Black people were essentially cast out of the human race as pariahs. They became a race apart. The concept of race was created to justify slavery: slaves had black skin, and slaves were inferior; therefore, black skin was a sign of inferiority. This was the origin of the creation of race, but not yet caste.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Teachers...

(continued from page 8)

the framework of what is acceptable to their Democratic masters, seek to regulate, not eliminate, charter schools, including through a cap. Obscenely, the new contract makes the union complicit in the setup of colocated charters, which take facilities away from public schools. A UTLA coordinator will now be part of the decision-making process on the sharing of space, that is, will give a union stamp of approval to the charter takeover.

In L.A. alone, charters have stripped nearly \$600 million annually from state education funds over the last decade. From coast to coast, charters increase racial segregation and class inequality in schools. The goal must be to smash the charter industry and bring charter teachers and staff into the public school system. A major step in that direction would be to wage an uncompromising fight to unionize the charter schools and win full union protections and compensation, undercutting their main selling point to the anti-union privatizers.

During the LAUSD strike, three UTLA-organized charter schools operated by the Accelerated Schools network also walked off the job. The first charter strike ever in California presented a unique opening to cement unity in action between charter school and public school teachers, but the UTLA leadership kept the struggles separate. District teachers were sent back to work before the charter teachers settled, as the union tops left them to fend for themselves. What was necessary was an all-out

fight for equal wages and benefits at the highest level, which would have gone a long way toward fueling enthusiasm for a drive to organize all charter schools.

Break with the Democrats!

Universal public education is a historic gain of the working class issuing out of the Civil War that smashed black chattel slavery. A century later, in the 1950s and ’60s, the struggles of the civil rights movement took aim against segregated and inferior schools. But its liberal, pro-Democratic Party leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. could not end the de facto segregation of black people that is materially rooted in the capitalist system. In the decades since, America’s racist capitalist rulers have deemed there to be little value in educating black, Latino and working-class youth.

Amid a racist backlash against the gains of the civil rights movement, California’s Proposition 13, which capped property taxes, was signed into law in 1978. At the time, a section of the bourgeoisie had fanned the flames of a white, middle-class tax revolt against government programs viewed as benefiting poor blacks and Latinos. This social reaction was linked to a racist opposition to busing, a modest effort to achieve some measure of school integration. After Prop. 13’s approval, funding for public schools was massively depleted, welfare was slashed, and libraries and hospitals devastated, while big businesses reaped huge tax windfalls. California, once known as the education state, today ranks 44th in school funding.

The UTLA leadership is now pushing a 2020 tax reform ballot initiative that would abolish Prop. 13’s tax cap for commercial and industrial properties. This initiative, the California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act, is being promoted as the way to restore billions of dollars to education across the state. As opponents of Prop. 13, we would support measures that curtail or reverse it.

However, the union bureaucrats push such legislative measures as a diversion from the necessary militant class struggle against the capitalists and their state. Indeed, in the new contract, the UTLA tops commit the union to acting as a lobbying arm of the LAUSD for the initiative. It’s not the union’s job to help the bosses figure out how to divvy up their funds. At the end of the day, the amount allocated to education and other vital social services is determined by the relationship of forces in the class struggle.

Caputo-Pearl’s Union Power caucus is cheered on by supporters of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and the

International Socialist Organization (ISO). In the article “We Won a Historic Victory for LA Schools” on the ISO’s website (socialistworker.org, 23 January), Gillian Russom, a member of the UTLA Board of Directors, bends over backward to sell teachers on the contract. Russom is a typical union bureaucrat, accepting the premise that there is only so much money to go around: “If you were to reduce one student in every classroom in LAUSD, that’s the equivalent cost of a 5 percent raise. So you’re talking about a very expensive item in terms of hiring new people.”

The ISO’s enthusiastic support of the UTLA leadership, which is ever-loyal to the capitalist profit system, parallels its backing of the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) that heads the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and has longstanding ties with the UTLA’s Union Power. During the 2012 Chicago teachers strike, CORE bowed to the city’s Democratic mayor, Rahm Emanuel, who refused to negotiate about such issues as school closings, layoffs and charters. As in L.A., the CORE misleaders abided by the parameters laid out by the Democratic bosses, and the CTU has since been battered.

The reformist ISO hitches its wagon to those Democrats being touted as “progressive” instead of “corporate,” selling the myth that capitalist politicians can be convinced to provide for the well-being of the masses. To this end, the ISO is work-

ing together with the DSA, which from its inception has been an organic component of the Democratic Party. A joint statement issued on January 22 by the L.A. chapters of the ISO and DSA claims: “Building a socialist alternative to capitalism means holding these Democrats to account and breaking with their pro-business agenda.”

No! As *Workers Vanguard* supporters emphasized on the picket lines, the starting point must be *breaking with the Democratic Party as a whole*. The situation cries out for a new class-struggle leadership of the unions, one based on the understanding that working people have nothing in common with the bosses and their parties. Key to unlocking the social power of the multiracial working class is severing the ties between labor and its class enemy.

The corporations and banks are sitting on mountains of cash, yet to put that wealth in the service of human need rather than private profit requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie and reorganizing the economy on a socialist basis. To do so is a question of leadership. The fight for a multiracial revolutionary workers party is crucial not only to defend the interests of workers, blacks, immigrants and others against the ravages of capitalism, but also to lead the struggle for workers revolution. Only this will open the door to an egalitarian society, in which everyone has access to housing, health care and education of the highest quality. ■

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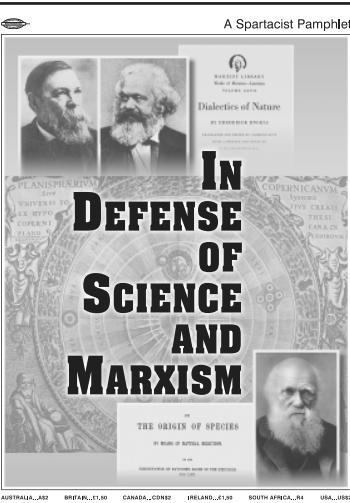
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WORKERS VANGUARD

Union Tops Bow to Democrats



Popular L.A. Teachers Strike Sold Short



Top: L.A. mayor Eric Garcetti, flanked by UTLA union president Alex Caputo-Pearl (left) and school superintendent Austin Beutner, announces agreement ending six-day strike, January 22. Above: Rally of striking teachers and their supporters, January 15.

For six days last month, Los Angeles teachers engaged in determined strike action in defense of public education. United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) members were up against a cabal of Democratic Party officials, not least billionaire Austin Beutner, the hated superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The walkout over better working conditions and learning conditions in the schools was widely popular, as many parents and students joined the picket lines along with sections of organized labor. Tens of thousands rallied with placards reading, “We Stand with LA Teachers” and “Estamos con los Maestros de Los Angeles,” a testament to the strike’s resonance among the city’s heavily Latino population.

The mood of many union members was captured by one first grade teacher, who declared: "We're a lot stronger than we thought we were" (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 January). In the end, the UTLA successfully staved off an attack on union health benefits for new hires and won some modest concessions from the LAUSD, such as more nurses, librarians and counselors and minimal class-size reductions. However, the union leadership called a halt to the strike with a settlement that on the core issues of school funding and charter schools undercuts the teachers' future struggles by further binding the union to the district and city bosses in the capitalist Democratic Party. The longstanding reliance on the Democrats by labor officialdom has paved the way for the decimation of union jobs nationwide. In fact, the union's strength is brought to bear when it mobilizes under its own banner,

independently of the capitalists and their political representatives.

As one UTLA teacher put it, "The Democrats and Republicans are like a double-headed snake." Indeed, so-called "friend of labor" Democrats have helped spearhead the decades-long ruling-class offensive to gut public-sector unions, starve education of funding and promote "free market" education schemes, such as privately run charter schools. The same capitalist rulers who are devastating public education also ratchet up the exploitation of workers and subject the black, Latino and poor masses to misery and repression. The fight for quality, integrated and secular public education for all, including bilingual education, is part of a broader struggle to address the felt needs of millions—for decent jobs, housing and health care.

Educators across the country, many themselves preparing to hit the picket lines as in Denver and Oakland, viewed the UTLA strike as a crucial battle. Although the L.A. teachers were not defeated, they also did not win. The settlement, brokered by Democratic mayor Eric Garcetti, who

praised a “new culture of collaboration,” was hailed as a “historic victory” by UTLA president Alex Caputo-Pearl, who rammed it through in a few hours. In fact, the contract will barely make a dent in the wretched conditions that teachers endure to educate hundreds of thousands of poor and working-class students. The minimal pay raise is hardly different from the LAUSD’s last pre-strike offer, as several angry teachers told *Workers Vanguard*. Even the scrapping of the previous contract’s hated Section 1.5, which had allowed the district to keep increasing class sizes, could be reversed in the event of any purported budget crisis.

One week after the strike was over, the cries of impending bankruptcy were renewed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education that oversees district finances. Claiming that the agreement is not “sustainable” due to “financial insolvency,” the agency threatened to put the LAUSD under its authority if it does not come up with adequate spending cuts. Meanwhile, with powerful financial forces ominously bemoaning the high pension costs of K-12

and community college educators, teachers' health care and retirement benefits could be next on the chopping block.

Down With the Charter Industry!

On the question of charter schools, which pose a mortal danger to public education and the teachers unions, the UTLA bureaucrats have patted themselves on the back for getting a toothless resolution passed by the school board as part of the strike settlement. The resolution requests that Democratic governor Gavin Newsom implement a moratorium of eight to ten months on new charter authorizations to allow for a study of their “financial implications.” Paying lip service to charter “accountability” is cheap for Democrats and hardly coincidental in the era of Trump and his “privatize at all costs” education secretary Betsy DeVos, especially with the 2020 elections on the horizon.

Pushing charter schools has always been a bipartisan project. The industry massively expanded under Barack Obama and his education secretary Arne Duncan, who replaced so-called “failing” schools with charters in cities like Chicago. As San Francisco mayor, Newsom was backed by charter proponents and lauded charter schools. Yet the labor tops continue to promote Democrats like Newsom as partisans of public education. The UTLA leadership is currently backing the school board campaign of longtime Democrat Jackie Goldberg, who, having supported charters time and again, calls for more “transparency.”

The union bureaucrats, working within
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