

## Oakland Teacher Anger Over Strike Settlement

# Free, Quality Public Education for All!

MARCH 4—The seven-day strike by 3,000 teachers, nurses and other school staff of the Oakland Education Association (OEA) ended today with a settlement that was opposed by 42 percent of the union members who voted. At a heated union meeting on March 3 attended by over 1,000 OEA members, the bargaining committee was heckled and the proposed contract denounced. The OEA leadership claimed the settlement with the union-busting Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) was a “historic contract.” But many teachers, nurses and others who had stood solid throughout the strike weren’t buying it. No wonder. The much-vaunted wage increase won’t even keep pace with inflation in a city where teachers already can’t afford to live; class sizes were reduced by a token one or at most two students; little to nothing was granted to relieve onerous caseloads of school counselors and nurses.

A letter signed by more than 200 OEA members pointed out that the settlement “includes nothing concrete to address school closures, allowing the School Board to push through its plans to close 24 more schools and opening the door for the continued privatization of Oakland education.” A key demand of the strike was an end to school closures, which currently threaten almost a third of Oakland



WV Photo

February 26: Striking Oakland teachers rally at school slated for closure.

public schools, mainly in black and Latino neighborhoods. Instead, the OEA leadership settled for a meaningless promise of a five-month moratorium on school closures, i.e., simply putting it off until August. As for the privately run charter

schools, which already claim almost 30 percent of Oakland students, the agreement calls on the school board to request a moratorium on new charters from California’s Democratic Party governor, Gavin Newsom.

In a school district whose students are 89 percent Latino, black, Asian and other minority, many working-class and poor parents actively sympathized with the OEA strike. Despite the district’s efforts

*continued on page 6*

## Democrats, Trump Push Coup

# Down With U.S. War Moves Against Venezuela!

MARCH 4—Under the guise of a “humanitarian aid” convoy, on February 23 the U.S. imperialists and their right-wing Venezuelan stooges tried to breach the country’s border with Colombia, that is, open Venezuela up to a potential invasion. Occurring one month after Juan Guaidó declared himself Venezuela’s president, this episode in the drive to bring down the bourgeois-nationalist regime of Nicolás Maduro was an abject failure. But Washington has vowed to

press ahead. While Republicans and Democrats alike shriek about a humanitarian crisis, it is the U.S. that is strangling Venezuela’s people with savage, constantly escalating economic sanctions. We say: **Hands off Venezuela! Down with the sanctions!**

From Trump to self-described “socialists” in the Democratic Party, the entire spectrum of American bourgeois politicians declaims that Venezuelans need to be saved from an evil despot who is blocking aid and starving his own people. This is just “humanitarian” cover for U.S. attempts to install an utterly subservient government in this oil-rich country. Such attempts date back to a U.S.-engineered coup attempt against populist strong-

man Hugo Chávez in 2002. Trump’s aid convoy was openly billed as aiming to topple Maduro, Chávez’s successor, by sparking a mutiny among Venezuelan soldiers and splitting the officer corps, Maduro’s chief prop of support.

This ploy was handily dispersed by Maduro’s forces. In the aftermath, some U.S. allies who had wholeheartedly supported the “aid” effort are seriously worried about what comes next. Two days after the fiasco, a European Union spokesman amplified earlier warnings against direct military intervention. The right-wing Colombian president Iván Duque has reportedly also ruled out intervention, despite his government’s central role in the whole scheme. Mean-

while, capitalist Russia and the Chinese deformed workers state maintain their opposition to “regime change,” vetoing a U.S. resolution in the United Nations Security Council calling for new presidential elections and demanding that Maduro let in the Trojan Horse of “aid.”

A *New York Times* (16 February) article made Washington’s intent clear. It cited the head of the U.S. Southern Command, Admiral Craig S. Fallor, who “said it would be premature to discuss whether American troops could be tasked with delivering aid on Venezuelan soil, a mission that would entail significant risks in a nation awash in weapons. But he said the American military has become

*continued on page 2*



Venezuela...

(continued from page 1)

experienced in getting aid to people under trying circumstances.” That’s one way of putting it. U.S. imperialism has long used aid agencies as tools for its machinations, such as to prevent the “spread of Communism” during the Cold War. Running the Venezuela operation is Elliott Abrams, who used a “humanitarian aid” program to funnel \$27 million worth of weapons to the right-wing contra death squads fighting Nicaragua’s Sandinista government in the 1980s. And it was under the pretext of aid that Barack Obama sent troops to Haiti in 2010 to enforce imperialist order following the devastating earthquake.

Cautioning against a unilateral approach in Venezuela, Rebecca Chavez, who served as Obama’s deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Western Hemisphere, told the *Times* that while it was “very likely” that the U.S. would intervene militarily, it should be as part of a coalition. The Democrats feel that the campaign would have a better shot if it’s not just U.S. troops marching in to overthrow Maduro.

At most, the Democratic Party, the other



U.S. Air Force



Reuters

**U.S. military aircraft deliver “aid” to Venezuelan-Colombian border as part of staged provocation, February 16. Above: U.S.-backed Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó, Colombian president Iván Duque, and U.S. vice president Mike Pence meet in Bogotá, Colombia, February 25.**

party of U.S. imperialism, has minor tactical differences with the Trump administration over pushing through “regime change” in Venezuela. In a February 5 MSNBC interview, freshman New York Congresswoman and apprentice imperialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez echoed Trump by saying that what’s really going on is “an issue of authoritarian regime versus democracy.” For his part, Bernie Sanders dismayed many of his followers on the reformist left by tweeting, on the very day of the border provocation, that

Maduro should “allow humanitarian aid into the country.” Roger Waters of Pink Floyd fame shot back that if Sanders really does buy U.S. lies about humanitarian intervention and “collude in the destruction of Venezuela...maybe you’re the perfect stooge for the 1%.”

There’s nothing new in Sanders, a capitalist politician, supporting U.S. war moves. While the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Socialist Alternative (SAIt) were going gaga over his presidential bid three years ago, we pointed out that he had voted time and again to fund the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan (“Bernie Sanders: Imperialist Running Dog,” WV No. 1083, 12 February 2016). Now, while the SAIt faithful hail Sanders’s 2020 campaign as a “working-class fight back,” the ISO timidly complains that “he doesn’t challenge the Pentagon the way he calls out Wall Street” (socialistworker.org, 27 February).

The truth is that the Pentagon serves the interests of “Wall Street,” i.e., the capitalist ruling class. The reformists obscure the fact that imperialism is not a policy decision by one or another ruling-class party but the very essence of the decaying capitalist system, marked by the dominance of finance capital and competition among the advanced capitalist countries to control the world’s resources and exploit its labor.

As Marxists, our opposition to U.S. intervention in Venezuela in no way implies political support to the bourgeois Maduro regime. Far from representing any kind of socialism, the “Bolivarian Revolution” was premised on maintaining the capitalist profit system and its repressive state. At the same time, Chávez’s anti-imperialist rhetoric, support for the Cuban deformed workers state and anti-poverty programs earned him the enmity of the U.S. rulers and their local satraps.

As long as oil prices were high, Chávez had the means to fund social programs and ensure that Venezuelan capitalists got a sizable cut of oil profits. However, the collapse in oil prices after Maduro took the helm in 2013 led to a severe economic contraction. Ensuing shortages of food and medicine, which Venezuela largely imports, were exacerbated by crippling debt payments to the imperialist bloodsuckers and economic sanctions imposed by the Obama administration. The Venezuelan billionaires who have monopolies on food production and distribution also resorted to hoarding and profiteering. Reporter Max Blumenthal recently posted a video of himself in an upscale Caracas

supermarket that was fully stocked with food and household goods. But with hyperinflation and general economic collapse, working people cannot possibly pay the prices being charged.

Both the traditional bourgeois oligarchy, which gave the U.S. free rein to pillage Venezuela’s oil wealth, and the *boliburguesía*, that section of the capitalists who enriched themselves under Chávez and Maduro, are class enemies of the workers and oppressed. Maduro and his bourgeois supporters, including in the military, are being targeted because they are not servile to Washington, not because they represent any challenge to capitalism. It is the proletariat that must lead the fight against the imperialists and their Venezuelan lackeys as part of the struggle to expropriate the bourgeoisie and take power in its own name.

After Guaidó’s self-proclamation as president, we stressed that “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” (“U.S. Imperialism Hands Off Venezuela!” WV No. 1148, 8 February). Opposition to U.S. intervention crucially involves defense of Cuba, where capitalism was overthrown in 1960-61. Speaking in Miami just before the Colombian border stunt, Trump ludicrously labeled Maduro “a Cuban puppet,” making clear that Washington’s war moves against Venezuela also target Cuba.

Nearly a century ago, American Communist John Reed warned about the imperialists’ “humanitarian” deceit. Addressing the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, Soviet Azerbaijan, Reed explained:

“Uncle Sam is not one ever to give anybody something for nothing. He comes along with a sack stuffed with straw in one hand and a whip in the other. Whoever takes Uncle Sam’s promises at their face value will find himself obliged to pay for them with blood and sweat.”  
—*Baku: Congress of the Peoples of the East* (New Park, 1977)

Reed ended by calling on the masses in countries oppressed by imperialism to “unite with the Russian workers and peasants,” who, led by the Bolsheviks, had overthrown capitalist rule in the 1917 October Revolution, as well as with the workers of the imperialist countries. As a section of the International Communist League, the Spartacist League/U.S. continues the fight for new October Revolutions to smash capitalist imperialism once and for all. ■



TROTSKY

For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

*In commemoration of International Women’s Day, we reprint below an excerpt from a book explaining the program of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), written two years after the October Revolution smashed capitalist rule in Russia. Bolshevik leaders Nikolai Bukharin and Evgeny Preobrazhensky addressed women’s oppression and how it was intrinsic to capitalism. They also laid out how the early Soviet workers*

*state, despite material scarcity and devastation by imperialist and then civil war, took strides to free working women from the burdens of child-rearing and the institution of the family, the central source of women’s oppression.*

The working woman in capitalist society is peculiarly oppressed, peculiarly deprived of rights. In all matters she has even less than the beggarly rights which the bourgeoisie grants to the working man. The right to the parliamentary vote has been conceded in a few countries only. As regards the right of inheritance, woman everywhere receives the beggar’s portion. In family life she is always subject to her husband, and everything that goes wrong is considered to be her fault. In a word, bourgeois democracy everywhere exhibits as regards women laws and customs which strongly remind us of the customs of savages, who exchange, buy, punish, or steal women just as if they were chattels, dolls, or beasts of burden. Our Russian proverb runs, “A hen is not a bird, and a woman is not a person”; here we have the valuation of a slave society. This state of affairs is extremely disadvantageous to the proletariat. There are more women than men amongst the workers. It is obvious that the struggle of the proletariat must be greatly hindered by the lack of equality between the two halves of which it is composed. Without the aid of the women of the proletariat, it is idle to dream of a general victory, it is idle to dream of the “freeing of labour.” For this reason, it is greatly to the interest of the working class that there should be complete fighting comradeship between the female and the male portions of the proletariat, and that this comradeship should be strengthened by equality. The Soviet Power is the first to have realised such equality in all departments of life: in marriage, in the family, in political affairs, etc. In all things, throughout Soviet Russia, women are the equals of men....

The aim of the Soviet Republic and of our party must be, to deliver working women from such slavery, to free the working woman from these obsolete and antediluvian conditions. The organisation of house communes (not places in which people will wrangle, but places in which they will live like human beings) with central wash-houses; the organisation of communal kitchens; the organisation of communal nurseries, kindergartens, playgrounds, summer colonies for children, schools with communal dining rooms, etc.—such are the things which will enfranchise woman, and will make it possible for her to interest herself in all those matters which now interest the proletarian man.

In an era of devastation and famine, it is, of course, difficult to do all these things as they ought to be done. Nevertheless, our party must in this manner do its utmost to attract the working woman to play her part in the common task.

—Nikolai Bukharin and Evgeny Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism* (1920)

# WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: Michael Davissón

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Jeanne Mitchell (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Edie Goldberg (letters editor), Mónica Mora (Spanish-language editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, Jon Brule, Paul Cone, Walter Jennings, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Alan Wilde, Laura Zamora

The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

*Workers Vanguard* (ISSN 0276-0746) is published biweekly, except skipping issues in January, June, July, August and December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net). Domestic subscription: \$10/21 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

*Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.*

The closing date for news in this issue is March 5.

No. 1150

8 March 2019

# WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

☐ \$10/21 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*)

☐ New

☐ Renewal

☐ International rate: \$25/21 issues

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist* and, in U.S. and Puerto Rico, *Suplementos en español de WV*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

1150

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Purchase *Workers Vanguard* subscriptions online at: [icl-fi.org/subscribe/wv](http://icl-fi.org/subscribe/wv)



Pacific Press

# NY Dems Squabble Over Amazon HQ



Getty

Democratic politicians, including State Senator Julia Salazar, and trade-union bureaucrats protest proposed Amazon headquarters (left) the day after New York governor Andrew Cuomo, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Amazon executive celebrate deal (right), November 2018.

# Labor: Organize Amazon!

To both fanfare and protest, Amazon announced plans last November to build new corporate headquarters in Queens and Arlington, Virginia, only to pull the plug on the New York City location three months later. The reversal was greeted with dismay by some Democrats, particularly NYC mayor Bill de Blasio and New York governor Andrew Cuomo, who had extensively wooed the tech giant. Others, though, such as Congressional starlet Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, welcomed the news, having objected to the \$3 billion incentives package offered by her fellow Democrats to Amazon. The squabbling among these capitalist politicians has not subsided. But one thing is certain: working people and the poor do not have a stake in agitating over where capitalist enterprises like Amazon set up shop. The crucial task for labor is to launch an aggressive campaign to **organize Amazon across the country.**

The bidding war for Amazon's HQ2 was a spectacle. Elected officials competed to shower the country's second-largest private employer with tax breaks, land deals and other perks. Several bids were substantially more generous than New York's, but its governor did offer to change his name to "Amazon Cuomo." Now, he is pleading with company execs, including Jeff Bezos, to give NYC one more chance.

At the same time, there is nothing remotely anti-capitalist about Ocasio-Cortez and others in the Democratic Socialists of America, the Democratic Party component that organized opposition to the NYC deal, denouncing it as "corporate welfare." Notably, even billionaire ex-mayor Michael Bloomberg and a group financed by the Koch brother anti-union zealots found fault with handouts to a company valued at over \$1 trillion. Talk of "corporate welfare" obscures the fact that the capitalist masters of this society



Bloomberg

**Behind every package, an army of exploited workers: Amazon employee packs boxes in New Jersey warehouse.**

always get full backing from the government that rules on their behalf.

Amazon became a global capitalist juggernaut not because it took advantage of tax codes and development funds (which it has) but as a result of the blood and sweat it has squeezed from its workers. The company is said to embody the changing nature of work—from its growing fleet of Amazon Flex drivers, independent "gig economy" contractors, to its emphasis on automation, including cashier-less Amazon Go stores and warehouse robots. However, more than anything, its operations underscore the unchanging workings of capitalism, which is based on maximizing private profit derived from the exploitation of labor.

There is no shortage of reasons to hate Amazon and its CEO, the richest man on the planet, who among other crimes have helped Homeland Security enhance its ability to hunt down immigrants. The company

relies on low-paid, often temporary, labor and is notorious for treating its 600,000 employees worldwide like dirt. Inside Amazon's warehouses, workers are all but barred from taking bathroom breaks, toil in unsafe conditions and are fired when they get injured. The same frenetic pace is imposed on Flex drivers, who get blacklisted for missing a delivery deadline. Amazon's overriding priority is to keep out unions in order to maintain these sweatshop conditions.

The decision by Amazon to locate its headquarters and some 25,000 mainly white-collar jobs in Queens should have spurred the unions to jointly prepare a combative organizing drive. Amid last year's headquarters derby, Amazon opened a new "fulfillment center" in Staten Island, its first in the state. The company has numerous such mega-warehouses in neighboring New Jersey. Enthusiasm for unionization has been on display at rallies for improved

conditions involving Amazon warehouse workers in the region. Workers at Amazon's grocery subsidiary, Whole Foods, have also been clamoring for a union. A real push to unionize Amazon in New York and New Jersey, where organized labor still has a critical mass, could be a spark for organizing the company across the board.

Rather than kicking off the necessary fight, union officials attached themselves to one or the other set of bickering Democrats. Building trades and SEIU 32BJ honchos cast their lot with Cuomo and de Blasio, most recently by signing a groveling open letter to Amazon requesting it reconsider the pullout. These union bureaucrats had invested a lot in Amazon's promise to hire union contractors to build and clean the headquarters.

Whether that promise was empty or not, company executives were certainly not going to entertain the notion of their own employees joining a union. At a January City Council meeting, an Amazon VP bluntly rebuffed calls for the company to remain neutral if its workers try to unionize, declaring: "No, we would not agree to that." The next day, having pinned hopes of organizing the Staten Island facility on just such a pledge, Stuart Applebaum of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union and NYC Teamsters head George Miranda decried "Amazon's refusal to simply remain neutral" (New York *Daily News*, 5 February). Playing a prominent role in the Democrat-sponsored "stop Amazon" protests, these labor traitors would have workers believe that moral suasion can convince the ruthless exploiters to "respect workers' rights" and let the unions in the door.

What nonsense! Company assurances of noninterference in unionization efforts are not worth the paper they're printed on. Neutrality is a sham; the interests of

*continued on page 7*

## Letter

# On Italian Workfare

4 December 2018

Comrades,

In WV #1144: Italian Government Steps Up Racist Attacks, the translation states the "guaranteed minimum income" would only undermine the unions'...

Perhaps it's the translation but surely the ICL would not oppose a guaranteed minimum income for workers. Perhaps that needs to be clarified.

Red Greetings  
Lawrence

### WV replies:

Lawrence refers to an edited translation of an article from *Spartaco* No. 82, October 2018, the paper of our comrades of the Lega trotskista d'Italia, which explained the anti-working-class measures of the new coalition government of the far-right, racist Lega (formerly Lega Nord) and nationalist Five Star Movement. The promise of a "guaranteed minimum income" (or "Citizens' Income") had been understood by many as a gov-

ernment subsidy to keep people's income over a certain miserable threshold.

In fact, the Citizens' Income is a cage for the poor and a threat to organized labor. Recipients must work up to 16 hours a week for free in the public sector (undermining union jobs) and accept one of their first three job offers, no matter how unsuitable. As its name indicates, the program pits Italian citizens against immigrants, most of whom are entirely excluded from it.

The bourgeois opposition Partito democratico (PD) and elements of the trade-union bureaucracy have claimed that the Citizens' Income would be a "waste" of money on the poor and a "disincentive" to work. In response, Five Star Movement head Luigi di Maio underlined the punitive nature of the program, saying, in an interview last October: "Those who lounge around at home on their couch will not receive a single euro as everyone's days will be filled with training and public works.... And whoever cheats will get up to six years in jail." The derisory level

of the Citizens' Income and eligibility for it were further slashed after the Italian government implemented the demands of the European Union (led by German imperialism) to make heavy budget cuts. The International Communist League opposes the imperialist EU on principle, and our comrades of the LTd'I seek to win the Italian working class to fight for *Italy out of the EU and its euro currency.*

It's a joke that this scheme will open up decent employment options to millions of people in Italy, given the huge unemployment in many areas, especially the South. Moreover, when recipients take a job, their Citizens' Income will be paid to their new employer, effectively subsidizing the bosses to replace existing workers. Another reactionary aspect of this scheme, in a country where many adults still live with their parents, is that eligibility is based not on an individual's situation, but on that of a family unit. This measure further oppresses women and youth by tightening the ties that bind women to husbands, and children to their parents.

Our Italian comrades oppose the Citizens' Income as an attack on unions and the poor, just as the SL/U.S. opposes

anti-union workfare schemes here. Many reformists have been critical of the Citizens' Income for falling short of the "Universal Basic Income" touted by social democrats (and some libertarian techies). Such fake socialists peddle the myth that capitalism can be reformed to serve the interests of working people and the poor. In reality, no welfare system can eliminate the misery that afflicts broad layers of the population in capitalist society.

We Trotskyists do not accept the unemployed being kept in misery at the margins of society; we aim to link their fate to the struggles of the working class. Only class struggle can defend the working class from the pauperization that is integral to the system of production for private profit. **Bring the unemployed into the ranks of labor by fighting for jobs for all at union pay and conditions! Spread the work among all—for a shorter work-week at no loss in pay! For a massive program of public works at union wages and under workers' control!** These demands, which are vital for the proletariat, show the necessity of overthrowing the decaying capitalist system and establishing a workers government. ■



# Anti-Muslim #MeToo Witchhunt Against Tariq Ramadan

We print below a translation of an article which appeared in *le Bolchévik* (No. 226, December 2018), newspaper of our comrades of the *Ligue trotskyste de France*.

## LE BOLCHEVIK

NOVEMBER 17—As part of their holy war against Muslims, the rulers of French imperialism have long sought to find a way to silence Tariq Ramadan, an Egyptian-Swiss Muslim theologian and Oxford professor, who was very popular among youth from the *banlieues* [working-class and minority suburbs]. The anti-sex campaign around #balancetonporc [expose your pig], and #MeToo in the U.S., gave the French state the perfect excuse. Falsely accused of rape by three women in France and another in Switzerland, Ramadan, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, spent nearly ten months beginning in February 2018 in the dungeons of the bourgeois state, his presumption of innocence trampled underfoot.

On November 16 he was finally released on bail but the charges were not dropped. In order to get out of prison Ramadan had to pay 300,000 euros and surrender his Swiss passport to the authorities; he is forbidden to leave France or to contact certain witnesses and the plaintiffs. He also has to report to the police once a week and to reside in the Paris area. In the present witchhunting climate, the media did not wait for the slightest evidence before pronouncing him guilty. In fact, it is clear that his relations with his accusers were *mutually consensual*.

**Tariq Ramadan is not guilty of any crime whatsoever.** The charges against him have nothing to do with the fight for “equality between women and men” or “against sexual violence” (as President Emmanuel Macron said against the backdrop of the #balancetonporc campaign). They are an integral part of the bourgeoisie’s racist offensive targeting Muslims and oppressed French minorities who are black or of North African origin. From the outset we warned: “The media lynching of the noted preacher and intellectual Tariq Ramadan is in contrast to the treatment the government reserved for Minister of Ecology Nicolas Hulot, whose presumption of innocence was sacrosanct [when, in February 2018, he was accused of sexual assault].... For six weeks the prosecutor brushed off Ramadan’s supposedly ‘misleading’ alibi.... One of the judges involved, Michel Debacq, was formerly head of the Paris anti-terrorism prosecution unit and had met one of the accusers in 2009.... The rush to throw Tariq Ramadan in jail and keep him there shows that this is simply the latest episode of a politically motivated and racist vendetta.”

—“Communist Party, NPA, LO Embrace the Anti-Sex Moral Order Campaign,” *le Bolchévik* No. 223, March 2018

Moreover, Ramadan’s lawyer, Emmanuel Marsigny, emphasized that the cops “had in particular kept evidence under seal that was exculpatory for Mr. Ramadan” and that the state had even refused him access to the file!

Ramadan has been in the state’s cross-hairs for 20 years because he is a popular ideologue for Islam in France and, *from his own religious point of view*, an opponent of the state’s draconian measures such as banning the headscarf in public schools in the name of “secularist” fanaticism. With intelligence and often with eloquence, this media star has more than once humiliated chauvinist and racist politicians and ideologues like Manuel Valls, Eric Zemmour and Caroline Fourest on television. Ramadan has drawn the capitalists’ hatred by

declaring that Islam authorizes resistance to oppression and by denouncing colonialism and “colonial thinking.” Against the anti-Muslim “clash of civilizations” hysteria, which is common coin in the media, Ramadan has insisted that Muslims should be able to integrate into French society *as Muslims*. But in France, these elementary bourgeois-democratic remarks are enough to make you public enemy number one.

Ramadan is in no way a leftist. He is a preacher (and a sinner, like all of us mortals) whose bourgeois worldview is simply reactionary. But it is as a spokesman for a section of the oppressed Muslim minority that Tariq Ramadan is being prosecuted by the state. As part of the fight to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, a Leninist-Trotskyist party that is a tribune of the people, it is the duty of communists to demand that the charges he faces be dropped.

### Framed Up by the State

For Marxists, the principle that guides sexual relations should be *effective consent*, in other words, mutual understanding and agreement at the time—no more, no less. Social norms concerning sexuality are colored by shame, fear and religious customs—not to mention the inequalities of gender, class and race—and all this creates complications. But as long as the participants consent at the time, nobody else, especially the state, has the right to tell them what they can or cannot do—nor how they should do it.

In contrast, the #balancetonporc/#MeToo movement lumps together all kinds of behavior—advances, suggestive references or unpleasant sexual experiences—with real crimes like coercion and sexual assault. In so doing, these bourgeois feminists trivialize horrible crimes like rape and divert people’s attention from the real oppression and exploitation experienced by the vast majority of women. In this frenzied climate, simple accusations—even without any proof—are enough to ruin the lives of the accused. Just calling into question the accusation of a presumed victim supposedly becomes “re-victimization.” In racist capitalist society, this puritanism necessarily targets oppressed minorities sooner or later. It is not the credibility of the accusations but solely their number that is being trotted out in order to declare Ramadan guilty.



Alamy

Tariq Ramadan.

Between October 2017 and April 2018, at the height of #balancetonporc/#MeToo, four women pressed rape charges against Tariq Ramadan: three in France—Henda Ayari, Paule-Emma Aline (known as “Christelle”) and Mounia Rabbouj (known as “Marie”)—and a Swiss woman known as “Brigitte.” According to Ramadan’s lawyer, *the four accusers* had been in contact with one another *for years*. In addition, several years before filing charges, at least Ayari and Aline had also been in contact with the “secularist” zealot Caroline Fourest, who is obsessed with Ramadan. Ayari and Aline had also, according to their own admission, solicited help from Alain Soral, an open fascist, in their campaign against Ramadan. The accusers and Fourest all tried to hide their collusion. Ramadan, who preaches “virtue,” initially denied having had relations with Ayari and Aline, but in October he admitted having slept with the three French accusers, to the media’s morbid satisfaction. *But all the evidence shows that these relations were consensual.*

Henda Ayari presents herself as a former Salafist turned “secular militant.” She was obviously seeking publicity, having already published two books—*I Chose To Be Free* (2017) and *Never Again Veiled, Never Again Raped* (2018)—that recount the supposed rape. In court, Ayari offered two different dates and places for a single alleged rape; it was shown beyond the slightest doubt that these declarations were lies.

Ayari sent Ramadan *hundreds* of text messages *after* the alleged rape. Not a single one mentioned that there had supposedly been a rape. In one of these messages she wrote that she hoped he had not forgotten “those good moments that we shared, only once, it is true, but so strong and intense.” And one minute later: “I really hope that you still remember me fondly as I do you even though it was short” (francais.rt.com, 24 October 2018).

Paule-Emma Aline says she converted to Islam in 2008. What is sure is that she is a right-wing activist. In the 2012 legislative elections she was a candidate of Debout la République (Stand Up for the Republic, today Debout la France). That party is headed by Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, who supported Marine Le Pen [of the National Rally, formerly the National Front] in the second round of the 2017 presidential election. According to the *Muslim Post* (11 April 2018), in 2017 Aline launched the website “Femmes avec Marine” [Women for Marine], today renamed “Femme Française,” an openly racist, anti-Muslim site.

Aline alleged that Ramadan raped her very violently on 9 October 2009. She presented no witnesses or the slightest material evidence. A few weeks after the alleged rape, she contacted a friend, Denise, via Skype. Aline didn’t mention any rape. Denise asked her, “What do you think about contacting Fourest?” Aline replied: “I intend to.” Two days later, Aline wrote: “I got a reply from Caroline Fourest.... She doesn’t want to attack him in that way.... But we’re going to take care of destroying his political career in our own way LOL.”

*The day after the alleged rape*, Aline wrote to Ramadan:

“If I had had a bad time I would have left. I stayed and I gave you more than anyone and I miss your skin. I missed you as soon as I walked out the door. I took a walk in the park nearby early this morning, my head full of images, wondering if you liked me physically and personally.”

—francais.rt.com, 24 October 2018

Mounia Rabbouj is a former escort who had been involved in the “Carlton affair” targeting Dominique Strauss-Kahn [DSK, former head of the International Monetary Fund]. She accused Ramadan of having raped her *about ten times* between 2013 and 2014, but she continued to see him. Rabbouj’s sister got in touch with Ramadan in 2014 to warn him against her: “As she did with DSK—she sold her story to the reporter for 8,000 euros—she will do the same thing to you. She told me so.” On 17 May 2013, *the day after* one of the alleged rapes, Rabbouj sent Ramadan a video in which she said to him: “Hi there,” “how are you?”, “see you soon,” “I love you.”

We know very little about “Brigitte.” She claims Ramadan raped her in October 2008. “Brigitte” declared that “he showed himself to be a tease sometimes, like calling me a ‘flirt,’ and I was seduced.” Saying she had thus been under Ramadan’s “sway,” she explained that she continued to communicate with him “in the hope of understanding what he had done, in the hope that he would apologize,” and she didn’t file a complaint against him until some ten years later (nouvelobs.com, 13 April 2018). It’s no accident that she had been in contact with Paule-Emma Aline *for years*, a fact both women tried to conceal.

Finally, in March 2018, an American woman who remains unnamed (and about whom little is known) filed a complaint against Ramadan in the U.S. for a sexual assault that supposedly took place in 2013. Neither the French nor the Swiss legal sys-



AP (inset); le Bolchévik



Left: Alma and Lila Lévy, expelled from high school in 2003 for wearing headscarf. Above: LTF banner at 2004 protest reads “No to the Racist Law Against Youth Wearing the Headscarf! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!”

tem is pursuing these charges, at least for now. At the time of the alleged assault, this American woman was working as a “cultural instructor” for the U.S. Department of Defense(!), where she taught Islam and Near Eastern culture to the American military. Feeling that she didn’t know enough about the subject to serve the Pentagon’s needs, she contacted Ramadan, one of the world’s best-known specialists on Islam, to seek his help.

It was during a visit Ramadan made to Washington that the purported assault took place. It should be noted that Ramadan had been prohibited from entering the United States between 2004 and 2010 under the terms of the Patriot Act “because of presumed links to terrorism.” The reason was that over a five-year period he had given 1,670 Swiss francs (about \$1,250 in 2004) to a Palestinian NGO considered by the American government to be close to Hamas (*le Monde*, 20 January 2010). It is reasonable to suppose that Ramadan was well known to the Department of Defense, among others.

The campaign against Ramadan goes well beyond the machinations of his accusers, whatever their motivations may be. *It is a frame-up by the state.* According to Emmanuel Marsigny, Paule-Emma Aline wrote in some of her text messages in 2010 that she was under pressure from the French security forces and [then president] Nicolas Sarkozy, to accuse Ramadan. According to her story, Sarkozy allegedly offered to pay for the best lawyer in France for her if she brought charges against Ramadan, because Sarkozy wanted to get rid of him. She also claims that she was subjected to four tax inquiries and that her bank accounts were frozen by the state in order to force her to bring a complaint.

The persecution of Tariq Ramadan definitely has more to do with French arms sales to oil-rich monarchies hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ramadan is the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the organization's founder) than with punishing crimes like rape. It must also be noted that Macron has been trying for months to strengthen the state's control over the French Muslim community, particularly by restricting financial flows from abroad—even as Macron performs countless favors for the Catholic Church.

## Women's Oppression, Religious Obscurantism and Bourgeois Hypocrisy

While we defend Ramadan against the state, we are staunch enemies of his perspectives and his program of religious obscurantism. For instance, he defended the anti-Jewish demagogue Dieudonné, a front man for the fascists, against completely valid accusations of anti-Semitism. For 20 years Ramadan has played a role in promoting the wearing of the Islamic veil, the physical symbol of women's submission to men and the imposed and permanent affirmation of their subordination. Ramadan wants to modernize the way that "scholars" interpret the sacred books of Islam, in order



**French imperialism continues to subjugate its former colonies in Africa. As part of ongoing Operation Barkhane, French soldiers patrol streets of Timbuktu, Mali, in 2015.**

to convince obscurantist regimes to stop stoning adulterous women and to halt other barbarous practices which he opposes, such as the death penalty. (That's the origin of his famous proposal for a moratorium on stoning, in opposition to which that great humanitarian Sarkozy and a whole slew of bourgeois and social-democratic Pharisees periodically rip their clothes.)

No matter how you try to “interpret” them, it goes without saying that the ancient holy writings are suffused with anti-woman backwardness (and this goes equally for the Jewish Torah and the entire Christian Bible, which are also sacred to Islam). Ramadan’s anti-woman and anti-gay positions (including opposing the right to abortion and calling homosexuality “a disorder”) are ultimately the same as those of any Catholic priest. But you won’t find the jihadists of “secularism” mounting a raid against the French Conference of Bishops in the name of “republican values.”

The hypocritical bourgeois rulers, who build their careers by publicly humiliating young women wearing the veil, do not care about women's oppression. Their "secularism" is just a cover for anti-Muslim prejudices that aim to divide the working class and isolate the militant layer of North African-derived workers from their class brothers who are white or of other ethnicities. We are for real secularism, where the state doesn't interfere with people's personal beliefs unless they harm others or fundamentally contravene the common good, like female genital mutilation, which is an atrocious crime. We have always fought for the separation of church and state, as well as the separation of mosque and state. But in France, where Islam will never be anything but an ideology of the ghetto that accepts segregation, the *main enemy* is not the Muslim fundamentalists but the anti-working-class and anti-woman French imperialist state that oppresses the toiling masses in Algeria, in Africa and *here*. *We say no to racist exclusions and laws against the veil! Down with the government's anti-Muslim offensive!*

The hysteria over the Islamic veil in France is a longtime racist campaign that reinforces the isolation and poverty of the women who wear it. The expulsion of these women from public schools and public employment through explicitly anti-Muslim measures (allowed also in the private sector by the 2016 El Khomri law) is a cruel act of racist exclusion and religious bigotry. This entire campaign feeds into the racist lie that the real problem in society is not the racist capitalist system but women who wear the headscarf, Muslims and minorities in general.

The capitalist state, which reserves for itself the right to interfere into every aspect of people's private lives, is a machine of repression directed against workers, the poor and all the oppressed. Its purpose is solely to perpetuate the domination of the bourgeois class. Calling for state intervention to "protect women" as the pseudo-Trotskyists of *Lutte ouvrière* constantly do by supporting (and even calling for) anti-Muslim laws is a grotesque adaptation to the racism of the French bourgeoisie. In fact, LO members played a pivotal role in the vile expulsion of Alma and Lila Lévy from their high school in Aubervilliers in

2003 [for wearing the headscarf]. Thus, LO was a spearhead for the 2004 law banning the headscarf in public schools.

At the same time, *the Ligue trotskyste* has always opposed the veil even as we oppose state bans on it. The veil is more than a symbol of religious affiliation. It represents a reactionary social program to confine women within the family and the household in a position of servitude. It represents the extension outside the home of the seclusion imposed on women by



**High school students in Paris protest racist police brutality, February 2017.**

reactionary *sharia*. Ramadan, in his supposedly “enlightened” version of Islam, gives an example:

"It is incumbent on Muslim women today to dress modestly by avoiding clothing that exposes their privacy in order to avoid any harm caused by certain sick people.... "In other words, today if a Muslim woman wears the veil and dresses correctly and is content with her status, that's good and nobody has the right to blame her. But if she is not content and decides not to wear it while remaining modest, this would not be contrary to Islam as is usually believed."

—tariqramadan.com,  
29 December 2013

In other words, while the veil is not an obli-

gation, it remains incumbent on women to be “modest” and not arouse men’s lust.

The subjugation of women in Muslim countries is not rooted in some reactionary character specific to Islam, as the imperialists claim. In fact, it is rooted in the capitalist system itself. Some sectors of Christianity and Judaism—which, like Islam, have their roots in precapitalist society—adapted to the prevailing conditions of early industrial capitalism and the bourgeois-democratic nation-states. In the Muslim world, capitalism arrived late and came with European colonialism, which allied itself with the local feudal powers. In the colonized countries, as well as among the immigrant concentrations in the imperialist cities, capitalism reinforced the barbarous, anti-woman traditions.

The condition of women in the more advanced capitalist countries, while different, shows the limits of freedom and social progress under capitalism. In France, unlike the countries of Africa, capitalist property developed and profoundly undermined backward feudal social relations. These relations were practically wiped out by the great bourgeois-democratic French Revolution of 1789, which opened the road to the development of an advanced industrial society. The revolution abolished the monarchy and aristocracy, limited the power of the Catholic church and greatly improved the status of women, although many of women's legal gains were later taken back

as the bourgeoisie consolidated its power. By attacking the Muslim girls who wear the headscarf, the French state *deforms* the aims and values of the French Revolution.

In fact, capitalism laid the basis for the liberation of women by opening the road to their participation in social production and by creating opportunities for the development of social consciousness and for organized struggle against oppression beyond the isolated structure of the nuclear family. But capitalism long ago outlived its progressive historical role and became a barrier to further development of the productive forces and to women's liberation.

*continued on page 7*

# LE **BOLCHEVIK** 4

Trésor  
Décembre 1981  
N° 226  
230 x 3

LEUKE TROTSKYSTE DE FRANCE

LEUKE COMMUNISTE INTERNATIONALE (QUATRIEME-INTERNATIONALISTE)

**Pour un gouvernement ouvrier  
et paysan centré sur les Kanak !**

## Indépendance pour Kanaky !

Le référendum d'été sera le rendez-vous de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Nous nous battons pour qu'il soit organisé à l'été 1982, et qu'il soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

**Pour la révolution  
permanente**

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

Des membres du FLNCF à Nouméa le 1 août 1980 devant le palais du gouverneur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

**A bas la campagne laïcarde antimusulmane - Levée des incultures !**

**Haïte à la vendetta contre Tariq Ramadan !**

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie est le seul pays du monde où la révolution est possible. C'est pourquoi nous nous battons pour qu'elle soit le résultat d'un processus démocratique.

**Publication of the  
Ligue trotskyste de France**

**No. 226, December 1981**

**\$1 (includes postage)**

**Subscribe! \$3 for 4 issues**

**Includes *Spartacist* (French edition)**

**Order from/make checks payable to:**

**Spartacist Publishing Co.**

**Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116**

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.	
Local Directory and Public Offices	
Website: <a href="http://www.icl-fi.org">www.icl-fi.org</a> • Email address: <a href="mailto:vanguard@tiac.net">vanguard@tiac.net</a>	
National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860	
Chicago .....	Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680 <a href="mailto:chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net">chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net</a> Public Office: by appointment, call (312) 563-0441
Los Angeles .....	Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029 <a href="mailto:slsycla@sbcglobal.net">slsycla@sbcglobal.net</a> Public Office: by appointment, call (213) 380-8239
New York .....	Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008 <a href="mailto:nysl@tiac.net">nysl@tiac.net</a> Public Office: by appointment, call (212) 267-1025
Oakland .....	Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604 <a href="mailto:slbayarea@fastmail.net">slbayarea@fastmail.net</a> Public Office: by appointment, call (510) 839-0851
TROTSKYIST LEAGUE IN QUEBEC AND CANADA	
Montréal .....	CP 83 Succ. Place-d'Armes, Montréal, QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578 <a href="mailto:trotskyiste.montreal@gmail.com">trotskyiste.montreal@gmail.com</a>
Toronto .....	Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138 <a href="mailto:trotskyist.toronto@gmail.com">trotskyist.toronto@gmail.com</a>
Vancouver .....	Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353 <a href="mailto:tl.vancouver.bc@gmail.com">tl.vancouver.bc@gmail.com</a>

# West Virginia Teachers Spike Charter School Gambit

On February 19, teachers and other education workers shut down schools across West Virginia, beating back a legislative effort to reverse the gains of last year's nine-day strike (see "West Virginia School Strike: Militant Union Battle Ends," WV No. 1129, 9 March 2018). Members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association, which includes school bus drivers, struck in opposition to Senate Bill 451 (SB 451), a frontal attack on public education.

Widely seen as retaliation for last year's strike, SB 451 would have drained state funds from public schools toward subsidizing tuition for private and religious schools; established charter schools in the state for the first time; eliminated seniority and made firing teachers easier. Four hours into the walkout, legislators temporarily postponed the bill. Determined not to be stabbed in the back again by the legislature, the teachers stayed on strike for another day.

Last year's strike sparked a wave of teachers' walkouts across the country, many in "right to work" states like West Virginia, where teachers are prohibited by law from striking and lacked collective bargaining rights. The architects of SB 451 cynically thought they could buy



Kemp/Charleston Gazette-Mail

**February 19: Teachers on picket line in Charleston, West Virginia, during strike against union-busting charter school legislation.**

off the teachers by tacking on an extra 5 percent wage increase, seeking to divide the teachers from the many parents and others who supported their defense of public education. As one striker stated: "Our students are not for sale.... We've seen the charter school system fail students all across the U.S. and that's why we are risking our pay raise to defeat this bill" (jacobinmag.com, 20 February). The power of strike action was further seen two days after the strike,

when a separate bill granting the pay increase was passed by the House of Delegates.

The teachers showed that waging class struggle is the only way to win. They faced down not only the anti-labor legislators, but also the pro-capitalist misleaders of their own unions. Teachers had been calling for a work stoppage for weeks before the union tops agreed to sanction a strike. Union tops finally yielded to the teachers' calls for a work

stoppage to kill this bill. Five days before the strike, Fred Albert, president of the West Virginia AFT, was encouraging his members to accept an earlier version of the bill that would have also allowed charters—just at a slower pace. AFT national president Randi Weingarten had the same position. In an attempt to justify his sellout position, Albert pointed to the lack of a Democratic legislative majority, which "presents a completely different scenario than last year"—a clear illustration that the union tops' ties to the Democrats are a stranglehold on labor struggle. No less than the Republicans, the capitalist Democrats have championed charter schools, attacked public education and vilified teachers unions.

The ongoing effort by the bourgeoisie in West Virginia to gut public education underscores that any strike settlement, even a successful one, is only a temporary truce in the ongoing class war. Every gain wrested by the workers and oppressed will be under attack until the capitalist rulers are swept away by a workers revolution that establishes a workers government. When those who labor rule, the vast riches that are today pocketed by the capitalists will be used to begin rebuilding this society for the benefit of all, including quality, integrated public schools from coast to coast.

## Education...

*(continued from page 1)*

to intimidate parents and teachers, 97 percent of students stayed away, a number of them joining the picket lines. The Service Employees International Union Local 1021, which organizes clerical, paraprofessionals and other school employees, went out in solidarity for the duration of the strike.

On March 1, unionized building trades workers refused to cross a picket line at an OUSD construction site, shutting it down tight. The same day, a 1,000-strong picket line chanting "Get up! Get down! Oakland is a union town!" shut down the building where the OUSD was scheduled to vote \$22 million in school budget cuts. But, just as union support for the teachers strike was building, the OEA misleaders announced they had a settlement.

Once again, struggle by the unions was subordinated to the trade-union bureaucracy's fealty to the capitalist Democratic Party. Like their counterparts in the Los Angeles teachers union leadership who rammed through a similar agreement (see "Popular L.A. Teachers Strike Sold Short," WV No. 1148, 8 February), the OEA misleaders peddle the treacherous delusion that the Democratic administration of California is going to defend public education. What a joke! For more than *four decades* Oakland's public schools have been deliberately starved of funding and resources under various Democratic administrations, local and state alike. The California Democrats have also gone to great lengths to expand charter schools, with Oakland having a higher proportion of students in charter schools than any other district in the state.

In 2003, then Oakland mayor Jerry Brown, along with other Democrats, drove the OUSD into bankruptcy so that the state could take over the district, paving the way for the proliferation of charter schools. Today, the OUSD claims that its high debt to the state means there is no money for teachers, support staff or schools. The OEA leadership dances to this tune, accepting the limits on the

school budget that are set by the capitalist rulers.

There is a crying need for a class-struggle fight for free, quality, integrated public education for all. But this just and basic demand runs directly up against the obscenely wealthy capitalist class that controls the means of production, distribution and exchange. Capitalists invest nothing in education for working-class and minority youth beyond what they expect to be able to recoup from exploiting their labor. How many resources for public education, decent medical care and housing can be wrested from the capitalist rulers depends on the relationship of forces in the class struggle.

The power to effectively wage such a battle lies with the working class. But the workers can't do so when they are chained to their class enemies in the Democratic Party, no less a party of racist capitalist rule than the Republicans. What's needed is a labor leadership that will arm the workers with the understanding that the only road to victory lies in mobilizing their power as a class against all the political parties and agencies of their exploiters. The fight to satisfy the needs of the workers and all the oppressed must be linked to forging a multiracial revolutionary workers party whose aim is the abolition of capitalist wage slavery and the institution of a workers government.

### Education U.S.A.: Separate and Unequal

Universal public education in this country was the product of revolutionary struggle, the victory of the North over the Southern slavocracy in the Civil War and the ensuing period of Radical Reconstruction. Slaves were banned by their masters from reading and writing. Recognizing the importance of literacy, the black soldiers, who were critical to the Union victory, went into battle with spelling primers strapped to the same belt as their cartridge boxes. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the Northern bourgeoisie, who brought Reconstruction to an end with the withdrawal of the Union troops that had defended the black freedmen.

In the aftermath, the system of Jim

Crow was established in the South. The segregation of schools and all aspects of public life was enforced through terror as black people were forcibly subjugated at the bottom of society. The mass struggles of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and '60s brought down Jim Crow in the South. However, the pro-capitalist leadership of that movement, which looked to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, could not make a dent in the de facto segregation of black people in the North. Black oppression is rooted in the system of American capitalism which uses black people as a "reserve army of labor"—the last hired and the first fired.

Today, the war against public education is a measure of the decay of American capitalism. With the destruction of hundreds of thousands of unionized industrial and other manufacturing jobs, the poor have been all but written off as an expendable population. The passage of California's Proposition 13 in 1978, which capped property taxes on which schools depended, was a watershed in the racist onslaught against social programs viewed as benefiting black people and Latinos.

By 1996, the last time the OEA had a significant strike, Oakland's school district, then majority black, was in a dead heat with Washington, D.C., as the worst in the U.S. (which itself ranks well below most other advanced industrial countries). The same year, Prop. 209 abolished affirmative action in public education, slashing university admissions for black, Latino and Native American students. In 1998, taking aim at the growing population of Latino and other immigrants in California, Prop. 227 banned bilingual education in public schools, although its "English only" requirement was overturned in 2016. Today, half of Oakland public school students speak a language other than English at home. The fight for bilingual education is vital for immigrants, and beneficial for native-born students, who would gain from learning another language.

The same government forces that reduced public education for black and Latino youth to decrepit, heavily policed schools joined with billionaire "school reformers" to sell charter schools to desperate black

and Latino parents as an alternative. In fact, charters increase racial segregation and class inequality while undermining teachers unions. Charter school teachers are forced to work hellish hours with no job protections. A fight to unionize charter schools would be a major step toward eliminating the charter industry and bringing charter teachers and staff into the public school system. Standing in the way of such struggle are the teachers union misleaders, who accept the existence of charters and make groveling appeals to the Democrats to simply regulate them.

### Break with the Democrats! For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

As the L.A. and Oakland teachers strikes clearly show, embracing the backstabbing "friend of labor" Democrats is a dead end. Yet a panoply of fake socialists works overtime to put lipstick on the Democratic donkey. Foremost among them in the teachers strikes has been the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which hailed the OEA settlement as a "huge victory" against "billionaires and their lackeys." Itself an integral part of the Democratic Party, the DSA peddles the delusion that there is a fundamental difference between establishment Democrats and "progressive" Democrats. In fact, the role played by such progressives is to keep discontented workers and minorities shackled to the capitalist Democrats.

Meanwhile, taking their usual side with the union-busters were supporters of David North's World Socialist Web Site. Purporting to offer "a fighting program for Oakland teachers," this sinister outfit demanded that education workers "break with the unions." This is an open call to bust the OEA. No one should be fooled by these scab socialists' call for "rank-and-file committees."

Unions are the basic defensive organizations of the working class; what is needed is a fight for a class-struggle union leadership. This must be linked to forging a workers party dedicated to constructing a socialist America. Only when those who labor rule can society be organized on an egalitarian basis, with quality housing, health care and education for all. ■



(continued from page 3)

What is necessary is a return to the class-struggle methods that built the UAW, Teamsters and other industrial unions in the first place. The quarter-million Amazon workers across the country have tremendous potential social power—the ability to shut down operations at a company that plays a huge role in the U.S. economy. Amazon depends on the steady movement of goods through the “just in time” global cargo chain, with its key choke points.

(continued from page 8)

## For Proletarian Political Independence

Acting hand in hand with Madrid, successive Catalan governments, headed either directly by the right-wing PDeCAT (and its predecessor, *Convergència i Unió*) or in collusion with the ERC and the CUP, have implemented anti-worker austerity and brutal anti-union attacks. Only last fall, the Catalan Generalitat, headed by PDeCAT's Joaquim Torra, unleashed its cops against four days of strikes and demonstrations by public employees, teachers, students and doctors protesting budget cuts and tuition hikes.

## France...

(continued from page 5)

## “The Opium of the People”

Religion plays a key role under capitalism by teaching the exploited and oppressed masses obedience to state authorities and the bosses, while instilling the patriarchal “family values” that stifle women, youth and everyone. The past three decades have seen an increase of religiosity, a product of racist segregation, among the French population of North African and West African

Unleashing that social power is a matter of leadership, a willingness to fight it out class against class, including in defiance of laws banning militant strike tactics. The trade-union bureaucracy, in contrast, is beholden to the bosses and their political representatives, especially the Democrats. Many are themselves fixtures in that party of the class enemy. Applebaum, for example, is a member of the DNC Executive Committee. The unions are mass organizations of workers to defend their economic interests against the capitalists; to consistently pursue that purpose they require a class-struggle leadership committed to the principle of complete political independence of the working class from the bosses and their parties.

## Pseudo-Trotskyists, Popular Frontism and Chauvinism

origin. Internationally, this upsurge of religion was conditioned by the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, which was a huge defeat for the working class and oppressed of the whole world. The counterrevolution brought with it a resurgence of all kinds of fundamentalism, in the Muslim world and elsewhere (for example, Protestant fundamentalism in the U.S.).

The rise of Islam in France reflects the despair of a horribly oppressed community that sees no way of ending that oppression. It is no surprise that many *banlieue* youth would be attracted to Tariq Ramadan, finding in his preaching a refuge and the illusion of a rediscovered dignity. As Marx wrote: “*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. “To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs*

In response to the Cuomo-initiated open letter, those who want Amazon to stay away issued their own statement titled “New



WV Photo  
**Spartacists join demonstration for  
Catalan independence in San Fran-  
cisco, California, 2017.**

As for IR's newfound attachment to Catalan "independence," it is worth noting that their maximum program remains "For a socialist federal republic" of *Spain*, which would include the Catalans, Basques and Galicians with no regard to the will of these oppressed nations. Meanwhile, the French affiliate of IR, Gauche révolutionnaire, remains silent about Catalan and Basque oppression at the hands of its "own" French imperialism, contenting itself with occasionally reprinting articles by its Spanish comrades. It is no

*which needs illusions.* The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears*, the *halo* of which is religion.

“Criticism has torn up the imaginary flowers from the chain not so that man shall wear the unadorned, bleak chain but so that he will shake off the chain and pluck the living flower.”

—“Introduction to *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law*” (1844)

Thus, the Marxist struggle against religious obscurantism is inseparable from the fight to abolish the material conditions which in this world create the need to take refuge in heavenly fantasies.

The bourgeois feminism of #balance-tonporc/#MeToo is a tool in the hands of the capitalist state, as is demonstrated by the persecution of Tariq Ramadan. For our part, as Marxists and fighters for women's liberation, we struggle for the revolutionary transformation of society, to eliminate once and for all the conditions of poverty, exploitation and oppression that give rise to religious illusions. In short, we fight for international socialist revolution. ■

Our goal is not just for the workers to unionize Amazon but ultimately to expropriate it, along with the productive forces of the entire capitalist class, through socialist revolution. Only then, with the introduction of collectivized property forms and centralized planning under workers rule, will economic development serve the interests of society as a whole and not the profits of a few. ■

wonder that they are buried in the chauvinist and colonialist *bourgeois* party of Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

The neo-Morenoites of the CRT (Corriente Revolucionaria de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras, in France the Courant communiste révolutionnaire within the New Anti-Capitalist Party) called for abstaining in the 2017 independence referendum—a call which constituted a capitulation to Castilian chauvinism—all the while giving political support to the bourgeois CUP. Now they try to pass themselves off as the staunchest fighters for “Catalan self-determination” while continuing to spout Castilian chauvinism.

Referring to the December 2017 Catalan elections forced by Madrid, they write: “An important portion of the Catalan working class voted for Ciudadanos thinking of national unity.... The idea of the ‘Balkanization’ of the peninsula would obviously be grave and there is no left or working-class organization that could seriously desire it” ([izquierdadiario.es](http://izquierdadiario.es), 23 July 2018). Thus, while claiming that “revolutionaries are not for just any unity of the Spanish state,” the CRT *opposes* the separation of Catalonia, Euskal Herria and Galicia in the name of...the “national unity” of Spain! Not unlike IR, the CRT’s claims to support self-determination are conditional on a “free and voluntary” federation of Iberian republics, to which end they “have insisted on demanding that the [bourgeois] CUP break with the Catalan bourgeoisie”!

Contrary to the CRT's chauvinist fear-mongering over the "Balkanization" of Spain, a victory in the struggle for independence for Catalonia would in fact represent a crippling blow to the very same capitalist repressive apparatus that keeps the entire proletariat enchained in wage slavery. But international proletarian victory is not the goal of the likes of the CRT and IR. In contrast, we in the ICL strive to follow the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky in order to fight for new October Revolutions around the world. ■

[illegible]

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Free All Catalan *Independentistes*!



Barcelona: Protesters during general strike against imprisonment of Catalan independence leaders, February 21.

SIPA (inset); DPA

We publish below a February 20 article written by our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México and the Ligue trotskyste de France, sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Twelve leading Catalan *independentistes* are being dragged through a show trial in Spain's Supreme Court by the bourgeois government of the social-democratic PSOE prime minister Pedro Sánchez. Their "crime": having organized and carried out the October 2017 referendum on independence of the oppressed Catalan nation and having proclaimed a Catalan republic.

Former vice president of the Catalan Generalitat [government], Oriol Junqueras of the Esquerra Republicana (ERC)—who faces a sentence of up to 74 years—and eight other Catalan nationalists have already endured more than one year in prison. Jordi Sànchez and Jordi Cuixart, former heads of the Assemblea Nacional Catalana (ANC) and Òmnium Cultural (OC) pro-independence organizations, and Carme Forcadell, former speaker in the Catalan *Parlament*, are also behind bars. Others fled Spain to escape arrest, including former Generalitat president Carles Puigdemont of the Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (PDeCAT). In March 2018, the German and Spanish police and intelligence services collaborated closely to detain Puigdemont on a European Union (EU)-wide arrest warrant later withdrawn by Spain.

The repression and humiliation of these Catalan bourgeois nationalists is a warning to any who would seek separation from Spain. As proletarian internationalists, we demand the immediate release of all Catalan *independentistes*. We also demand freedom now for all Basque nationalists languishing in Spanish and French dungeons. **Drop all charges!**

The charges of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds were originally filed by the previous Spanish government, headed by the neo-Francoist People's Party (PP). The openly racist, anti-immigrant, anti-Catalan and anti-Basque Vox party—old school Francoists—joined the government in the prosecution as a "private accuser." The social democrats, rabid *españolistas* [Spanish nationalists] and loyal subjects of "his majesty" King

## For a Catalan Workers Republic North and South of the Pyrenees!

Felipe VI, have from the beginning fully supported the persecution of Catalan *independentistes* (including the suspension of Catalonia's autonomy between October 2017 and June 2018). Since last year they have implemented it from their position in the government. The Catalan nationalist parties helped prop up the Sánchez government in Madrid but finally abandoned the government when it repeatedly refused to grant an independence referendum. When the Catalan parties recently voted against his budget, Sánchez was forced to call early general elections, which are to be held on April 28.

The social democrats' failed attempt at a deal with Catalan forces incensed the PP, Vox and Ciudadanos. This Francoist trinity organized a Castilian-chauvinist display of force in Madrid on February 10, demanding the imprisonment of the *independentistes* and the fall of the Sánchez government. As a personification of the unity of Spanish and French anti-Catalan chauvinism, present in this orgy of backwardness was former French prime minister Manuel Valls, now a Ciudadanos candidate for mayor of Barcelona. Under

François Hollande's 2012-17 French Socialist Party government, Valls implemented one attack after another against the proletariat and did his best to make his name as the scourge of Arabs, the Roma [Gypsy] people and all the oppressed.

### For Independence from Spain and France!

There is a single Catalan nation and a single Basque nation, each of which is divided and oppressed by two capitalist states: Spain and France. In order to stabilize the Spanish state after the death of the dictator Francisco Franco, Catalonia, the Basque Country and other regions were granted fraudulent autonomy in the late 1970s. In France, on the other hand, the oppressed nations have no linguistic or legal rights *whatsoever*. Especially in the Basque Country, the population faces as much repression as in Spain. Due to the differences in the historical development of capitalism in Spain and France, the driving force of pro-independence movements in Catalonia and the Basque Country [Euskal Herria] comes from the portions of those nations forcibly re-

tained within Spain. Thus, the fate of the Basques and Catalans in France strongly depends on what happens on the Spanish side of the border.

We call for the independence of Euskal Herria and Catalonia now, in the North and the South. We are also for the right of independence of Galicia and for the unconditional withdrawal of Spain from its enclaves in Morocco—Ceuta and Melilla. As for France, we are for the independence of the French colony of Kanaky [New Caledonia] and of the Corsican oppressed nation, and for the right to independence for *all* the French colonies.

We recognize in the struggle for national liberation a potential motor force for *proletarian revolution*. We seek to imbue the working class of France and Spain with the understanding that the fight against the national oppression of Basques and Catalans is an integral part of the fight for the emancipation of the proletariat itself. **Down with the Spanish monarchy! For workers republics of Catalonia and Euskal Herria!**

### Down With the EU!

Catalonia has nothing resembling its own state, particularly armed forces. In the face of the Castilian onslaught and in the absence of a class-conscious proletariat, there is no hope of making Catalan independence a reality in the near future. The Catalan bourgeoisie has prostrated itself before the EU, pleading for its backing. The EU is no supranational state, but an imperialist consortium dominated by Germany. It is devoted to squeezing every possible euro of profit from the working class of Europe, including in Germany, while trampling on the national sovereignty of its poorer members like Greece, Portugal and Romania on behalf of the imperialist powers, mainly Germany and, to a lesser extent, France.

Contrary to the illusions spread by Catalan nationalists, the EU unequivocally backs the Spanish bourgeois state against Catalan independence. An independent Catalonia would threaten the breakup of Spain and would undermine French imperialism by fueling the national aspirations of Galicians, Basques, Corsicans and all colonial peoples. It would also threaten

*continued on page 7*



Reuters

October 2017: Crowd outside polling station confronted by Spanish Guardia Civil cops seeking to prevent Catalan independence referendum.