

## Venezuela

### Democrat-Backed White House Coup Flops



AP

# Down With U.S. Sanctions, Military Threats!

Once again, right-wing forces acting at the behest of U.S. imperialism have attempted to seize power in Venezuela. Standing on a highway overpass near a Caracas airbase in the early morning hours of April 30, Washington stooges Juan Guaidó and Leopoldo López called on the armed forces to revolt in the “final phase” of “Operation Freedom,” the campaign to overthrow the bourgeois-populist regime of Nicolás Maduro. Regurgitating White House spin, the U.S. capitalist media refused to call the coup attempt by its right name, preferring terms like “uprising” or even “protest.” But with only a couple dozen soldiers by his side, Guaidó’s plot quickly fizzled. As tens of thousands gathered to defend the presidential palace, López scurried away to the Chilean and then the Spanish Embassy, while Guaidó led a march that was dispersed by the National Guard.

All opponents of U.S. imperialism should cheer the defeat of this attempted putsch. However, the U.S. rulers remain determined to oust Maduro and install a regime loyal to their diktats. Asked about military intervention, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Fox Business News, “If that’s what’s required, that’s what the United States will do.” The U.S. also stepped up brutal economic sanctions against Venezuela, which sits on the world’s largest proven oil reserves as well as substantial gold and other mineral wealth.



Miraflores Palace

**Top: Washington tools Juan Guaidó (right) and Leopoldo López (center left) with Venezuelan National Guard officer at air base in capital during failed coup attempt, April 30. Above: Mass rally that day in Caracas in defense of government of bourgeois-populist Nicolás Maduro.**

U.S. attempts to unseat the Venezuelan regime date back to a failed 2002 coup against Maduro’s predecessor, the late Hugo Chávez. Like Maduro, Chávez was a bonapartist capitalist ruler who exercised a degree of independence from the Yankee imperialists. Proud of his *mestizo* background in a country with a lily-white elite, Chávez used Venezuela’s oil revenues to fund social reforms benefiting the

urban and rural poor and denounced U.S. military interventions. His regime established close ties with Cuba, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, providing oil to help keep it afloat in the face of relentless U.S. hostility. The White House has now further tightened the U.S. embargo against Cuba (see article below).

We oppose all U.S. machinations in Venezuela and stand for that country’s

defense against any imperialist military attack. At the same time, as revolutionary Marxists we give no political support to the bourgeois Maduro regime. Washington howls that the crisis in Venezuela shows the failure of “socialism.” In fact, Maduro and his bourgeois supporters, including in the officer corps, are being targeted because they are not servile to Washington, not because they in any way represent a challenge to capitalism.

While the Republican Trump administration is leading the drive for “regime change” in Venezuela, “support for Guaidó and opposition to Maduro has been a rare bipartisan issue in Washington,” as ABC News observed on the day of the fizzled coup. Indeed, the Democratic Party is a full partner in the drive to bring Venezuela to heel, from mainstream pols like Nancy Pelosi to “progressives” like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Asked about the coup attempt,

Ocasio-Cortez replied, “I defer to caucus leadership on how we navigate this.” With a mere handful in Congress voicing any opposition to the administration’s policies in Venezuela, it’s clear that the Democrats’ main concern is that the coup attempt failed.

A quick learner in imperialist duplicity, Ocasio-Cortez echoed Trump by calling

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## Washington Tightens Vise

# Defend the Cuban Revolution!

Last month, the White House levied a series of punitive measures designed to starve the Cuban workers state into submission: hardening economic sanctions, cracking down on tourist travel and capping remittances from relatives abroad. The Trump administration is reversing Barack Obama’s modest “Cuban thaw.” Obama had normalized diplomatic relations and eased some trade restrictions while keeping intact the decades-long

embargo, which continues to strangle workers and peasants on the island. It is crucially necessary for the working class in the U.S. to defend Cuba, oppose all imperialist sanctions and demand an end to the embargo, an act of economic warfare. Cuba should have every right to trade with whatever countries it chooses.

The Cuban Revolution laid the basis for the overthrow of capitalism in 1960-61, and since then the U.S. ruling class as a whole has relentlessly sought to restore capitalist slavery and imperialist domination there. Both Democratic and Republican administrations have combined their economic blackmail with everything from terror attacks and

assassination attempts to military invasion, namely the CIA-organized 1961 Bay of Pigs, ordered by John F. Kennedy.

Before a crowd of *gusano* Bay of Pigs veterans in April, Trump’s national security advisor, John Bolton, pledged gunboat diplomacy in U.S. imperialism’s “backyard,” gloating that the 19th century Monroe Doctrine, which designated the Americas as the sole dominion of the U.S., “is alive and well.” The Obama administration was a tad more subtle in how it packaged the same counterrevolutionary goal, seeking to develop a class of entrepreneurs and flood the island with cheap imports, as well as to further bolster pro-imperialist

“dissidents” from within. Meanwhile, he kept open the U.S. military’s torture center in Guantánamo Bay, which has long served as a staging ground for provocations against Cuba. We say: U.S. out of Guantánamo now!

The Trump administration presented the new measures as a way to strong-arm Cuba into severing ties with Venezuela, its major trading partner. Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel has been accused of “controlling” Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, whom the U.S. political establishment wants to depose. Deeming both countries part of the so-called “troika of tyranny” (along

*continued on page 7*



# “Progressive” D.A. Drops Appeal, Continues Vendetta

## Free Mumia Now!

### No Illusions in the Capitalist Courts!

On April 17, Philadelphia district attorney Larry Krasner abandoned his effort to prevent class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal from challenging his frame-up conviction for the 1981 killing of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Last December, Judge Leon Tucker of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas threw out the state Supreme Court decisions from 1998 to 2012 that rubber-stamped Mumia’s frame-up because a judge on that court had given an “appearance of bias.” The judge, Ronald Castille, had been the D.A. during Mumia’s first appeal of his conviction and sentence. Making clear that the decades-long vendetta against Mumia will not end on his watch, Krasner proclaimed that the decision to withdraw his appeal of Tucker’s ruling “does not mean Mr. Abu-Jamal will be freed or get a new trial.” According to Faulkner’s widow Maureen, Krasner promised “that he would do everything within his power to keep my husband’s remorseless killer in prison for the rest of his life.”

Krasner rode into office supported by

a host of liberal activists and fake socialists as a “progressive” D.A. and a pillar of the decarceration movement. Krasner had pursued the appeal out of expressed concern that Tucker’s ruling would open the door to challenges by all inmates victimized by Castille’s dual role as prosecutor and judge—and some might then actually be decarcerated. According to Krasner, he can now rest easy because a supplemental ruling by Tucker narrows the scope of his order.

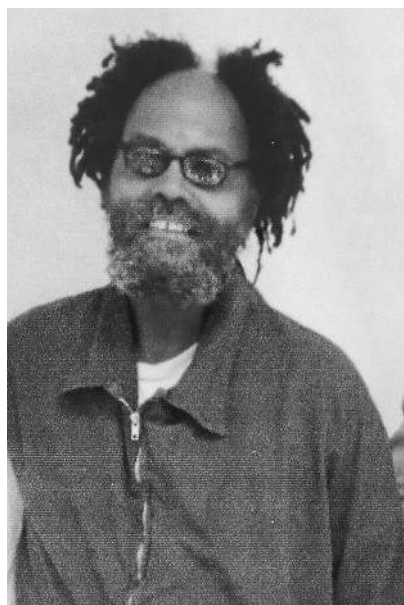
Mumia, a former Black Panther Party spokesman, MOVE supporter and award-winning journalist, has been in prison hell for 37 years—30 of them on death row.

His trial for killing Faulkner was a classic frame-up, including evidence tampering, racist jury-rigging, lying prosecutors and a hanging judge. The cops and prosecutors terrorized witnesses and concocted a false “confession.” Mumia was sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. In 2001, a U.S. District Court judge overturned the death sentence and ten years later the Philly D.A.’s office dropped its longstanding effort to legally lynch Mumia, satisfied that he remains condemned to life in prison with no chance of parole.

Among the reformist outfits that celebrated Krasner’s election were Workers World Party (WWP), Socialist Alternative (SAlt) and the now defunct International Socialist Organization (ISO), whose ex-members have largely liquidated into the Democratic Party via the Democratic Socialists of America. After Krasner won the Democratic Party primary in 2017, SAlt’s Philadelphia branch enthused: “Krasner Wins! Keep Building The Resistance!” WWP declared that “Krasner’s election victory was significant.” The ISO hailed Krasner’s campaign as a blueprint for how activists can help elect “progressive” D.A.s nationwide on the Democratic Party ticket and keep the prosecutors “aligned with the perspectives of the movement organizers” (socialistworker.org, 1 October 2018).

The lie that a D.A. can serve the people is a betrayal of workers, black people and immigrants. The entire job of a district attorney, whether traditional or “progressive,” is to wield the repressive powers of racist capitalist “law and order.” Krasner made this clear to his supporters when he appointed Castille to his transition team and gave his army of prosecutors the green light to pursue death sentences.

With Krasner’s tooth and nail fight against Mumia’s struggle to overturn his conviction, a little bit of bloom came off the rose—just a little bit. A February 6 letter to Krasner, signed by WWP’s International Action Center and other organi-



CSDN

zations, implored him to drop the appeal, grotesquely groveling that he could “be the one to end this pattern of racism in Mumia’s case.” As WWP now tells it, such “pressure on Krasner’s office to do the right thing” convinced the D.A. to reverse course on the appeal (workers.org, 17 April). Truth is, in continuing to oppose Mumia’s fight for freedom Krasner is doing the right thing for the racist capitalist class he serves.

Prosecutors, along with the cops, courts, prisons and military, are a core part of the capitalist state, a machinery of organized violence whose very purpose is to preserve the class rule and property of the capitalist exploiters. The reformists sow deadly illusions that this apparatus to repress the workers and oppressed can be bent to serve their interests.

Even after Krasner went after Mumia’s head, SAlt called on him “to boldly and actively apply the full power of his office to re-balance the scales of justice” and “use the bully pulpit that comes with elected office to build the movements that could force changes to the law” (socialistalternative.org, 20 March). We have no doubt that Krasner will use the full power of his office to keep grinding out new victims of capitalist injustice and the bully pulpit to build his movement—the forces of repression. SAlt’s finding common cause with the top prosecutor in heavily black Philadelphia is no surprise, as it has long embraced cops and prison guards as “workers in uniform.”

We welcomed Tucker’s ruling, which allows Mumia another chance to overturn his conviction, but it is no “historic win,” as WWP declared—Mumia remains behind bars, battling for his freedom in courts that have always been stacked against him. According to Workers World, “Once Abu-Jamal wins just one of these arguments he gains the right to a new trial.” Not so. The courts have a long-established tradition of dismissing prosecutorial misconduct and trial court error as *de minimis*, Latin for we don’t give a damn, you’re going to rot in prison until you die. Even before Castille donned the judge’s robes, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court discarded its own precedent to affirm Mumia’s death sentence in 1989. The federal courts as well have repeatedly rubber-stamped the Castille court’s decisions and refused to consider evidence of Mumia’s innocence, including the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner.

Since taking up Mumia’s case in 1987, we have advocated pursuing all possible legal avenues, while fighting against any illusions in the courts of the capitalist class enemy. We have fought for Mumia’s struggle to be taken up by the multiracial labor movement—those who create the wealth of this society and who can shut it down. What is necessary to put an end to capitalist exploitation, racial oppression and injustice is for the working class to sweep away the ruling class and its state apparatus and establish its own egalitarian rule. ■



TROTSKY

#### U.S. Imperialism in Latin America

*The 1938 founding conference of the Trotskyist Fourth International emphasized the special duty of revolutionaries in this country to oppose U.S. imperialist domination of Latin America and its other colonies and neocolonies. In 1823, President James Monroe warned the European powers to cease all colonization and intercession in the Americas, in effect asserting Washington’s claim to the entire hemisphere as its backyard. By the end of the 19th century,*

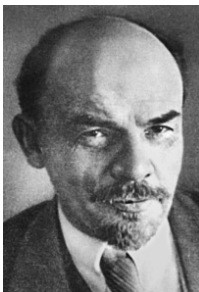
*the U.S. emerged on the world scene as an imperialist power. Since then, every Democratic and Republican administration has hewed to the Monroe Doctrine, keeping Latin America and the Caribbean under the thumb of the U.S. through military intervention, coups, puppet regimes and economic subjugation.*

In Latin America, although confronted with a powerful rival in the form of Great Britain and to a lesser but increasing extent by Japan and Germany, the United States remains the dominant imperialist force. The United States appeared on the scene at a later date than did such countries as Spain, Portugal, Germany, and England, but by the turn of the century it was already on its way to outstripping its rivals. Its rapid industrial and financial development, the preoccupation of the European powers during the [first] World War, and the transformation of the United States into the world’s creditor during that period, facilitated its rise to the top and enabled it to establish its imperialist hegemony over most of the countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean Sea. It proclaimed its intention of maintaining this hegemony against encroachments by European and Japanese imperialism....

The Roosevelt administration, despite all its bland pretensions, has made no real alteration in the imperialist tradition of its predecessors. It has emphatically reiterated the vicious Monroe Doctrine; it has confirmed its monopolistic claims over Latin America at the Buenos Aires Conferences; it has given the sanctification of its approval to the unspeakable regimes of Vargas and Batista; its demand for a bigger navy to police not only the Pacific but also the Atlantic is an example of its determination to wield the armed force of the United States in defense of its imperialist might in the southern part of the hemisphere. Under Roosevelt, the policy of the iron fist in Latin America is sheathed in the velvet glove of demagogic pretensions of friendship and “democracy.”...

The revolutionists in the United States are obliged to rouse the American workers against the sending of any armed forces against the peoples of Latin America and the Pacific and for the withdrawal of any such forces where they now operate as instruments of imperialist oppression, as well as against any other form of imperialist pressure, be it “diplomatic” or “economic,” which is calculated to violate the national independence of any country or to prevent its attainment of such national independence.

—“Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism,” September 1938, reprinted in *Documents of the Fourth International* (Pathfinder Press, 1973)



LENIN



WV Photo

**Spartacist League warns against illusions in D.A. at protest outside Mumia’s hearing, Philadelphia, October 2018.**

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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# Canada Bars Entry to Catalan Leader Let Carles Puigdemont into Quebec!

The following article was written in French by our comrades of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada, binational section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

On April 29, the bourgeois press announced that Justin Trudeau's anti-Québécois government had just barred Carles Puigdemont, the former president of the Generalitat [Catalan parliament] and leader of the Catalan independence movement, from entering Quebec. Puigdemont, who has lived in exile since 2017 due to the neo-Francoist repression meted out by the chauvinist Spanish state, had been invited by the Québécois nationalists of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal and was scheduled to tour Quebec, speak about Catalonia's independence struggle and visit the National Assembly.

Puigdemont is a leader of an oppressed nation struggling to liberate itself from its oppressor nation, and he therefore finds sympathy in Quebec. Trudeau's actions not only are a slap in the face to the Catalan people but also are aimed against Quebec's right to self-determination. In the eyes of the imperialist Canadian government, every fight for independence is an indirect threat to its own existence; thus, any expression of solidarity between Quebec and other independence movements must be quashed.

Carles Puigdemont's lawyer in Montreal has taken legal action to lift the travel ban, and the Trudeau government may well cave in to political pressure in this election year. Whatever happens, one thing is clear: so-called "multicultural" and "liberal" Canada (which, like Spain, is in fact a reactionary monarchy) is 100 percent behind the Castilian capitalist state of Spain, which is a prison house of peoples including the Catalans, Basques and Galicians.

Having used repression to attempt to crush the legitimate 2017 referendum on Catalonia's independence—in which the "yes" vote won an overwhelming 90 percent—Madrid is going after Catalan leaders. A dozen *independentistes* are currently languishing in the jail cells of the capitalist government presided over by the social-democratic PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) of Pedro Sánchez since 2018. They face show trials that could lead to decades-long prison sentences. Puigdemont and other Catalan members



AFP

Carles Puigdemont in Brussels, July 2018.

of parliament fled the country to avoid a similar fate. We call for the independence of Catalonia and the Basque Country on both sides of the French-Spanish border. We say: **Down with the repression against the independentistes! Drop all charges and free them now!**

Like Quebec, Catalonia is a nation with a distinct language and culture and

Demòcrata Europeu Català (PDeCAT), have a bourgeois-nationalist program, i.e., a false conception that the bourgeoisie and the working class of a given nation share common interests. Today's nationalist leaders make every effort to keep the struggle for national liberation within the confines of "democratic" capitalism, while the nationalist capitalists seek an

## Independence for Catalonia and Quebec!

we are for its independence without conditions. Furthermore, independence for these nations would strike a blow against the reactionary Spanish and Canadian states, thereby serving the interests of all workers. Marxists are staunch champions of national liberation struggles. We view such struggles as a potential motor force for socialist revolutions that would establish the rule of the working class—the only force capable of realizing the true national and social liberation of all peoples of the world.

This perspective is starkly counterposed to that of the Parti québécois (PQ), the Bloc québécois and Québec solidaire (QS), which, like Puigdemont's Partit

independent state in order to better exploit their "own" workers.

The PQ and its allies (backed by the union bureaucracies in Quebec) support NAFTA, NATO and all the imperialists' machinations. During every referendum, their actions amount to nothing more than crawling before the Wall Street bankers and "assuring" them that an independent Quebec would be pliable and submissive to their diktats—not that this would stop U.S. imperialism from crushing Quebec. Catalan nationalists likewise preach deadly illusions in the European Union (EU). We categorically oppose the EU, which is a consortium of capitalist states today dominated by German imperialism, and sec-

ondarily by France, both of which fiercely oppose independence for Catalonia.

The events of the past two years in Catalonia have demonstrated that independence will not be won through parliamentary maneuvers by bourgeois *independentistes*, who plead with Madrid for an agreement. And contrary to what Puigdemont claims, Canada is certainly not more democratic than Spain just because it tolerated two referendums on independence for Quebec. As demonstrated by the military occupation of Quebec in October 1970, by the military and economic threats around the 1980 and 1995 referendums and by the Clarity Act, which effectively bans the separation of Quebec, it is clear that even in the case of a majority "yes" vote in a hypothetical third referendum, independence is by no means guaranteed.

Ultimately, only the working class has the social power to achieve genuine national liberation and create a socialist society free of oppression, misery and exploitation worldwide. To unleash this social power, what is necessary is to build Leninist parties as tribunes of the oppressed, which will fight against all manifestations of oppression and for the *political independence of the workers movement*.

In the oppressor nations, this means winning Castilian and Anglo-Canadian workers to the struggle for national liberation in opposition to their chauvinist, reformist leaderships, be they supporters of the Liberal Party or the NDP [New Democratic Party] in Canada, or the PSOE or other social democrats or petty-bourgeois chauvinists (like Podemos) in Spain. In the oppressed nations, it is necessary to fight against workers' illusions in their bourgeois-nationalist leaderships (the PQ, the Bloc and QS in Quebec; the PDeCAT, Esquerra Republicana and Candidatura d'Unitat Popular in Catalonia). What the Trotskyist League strives to build here in Quebec and Canada is a binational Leninist party, as part of spreading our revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist program along with our comrades of the International Communist League. ***Pour une république ouvrière du Québec! For a workers republic of Quebec! Per una república obrera catalana! For a workers republic of Catalonia!*** ■

## Letter

## On L.A. Teachers Strike

3 April 2019

To *Workers Vanguard*

In "Blue" California, Los Angeles was the latest flashpoint for privatization of public education. Nationally Democrats (Elizabeth Warren, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) expended much hot air "supporting" LA teachers. The Democrats cast themselves defenders of the "middle class", but as the "lesser evil" uphold capitalist rule for Wall Street over the working class.

The *LA Times* references ex-Mayor and Democrat, Antonio Villaraigosa, (UCLA MEChA Alumni) as "a staunch supporter" of Charters. In the 2018 Primaries for governor he was backed by business and philanthropic Charter supporters with \$22.5 million. The *Times* noted Villaraigosa was "A one-time union organizer", but to clarify, he was a UTLA organizer in the 1989 teachers strike. UTLA's Wayne Johnson called the strike despite pressure against this due to end-of-year grading/graduation. In 2010, Mayor Villaraigosa

sought control over LA Unified and chose billionaire Austin Beutner as "Jobs Czar" for 13 city departments, labeling UTLA "an unyielding obstruction to education reforms." From the start Charters openly discriminated against inner-city and Special Needs students. Education historian, Diane Ravitch, wrote in the *LA Times*, "Charter Schools are 'public' when it is time to claim public funding, but they have claimed in federal court and before the National Labor Relations Board to be private corporations when their employees seek the protection of state labor laws."

In this year's strike LA's Democratic "progressives" took a side...with LAUSD! *LA Times* "Features" writer, and hipster, Gustavo Arellano, cited the "fact-finding panel" which countered UTLA's demands to ooze his anti-working class cynicism, "How about be happy you're getting a raise, let alone a retroactive one?" screamed what remains of Southern California's working class." In an Op-Ed Antonia Hernández, ex-president of the

Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, stated, "Elected officials, along with civic, business and philanthropic leaders, need to put pressure on both the school district and the teachers union to resolve their differences and avert this strike." Termed out LA County Supervisor, Gloria Molina, with a shady past in East LA commercial real estate and being "for the people" wrote, if families were at the negotiating table, "I'm certain they would say they don't want a strike."

These "Friends of Labor" smelled blood without a unified District-wide union. UTLA stands apart from SEIU Local 99, representing 30,000 Teacher Assistants, janitors, cafeteria workers, school bus drivers. Leaning on separate contract expiration dates the pro-Democratic Party union bureaucrats, and the bosses, pit the work force against each other. The current settlement caused much frustration, with one teacher posting, "I stood out in the rain for 5 days to get this anemic contract!"

In the 1989 teachers strike Local 99 had union school bus drivers transport scab "substitute teachers" to school sites! Driver resistance led the union leadership to back away from this, but they had

drivers deliver students, go into schools, watch the kids, and be under supervision of principals, i.e., continue scabbing! Rather than UTLA organize TA's, Local 99, to its credit, organized the TA's in the 1989/90 period. In the 2019 strike Local 99 again directed members to cross picket lines. Individual school sites could "petition" to join the strike. Over a dozen schools joined UTLA standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the picket lines, exhibiting a model of union solidarity! Independence of the working population from the parties of capital can break this cycle with a struggle for a party of the working class!

B. Montoya,  
Retiree SEIU Local 99

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# France's New Caledonia Colony

# Independence for Kanaky!

The following is the second part of an article translated from le Bolchéviek No. 226 (December 2018), newspaper of our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France. Part One appeared in WV No. 1154 (3 May). The article is based on a talk given by the LTF last year, shortly before New Caledonia's November 4 referendum on independence, in which the "no" vote prevailed.

## PART TWO

At the time of the Matignon Accords 30 years ago, the FLNKS [Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front] won an agreement in principle for the reopening of the Koniambo mine in the North [Province of New Caledonia] and the building of a refinery complex for the ore in order to counterbalance the overwhelming power of the SLN [Société Le Nickel], whose financial backers are French capitalists like the Duval family. The Koniambo complex was to be controlled by the regional council, which is in the hands of the *indépendantistes*.

To begin with, the operation enabled Jacques Lafleur, one of the principal Caldoche [long-term European inhabitants] capitalists and one of the negotiators of the Matignon Accords, to get rid of his mining interests at a good price. As the region did not have the capital for the enormous investments at stake, the sell-off in reality served simply as a facade to enable the entry of big international mining conglomerates, today notably Glencore, whose CEO is a white capitalist of South African origin. In South Africa, it's called Black Economic Empowerment.

Furthermore, a third nickel company suddenly appeared in the South Province, this one controlled by the Caldoches. The bottom line is that there is no way for the Kanak to have real influence in the extraction and refining of the principal wealth of their country. All that the FLNKS obtained is the job of running the social services of the French colonial power, by administering the North region and the Loyalty Islands. That won't advance the cause of independence one iota.

All this underlines two things. First, despite the fact that the leaders of the FLNKS pretend that independence is on the way and that the "process of decolonization" is inevitably going ahead, the reality is that it will not come from this referendum. Massive social and class struggles will be necessary to drive out

## For a Workers and Peasants Government Centered on the Kanak People!



Supporters of independence for Kanaky rally in Nouméa, October 2016.

French imperialism. Second, economic dependence on imperialism is deep and multifaceted. National independence in and of itself will not abolish it. What is necessary is a workers and peasants government centered on the Kanak people that expropriates the capitalists and extends the struggle until they are expropriated in the imperialist centers.

That is the basis of our fundamental difference with the nationalists of the USTKE [Federation of Unions of Kanak and Exploited Workers] and their political wing, the Parti travailliste [Labour Party]: They want an independent Kanaky *in a framework that remains capitalist*, but which is more equitable toward the Kanak and the exploited. Capitalism cannot be equitable for the Kanak or for the exploited. For our part, we want *all power to the workers* by means of socialist revolution.

At their Paris meeting on September 19, USTKE leader Rock Haocas showed convincingly that independence could not be expected from a referendum whose dice are loaded so much in favor of French imperialism. He added that "We have to think of a new strategy to win independence."

But what is it? A mystery. Radical nationalism is at an impasse. We intervened at this meeting to present our program, laying out our proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist perspective to drive out French imperialism.

### French Imperialism and the Pacific

France will not leave Kanaky without being driven out. It has been preparing this referendum for 30 years. The Macron government has even recently changed the weather bulletin on the 8 p.m. news on France 2 [TV station] to also give the weather report for Nouméa. In other words, they hammer away every day that New Caledonia is France, whether it is raining or the wind is blowing.

New Caledonia is French imperialism's key possession in the Pacific. French Polynesia is thousands of kilometers away from anywhere and has lost its strategic interest with the end of nuclear testing. On the other hand, New Caledonia is a military rampart just to the east of Australia, as I have already mentioned. Its nickel resources are potentially strategic, even if they are no longer exported to France.

The claim of French imperialism to still be a player in the big league rests on its possessions in the Pacific. Before that, it was Polynesia, which allowed it to maintain its nuclear arsenal. The exclusive economic zone around New Caledonia represents more than three times the area of France. As the bourgeois-chauvinist [Jean-Luc] Mélenchon said in his presidential program, "France is a maritime power without really being aware of it. Nevertheless, it is a question of essential sovereignty for our country, which has a presence in all the seas across the globe." With declarations like this, there is no need to ask what he thinks of independence for the Kanak people. In the best of cases, he would do as his mentor and role model [former Socialist president François] Mitterrand did.

France is manifestly an imperialist power in decline and on the road to marginalization. But it has not renounced its role, which only makes it more danger-

ous. It wants to play its small part in the great game in the Pacific to try to destroy the bureaucratically deformed Chinese workers state and restore capitalism in that country. It has sent warships to provoke the Chinese navy in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands. It has sold new-generation attack submarines to Australian imperialism, armaments whose only use in the region is for conflict with China. It is constantly stirring up fear over the so-called transformation of Vanuatu into a Chinese aircraft carrier and saying that New Caledonia itself would follow the same road in the case of independence.

In the face of these Cold War-style provocations, Marxists proclaim loud and clear that we are for the *unconditional military defense of China* against any imperialist threat and against any internal threat of capitalist counterrevolution. This is also an aspect of our demand for the withdrawal of French troops from New Caledonia. We fight for proletarian political revolution in China to establish a regime based on workers councils. Such a regime, inspired by proletarian revolutionary internationalism and not the narrow Chinese nationalism of the ruling bureaucracy in Beijing, would help the Kanak people finally liberate themselves from the stifling yoke of French colonialism.

### The Land Question

Our political perspective is not simply independence. In Kanaky, it is above all for a workers and peasants government centered on the Kanak, a formulation of the dictatorship of the proletariat that highlights two of its crucial aspects for Kanaky: the land question and the question of national liberation of the Kanak people.

I think the second point is straightforward. Contrary to the claims of the chauvinist French press, the Kanak have always emphasized that they were a hospitable people and that they had no intention of throwing the European or Oceanian immigrants into the sea. Their concept of Kanaky was not racial but national, but the Kanak had to be masters in their own country. The Caldoches have a choice: either they accept living in an independent



Biosphoto

Family of Kanak farmers, 2018. Kanak agriculture, concentrated on less desirable land, is largely subsistence.

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Kanaky, where they will have their place, or they consider themselves French above all else, in which case their only choice is to leave for France. For the immigrants into Kanaky from the surrounding region, the question posed is their integration into this society. We are for their integration into a society dominated by the Kanak people rather than by French imperialism. This directly flows from our support for independence.

A fundamental aspect of Kanak identity is the land question. At the time of the arrival of the Europeans, the Kanak had a society of patrilineal clans based on the cultivation of taro and yam. They maintained hillside terraces with efficient irrigation systems for the taro plantations. Each clan was identified by its own ceremonial mound. The land dispossession of the Kanak and their confinement in reservations constituted a profound trauma. The Kanak people want to recover their land. This is quite legitimate. Nationalization of the land would allow soviets (councils) of peasants in the rural areas to reappropriate the land as they judge fit.

The very large landed estates have declined since the 1950s. Since the 1980s, there has been significant agricultural reform. What this means in practice is that a significant number of the [rural] Caldoche *broussards*, especially on the east coast of Grande Terre, got rid of their land at a good price, paid for by the state. Today, a clear majority of the land on the east coast that is not state property is in the hands of the Kanak. However, the best lands are on the west coast—with most of their value found below ground—and in the metropolitan area of Greater Nouméa, the only real city in the country, where real estate remains, as before, in the hands of whites.

There has never been modern agriculture of the capitalist type in New Caledonia. This is very different from South



Jean-Louis Dion

Nickel workers, in midst of 51-day strike, march to Territorial Assembly of New Caledonia, 1978.

afar, and especially without a Trotskyist organization in Kanaky. A workers and peasants government centered on the Kanak means that the dictatorship of the proletariat leans consciously on the Kanak peasantry to create the means for a progressive development of labor productivity and harmonious development of the country outside of Greater Nouméa.

For Permanent Revolution!

If we are able to present a Marxist line on Kanaky today, it is because we have been able to reappropriate a Leninist framework on the national question thanks to a crucial fight that was conducted in our party last year to break with English and French great-power chauvinism in particular. This fight culminated at our last international conference. I am not able to elaborate on this today, but I will refer

French imperialism could in the case of independence grant the Kanak petty bourgeoisie “a majority stake as shareholders in the SLN.”

French chauvinism always accompanies the absence of a revolutionary proletarian perspective. Our propaganda of the 1980s practically disappeared the existence of the proletariat in New Caledonia. Actually, unlike on most of the islands of the Pacific, a proletariat has existed for a hundred years on Grande Terre, certainly small, but endowed with considerable social power, disproportionate to its numerical size. It is concentrated significantly in the mines, in nickel refining, the ports and airports.

This proletariat is multiethnic. Over time, the French capitalists have resorted to various waves of indentured labor, from Japan (later interned then expelled by the Gaullists during the war), Indonesia and Indochina. (The latter were expelled at the beginning of the 1960s because they were increasingly being won over to Communism during the Vietnam War.) More recently, there has been a notable immigration of Wallis Islanders.

There are also Kanak in the proletariat, especially since the breakdown of the *Indigénat* [the racist “Indigenous code”] regime after the war [World War II]. As I have already said, the development of the trade union at the SLN from the 1950s onwards was intimately linked to the struggle for equal pay for equal work, irrespective of ethnicity. I have also spoken about the brief upsurge of the Communist Party after the war. The essential question dominating the history of the workers movement of New Caledonia is the question of equality for the Kanak.

Certainly, the Kanak remain concentrated at the bottom of the wage scale. There is an unspoken racist glass ceiling that reserves the qualified jobs for white Caldoches or more recent arrivals

from France. The lack of qualifications and low educational achievement of the Kanak are themselves products of the French state policy of imposing teaching in French and not in the mother tongue. This, in turn, has served, since the 1960s, as an additional pretext for the pursuit of France’s colonial policy of making the Kanak people a minority in their own country and bringing in qualified personnel from France.

The proletariat in power will, as a priority, struggle to put an end to this state of affairs. This will mean, in particular, radical changes in education policy, with teaching carried out in the mother tongue and considerable investments in educational infrastructure for the benefit of the Kanak and other peoples who are today oppressed.

Such a policy will be linked to the promotion of paid employment for women, also with equal pay for equal work. It will be a question of laying the material basis for a real socialization of education and childcare, which will permit the gradual replacement of the family, a pillar of social conservatism and the oppression of women, by freely consensual relations between individuals. For the Kanak, this will also include an end to the oppressive forms of clan-based family structures, which include arranged marriages and the prohibition of divorce.

Obviously, it is not possible to construct socialism on a single island. The program of socialism in one country is a Stalinist program that proved its failure in the Soviet Union, leading finally to the capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. The Soviet Union was roughly a thousand times larger and more populous than Kanaky. The immediate struggle for the extension of a socialist revolution in Kanaky is of vital importance because the imperialists, whether they are French, Australian or others, would do everything possible to crush the revolution before it could be extended.

But the seizure of power by a workers and peasants government in Kanaky would be an enormous step forward to break the French proletariat from the chauvinism that ties it to its own bourgeoisie. It would be a boost for the proletarian revolution here in this country. The allies of a revolutionary workers government of Kanaky are not the UN where French imperialism sits on the Security Council; they are the workers and oppressed masses in Indonesia, in France, in Australia and elsewhere. This perspective is inconceivable without a revolutionary workers party in Kanaky, a party composed in its overwhelming majority of Kanak people. Without such a party, the inevitable uprisings to come of the Kanak and the workers risk suffering the cruelest of setbacks again. This struggle is intimately linked to the fight to reforge the Fourth International, with sections deeply anchored in the working class, in Kanaky, in France and in the rest of the world. ■



Australasian Spartacist

Sydney, July 2016: Spartacist supporters at Black Lives Matter protest.

Africa or Zimbabwe, where after the socialist revolution the direct transformation of the large properties into collective production units controlled by soviets of rural workers can be envisaged. In New Caledonia, the large properties of several hundred or several thousand hectares on the west coast now remain essentially in the hands of the Caldoches, and are dedicated to the extensive raising of cattle with reduced manpower.

The colonial rulers tried to introduce coffee growing, but this continues to decline and it is in fact quite marginal today. Typically, you have a coffee plantation of a hectare or less, a supplementary crop for some Kanak. In practice, the banks systematically refuse to lend even the smallest amount of money to the Kanak. From their viewpoint, tribal or clan land, being inalienable, cannot guarantee a mortgage. Thus, even the Kanak who would like to develop commercial agriculture remain deprived of any perspective of economic development. Agriculture practiced on the Kanak lands, and it is the same for fishing, is essentially destined for self-sufficiency and customary exchanges, not for the market.

How would socialist modernization of agriculture be carried out? This is something that is impossible to sketch out with our very limited knowledge, from

to the latest issue of *Spartacist* [English-language edition No. 65, Summer 2017], which presents the question better than I can do here.

As a result of this correction of our program on the national question, we have rejected the entirety of the numerous articles published in the 1980s in *le Bolchévique* on “New Caledonia.” At that time, our organization consciously refused to use the word Kanaky. These articles are marked by a vulgar French chauvinism, in practice little different from what [the reformist group] *Lutte ouvrière* published in the May-June [2018] issue of *Lutte de classe* [Class Struggle], except for the fact that, on paper, *le Bolchévique* called for independence.

In contrast to our current position, LO openly affirms its indifference on this question, saying that the victory of either the “yes” or the “no” vote at the next referendum would only result in influencing “the redistribution [between the Caldoche right and Kanak *indépendantistes*] of posts and positions, but always under the aegis of the French state.” A bit further down in their article, they insist that “even if independence were voted up, the workers would not be liberated in any way: certainly not from exploitation, and not even from discrimination as Kanaks.” At the same time, LO absurdly makes out that

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Venezuela...

(continued from page 1)

Venezuela “an issue of authoritarianism vs. democracy.” Washington claims that Maduro was not “democratically elected.” In fact, Maduro was elected president twice, most recently in 2018 when most of the right-wing opposition boycotted. For his part, Sanders, who has repeatedly voted to fund the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, denounces Maduro’s “violent crackdown on Venezuelan civil society.” Out of one side of his mouth he tut-tuts about Washington’s history of “inappropriately” intervening in Latin America. From the other side, he tells the *New Yorker* (13 April) that Venezuela needs “free and fair elections, and we want to do everything we can to establish democracy there.” This is simply hiding imperialism’s clenched fist in a “democratic” glove.

The U.S. working class has every interest in opposing the bloody depredations of its capitalist rulers. For well over a century, American imperialism under both the Democrats and Republicans has left a trail of wars, death squads, embargoes and coups to keep Latin America under its jackboot. By taking a stand against the sanctions and threatened military intervention, and demanding the cancellation of Venezuela’s debt to the U.S., the workers would strengthen their hand for waging class struggle at home against their exploiters.

Big Lies and Deadly Sanctions

As several of his cohorts were swept up by the Maduro regime, Guaidó called yet another rally on May 11, turning out a scant few hundred of his supporters. Dropping the pretense that he is anything but Washington’s tool, Guaidó blustered that as Venezuela’s “rightful” ruler he is empowered to invite foreign troops into the country.

This pretender got his political grooming at George Washington University under Luis Enrique Berrizbeitia, a former director of the International Monetary Fund who served in right-wing Venezuelan governments in the 1980s. Guaidó went on to help found the reactionary Voluntad Popular (VP—Popular Will) party. The main VP leader, Leopoldo López, is a scion of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie who got his training at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a notorious CIA recruiting ground. (For more, see Dan Cohen and Max Blumenthal, “The Making of Juan Guaidó: How the US Regime Change Laboratory Created Venezuela’s Coup Leader,” thegrayzone.com, 29 January.)

Heavily financed by the National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA front, VP organized violent street protests against the Maduro government starting in 2014. López was convicted of incitement for his role in these riots, which killed hundreds, and was later placed under house arrest. The U.S. then chose Guaidó, hitherto little known even within Venezuela, as a figurehead for the projected coup. Elevated to head the opposition-controlled National Assembly, Guaidó traveled secretly to the U.S., Colombia and Brazil to coordinate plans. After meeting with Pompeo in early January, he returned to Caracas, declared himself president and was immediately



WV Photo

May Day 2019 rally in NYC.

recognized by the U.S., Canada and most Latin American regimes, soon joined by various European governments.

The imperialists and their kept media are claiming that Venezuelans are starving because Maduro has ruined the economy. The real story is that U.S. sanctions have strangled the Venezuelan people, massively compounding economic hardships brought on by falling oil prices. The sanctions began under Barack Obama in 2015 and have been escalated by Trump.

The U.S. has used its power over the global monetary system, in which the dollar is by far the main reserve currency, to block Venezuela from accessing financial markets. Washington has also seized some \$7 billion in Venezuelan assets, declaring that they belong to Guaidó’s cabal. The Bank of England added to the imperialist larceny by grabbing \$1.2 billion’s worth of Venezuela’s gold earlier this year. Such measures prevent the country from obtaining many necessities and undertaking measures aimed at stabilizing the economy. Food imports plummeted from \$11.2 billion in 2013 to \$2.4 billion in 2018 and are expected to plunge even further this year. The U.S. ban on oil from Venezuela has cut the country off from its main export market, leading to a cataclysmic collapse in production.

A recent report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), a liberal think tank, describes the devastating impact, from reducing food intake and increasing disease to causing a section of the population to flee economic depression and hyperinflation (“Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela,” April 2019). The report estimates that sanctions have led to the preventable deaths of at least 40,000 Venezuelans in the past two years. More than 300,000 more are at risk due to lack of access to medicine or treatment, including about 80,000 with HIV who cannot obtain antiretroviral drugs. Placing all the blame on the Trump White House, the CEPR report carefully avoids any mention of the impact of Obama-era sanctions, which were coupled with the channeling of funds to the right-wing opposition.

China, the largest of the remaining

deformed workers states, and capitalist Russia have sent medical supplies to help alleviate the crisis. They have also provided substantial loans to the Maduro regime and denounced U.S. attempts at violent “regime change.” Pompeo brazenly charged that Chinese loans and investments in Venezuela “have helped destroy that country” (*South China Morning Post*, 4 May). National Security Advisor John Bolton demanded that Russia withdraw its handful of military advisers from Venezuela. “This is our hemisphere,” he warned darkly, “it’s not where the Russians ought to be interfering.” Of course, the U.S. interferes in Russia’s “hemisphere” all the time, such as when it sponsored the fascist-infested coup in Ukraine in 2014.

Reformist Apologists for Imperialism

The Democratic and Republican parties see every inch of land south of the Rio Grande/Río Bravo as the U.S. rulers’ private hunting ground. For the more liberal imperialists like Bernie Sanders, American capitalist interests might be harmed by unilateral military intervention into Venezuela, which could backfire and spark turmoil throughout the region. They would prefer to get the allies on board so that it’s not just U.S. troops marching into Caracas.

Socialist Alternative (SAlt), which as in 2016 is going all out for the Sanders presidential campaign, maintains a strict vow of silence on their man’s support for ousting Maduro. SAlt’s only mention of Sanders in its last online article on Venezuela was to whine that “comparisons with Venezuela are being used to smear ‘democratic socialists’ like Bernie Sanders and AOC [Ocasio-Cortez] and their pro-working class demands” (socialistalternative.org, 15 February). Coupling its paeans to these imperialist politicians with denunciations of the “undemocratic” Maduro, SAlt shows its colors as drummer boys for imperialism in its “democratic” garb.

In the same vein, SAlt condemns Maduro for “turning to China against the U.S.,” which, the article opines, “is increasingly in competition with Chinese, and to a lesser degree, Russian imperialism in Latin America.” Describing Russia, a regional capitalist power, as imperialist fits neatly with the demonization of that country by the U.S. ruling class, especially the Democrats. As for China, SAlt’s false line that it is capitalist and even a rising imperialist power is just cover for its promoting the forces of “democratic” counterrevolution that seek to return China to capitalist rule and imperialist subjugation.

Left Voice, U.S. affiliate of the Argentine-based Trotskyist Faction-Fourth International, strikes a seemingly more critical pose than SAlt, chastising Ocasio-Cortez as well as Sanders for “providing a left cover for the Trump administration’s narrative in favor of a coup” (leftvoice.org, 6 May). Pointing to a three-sentence DSA statement objecting to the coup attempt, Left Voice asks, “Is AOC in any way accountable to the DSA?” The opportunists of Left Voice look to the State Department “socialists” of the DSA, which as a component part of the Democratic Party is committed to promoting the fortunes of U.S. imperialism. The role of the DSA

and its left adjuncts is to refurbish the Democrats’ image so as to better tie disaffected youth and workers to this party of exploitation, oppression and imperialist war. The Spartacist League seeks to build a revolutionary proletarian party that breaks workers and the oppressed from the Democrats and links struggles against imperialism abroad to the fight to overturn the system of wage slavery and racial oppression at home.

For a Revolutionary Perspective

In Venezuela, the working class must come to the fore in struggle against the imperialists and their local lackeys. But the workers must be organized based on political independence from the Maduro regime and all capitalist forces. Various reformist groups around the world used to hail Venezuela as a model for “21st century socialism.” Most have quietly retired such claims, but the Party for Socialism and Liberation continues to assert that the “Bolivarian Revolution” has laid “the foundations for the construction of socialism” (liberationnews.org, 23 January).

In truth, there was no revolution in Venezuela, where Chávez was elected with support from a section of the military, a central component of the capitalist state apparatus. His program of populist reforms, including some nationalizations of businesses, was in no way a challenge to capitalist class rule. One of Chávez’ predecessors, the more mainstream Carlos Andrés Pérez, nationalized oil and mining in the mid 1970s and, with booming oil revenues, massively subsidized food, transportation, health care and education. When the boom went bust, a later Pérez regime instituted brutal austerity measures against working people and the poor. Both the traditional, pro-U.S. bourgeois oligarchy and the *boliburguesía*, the section of capitalists who enriched themselves under Chávez and Maduro, are class enemies of the workers and oppressed.

Throughout the semicolonial world, the bourgeoisie is too weak, fearful of the proletariat and dependent on the capitalist world market to break the chains of imperialist subjugation, overcome mass poverty and resolve other burning social issues. The proletariat is the only class with the potential, based on its central role in production, to lead all the exploited and the oppressed—from wage workers and peasants to impoverished slum dwellers—in a socialist revolution that sweeps away the capitalist state. Such a revolution would have to be spread through the victory of workers power in the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries, which would expropriate the imperialist bloodsuckers and lay the basis for all-round socialist development in a worldwide planned economy.

This is the perspective of permanent revolution developed and extended by Leon Trotsky, who together with V.I. Lenin was a key leader of the October 1917 workers revolution in Russia. Following the example of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, we seek to build sections of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, to organize and educate the working class in uncompromising hostility to imperialism and political opposition to all wings of the exploiters. ■

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6

WORKERS VANGUARD

# Abortion...

(continued from page 8)

of women’s oppression and—along with organized religion and the state—a crucial prop for the system of capitalist exploitation. A key function of the family is to instill respect for authority, regiment the population and enforce bourgeois morality, which condemns anything seen to undermine “motherhood” and “family values,” including abortion.

Latina women come from countries dominated by the Catholic church, where abortion, with few exceptions, is illegal and considered a sin. The idea that a fetus is a human being and endowed with a soul is an invention of the Catholic church. As materialists, we reject this notion. Far from being some “eternal truth” of Catholicism, the idea that human life begins at conception was invented by Pope Pius IX in 1869 as part of a drive to buttress the power of the church in the face of rising secularism and bourgeois nationalism.

This bogus doctrine, today seized on by both Protestant and Catholic foes of abortion, underpins the “fetal heartbeat” laws now on the books of many states. Less than two weeks ago, the Georgia leg-

islature passed one such law that criminalizes abortion after six weeks, when many women do not even know they are pregnant; women who terminate their pregnancies beyond that can be imprisoned and charged with murder. Cut of the same cloth are the dozens of “fetal homicide” laws under which hundreds of women have been prosecuted for engaging in behavior deemed “unacceptable” while pregnant, from drinking alcohol to taking prescription drugs or not wearing a seat belt. These measures serve to reinforce the oppression of women in the family.

To many young activists, the future of abortion rights surely looks bleak. The 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision was a critical gain for women, but it was limited, partial and, like all reforms under capitalism, reversible. And it has been reversed to the point where it hardly exists for many women, with some 90 percent of U.S. counties lacking any abortion provider. Since 1973, there have been well over 1,200 legal measures against abortion. In recent months, scarcely a day has passed without some extreme, new restriction being proposed. This underscores that looking to the courts and politicians is a forlorn hope. Abortion rights were won not thanks to a benevolent, supposedly

liberal Supreme Court, but by years of explosive social struggle at the base of American society, centrally for black rights and against the Vietnam War.

Likewise, real blows against the war on abortion will come through struggle. That, in turn, requires combating the liberal, legalistic strategies of the feminist movement, which revolve around the election of “women-friendly” candidates (read Democrats) who will supposedly reverse the attacks on abortion. Looking to the Democrats has always demobilized fighters for women’s rights while ceding ground to the reactionaries. The Democrats make statements upholding *Roe*, but they represent the capitalist class and are committed to the institution of the family, the exploitation of the working class and U.S. imperialist interests abroad. When it matters, they accede to the anti-abortion crusade, and are fully complicit in the steady chipping away of abortion rights.

The Hyde Amendment signed by Democrat Jimmy Carter in 1977 eliminated abortion coverage from the Medicaid health plans of 23 million poor women and every president since then has renewed it. Over thirty years later, Obama ensured that under his Affordable Care Act fed-

eral funds were “not used for abortion services” nor would they benefit “those who are here illegally.” The combined effect of these measures was to force millions of women to pay for abortions—as for those who can’t pay, well, as Carter put it, “There are many things in life that are not fair.”

The devastation of abortion rights is part of the broader assault on the rights and living conditions of the working class as a whole, from poverty wages and skyrocketing medical costs to the shredding of what is left of the social safety net. As revolutionary communists, our defense of abortion rights and every other conquest that the workers and oppressed have won is part of our struggle to build a vanguard party—70 percent black, Latino and other minority—that will champion the interests of the proletariat against the capitalist rulers. Such a party will be, as Lenin said, a “tribune of the people,” fighting every form of capitalist oppression and violence so that the workers can see that their class interests lie in the overthrow of this racist capitalist order. Only when the working class takes power will it be possible to put an end to this system that requires the subjugation of women, laying the material basis for women’s liberation. ■

# Cuba...

(continued from page 1)

with Nicaragua), Bolton demanded that Cuba remove the 20,000 soldiers that it supposedly has in Venezuela. In response, a Cuban official dubbed Bolton a “pathological liar,” remarking that there are no such troops or security forces and that “we can’t withdraw something that does not exist.” Rather, tens of thousands of Cuban doctors and teachers remain in Venezuela as part of an agreement, implemented by the Hugo Chávez government in 2003, to provide subsidized oil to Cuba in exchange for medical and educational services.

Unlike Venezuela, which is a capitalist state where the bourgeoisie is fully intact

The fact that a petty-bourgeois guerrilla movement could smash capitalist property relations was due to historically exceptional circumstances: the absence of the working class as a contender for power, hostile imperialist encirclement, the flight of the national bourgeoisie and a life-line thrown by the Soviet Union, which supported Cuba with billions in annual aid and provided a vital military shield against the U.S. Decisively, there was no authoritative revolutionary Marxist party to intervene into the political development of the Cuban Revolution and put it on the path of workers democracy.

Though Cuba remains underdeveloped and beset by scarcity, not least due to the crippling effect of the U.S. blockade, its social revolution led to enormous gains for the working masses, particularly women and blacks. With Soviet aid, a centralized, planned economy was built, guaranteeing jobs, housing, food and education. To this day, Cuba’s health care system remains far superior to its capitalist Caribbean neighbors.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of Cuba against capitalist counterrevolution and imperialism. At the same time, we oppose the rule of the privileged Stalinist bureaucratic caste, which has always promoted the fallacy of building “socialism” in a single country, in this case a resource-poor island 90 miles from U.S. imperialism’s shores. We stand for proletarian political revolution to oust the Castroite bureaucracy and institute a regime committed to the fight for world socialism.

Cuba’s stagnant economy has never fully recovered from the severe crisis following the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state, even with the relief provided by the subsidized oil from Caracas. During the last couple decades, the Cuban government has been promoting “market reforms” like small-scale private enterprise, though at times it has pulled back from them. While these measures by themselves do not constitute the restoration of capitalism, they have significantly increased social inequality. Under Stalinist rule, such schemes are the only available “answer” to bureaucratic mismanagement and commandism. As against both bureaucratic centralism and Stalinist “market reforms,” we are for centralized planning under democratic organs of workers rule, which would determine the direction and operation of the economy.

Nationalized industry remains overwhelmingly dominant on the island. At the same time, the Cuban regime has opened up the economy to imperialist capital penetration from West Europe and Canada in the form of joint ventures with state-owned companies and enacted trade deals with Venezuela and the Chinese deformed

**Coral Gables, Florida, April 17: U.S. national security advisor and raving anti-Communist John Bolton (right) receives medal from counterrevolutionary gusano who took part in defeated 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.**



workers state. Imperialist economic penetration comes with risks to the socialized economy, underlining the need to maintain a strict state monopoly of foreign trade.

Today, as Cuba struggles with low world prices for nickel and sugar—its only substantial exports—stagnant food production and widespread shortages, the White House is putting pressure on its foreign investors to cease any involvement in Cuban enterprises and projects. Trump has activated the Title III provision of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, signed into law by Bill Clinton, which grants the former owners (and heirs) of nationalized property the right to sue for compensation in U.S. courts. The measure, waived by every previous administration, promises to open the floodgates to potentially hundreds of thousands of lawsuits against international firms with operations in Cuba. Already, dozens of corporate sharks, including Texaco, Coca-Cola, and IBM, are salivating over their claims amounting to billions of dollars.

Some in Washington view a belligerent policy toward Cuba as outmoded and counterproductive to U.S. imperialist interests. In a 3 May *Foreign Policy* article, Rebecca Bill Chavez, a former Defense Department official under Obama, argues that Trump’s sanctions will harm American commercial ventures and Cuba’s “emerging private sector.” Her main concern is that the Cuban government will be driven into the arms of China and Russia: “If the U.S. goal is a democratic transition in Cuba, it should not deliberately create the conditions for the country to fall under the sway of the United States’ two most powerful strategic competitors.” Whatever cynical catchphrase they employ—“democratic transition,” “human rights,” etc.—the American rulers are committed to turning Cuba into a neocolony for untrammelled capitalist exploitation.

The isolated Cuban deformed workers state will not be able to endure forever the vast economic and military pressures

exerted by the U.S. and the capitalist world market. For Cuba to not only survive but thrive requires workers revolution throughout the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America and not least in the U.S. imperialist bastion. The Stalinist misrulers have always opposed the fight for workers revolutions elsewhere and instead fostered deadly illusions in “progressive” bourgeois rulers—e.g., Salvador Allende’s Chilean popular front in the early 1970s and Venezuela under both Chávez and Maduro.

The Spartacist League is dedicated to forging a revolutionary workers party as the necessary leadership in the fight for proletarian rule in the U.S. The multi-racial working class, in liberating itself from capitalist wage slavery and bringing down the imperialist beast, will come to the aid of its international class brothers and sisters, including the courageous working people of Cuba. ■



Tames/NY Times  
**Cuban militiaman guards expropriated U.S. oil refinery, 1960.**

as a class, Cuba is a deformed workers state where property is collectivized but a nationalist bureaucratic caste, not the workers, holds political power. When Fidel Castro’s peasant-based rebel forces marched into Havana in 1959, the army and the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that had propped up the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship collapsed. In the face of imperialist aggression, the new Cuban government began a series of nationalizations in 1960. By the time Castro declared the country “socialist” the next year, the Cuban bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialists had been expelled and private property expropriated.

Nonetheless, Cuba was never socialist. Socialism is a global, classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance, in which economic productivity is at the highest level. From the outset, the Cuban bureaucracy politically suppressed the working class and opposed the perspective of international socialist revolution.

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## The Fight for Abortion Rights and the War on Immigrants



**Left: Protest in defense of abortion rights outside clinic in McAllen, Texas, October 2014. Vicious anti-abortion bigots besiege women, largely Latina, seeking medical attention there. Right: Pregnant woman seeking asylum processed by immigration officer at McAllen border crossing, 2017.**

The years-long onslaughts against immigrants and abortion rights have converged in a double-barreled assault on Latinas. These attacks started long before Trump rode into the White House vowing to crack down on immigrants and overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision and allow states to make abortion illegal. The anti-abortion fanatics, who today feel the wind in their sails, have for decades been aided and abetted by the Democrats, the other party of American capitalism, which no less than the Republican Party is an enemy of immigrants, black people and workers.

The detention centers near the U.S.-Mexico border are racist hellholes, where women are subjected to all manner of brutality. The Trump administration tried to prevent teenagers held by the Office of Refugee Resettlement from obtaining abortions, forcing some of them to sue in order to have the procedure. Even now, the government is trying to beat back a court order that temporarily blocks it from interfering with detained minors who want abortions. As internal government documents released last year show, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) and Border Patrol cops routinely commit acts of violence, including rape and sexual abuse. The thousands of atrocities revealed by these documents happened under Obama, who endowed his successor with a well-oiled “immigration enforcement” machine. Massive numbers of immigrants were packed off to detention centers and deportations soared to record levels.

Undocumented immigrants are trapped in the shadows, their lives stamped by fear, as is starkly displayed in Texas. Many there live in the *colonias*, the impoverished, often remote communities along the border that largely lack clean water, waste disposal and paved roads, much less health care. Undocumented Latinas face anti-woman bigotry, racism, language barriers, poverty, precarious jobs and the constant threat of deportation. It is nearly impossible for them to get insurance or medical care in this country’s for-profit health system.

To try to get an abortion in Texas today is to meet the full force of the drive to legalize it. In that state, where more people are executed than in any other state,

the House of Representatives considered a bill that would allow the death penalty for women who get abortions. It failed but it is indicative of the climate. Texas is “ground zero for government surveillance and hostility toward immigrants that sits at the crux of hatred for women, hatred of abortion,” as Jessica González-Rojas, head of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, said of the border area.

Women are forced to make the agonizing choice between an abortion, which could pose the risk of deportation, and bearing a child that they are unable to raise. Following passage of the 2013 anti-abortion laws that forced the closure of more than half of Texas clinics, some 20 facilities remain open. Women must travel long distances with the terrifying possibility of being grabbed at one of the many internal Border Patrol checkpoints located up to 100 miles from the border. At the clinics, anti-abortion protesters intimidate and humiliate patients, snapping photos to be plastered on the internet or given to border cops.

I.C.E. agents often lurk in the parking lots. Once inside, patients must show state-issued ID. This measure was enacted in 2016 to prevent minors from getting abortions without parental or judicial approval, creating a dangerous hurdle for both teens and immigrant women. As immigration and reproductive rights activist Alejandra

Pablos, who got an abortion amid still ongoing attempts to deport her, put it: “I don’t have the privilege to say, ‘my choice, my body’ when my body basically belongs to ICE.”

Even trying to access routine medical care is dangerous, as the case of Blanca Borrego, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, showed. In 2015, she sought care at a women’s clinic in the Houston area. When the staff called her into the exam room, she was arrested and handcuffed for using a false ID when she arrived for her appointment. For the nearly two million undocumented immigrants in Texas, this sent a terrifying message. Many legal immigrants, too, are avoiding doctors and hospitals, fearing that undocumented relatives will be grabbed by *la migra*.

What is needed is clear: free abortion on demand, quality health care for all, free at the point of service, and free 24-hour childcare, as well as full citizenship rights for everyone who makes it into this country. Such gains would go a long way to address the needs of immigrants, women and workers everywhere. All immigrants should be able to receive health services in their language or have an interpreter. This perspective is vital to the defense of the whole of the working class with its significant immigrant component.

Access to abortion is heavily conditioned by class. Wealthy women can always find

ways to get around the restrictions on abortion. But for the majority of poor, Latina and black women—those who are uninsured, can’t afford it or can’t get to a clinic—there is effectively no right to abortion.

The years-long crusade against Planned Parenthood is an attack on these very women. One of the few organizations in the U.S. that offers low-cost health care to teens and poor, minority and working-class women, Planned Parenthood provides cancer screenings, birth control, sex education and, of course, abortions, which account for 3 percent of their services. Trump’s proposed “gag” law would make it illegal for Planned Parenthood and other facilities that receive federal Title X family planning funding to tell patients how to obtain an abortion. It would also bar women from getting birth control at these clinics.

Out of desperation, undocumented women and others are turning to self-induced abortions, which can be dangerous. Poverty, pregnancy and the utter lack of access to abortion combine to drive women to deadly measures, from throwing themselves down stairs to ingesting turpentine and other toxic substances. And if the state can prosecute, it will, as in the case of Anna Yocca, an Amazon worker who was charged with attempted murder for trying to abort her 24-week-old fetus with a coat hanger (see “Tennessee Torture Woman for Abortion Attempt,” WV No. 1102, 16 December 2016).

The very safe abortion pill (mifepristone and misoprostol taken together) should be a godsend for women, but like many medical advances, the benefits are curtailed by medicine for profit. In the U.S., the pills can cost up to \$1,600, putting them out of reach for many women. If obtained without a prescription, women can be and have been prosecuted, opening the door to deportation.

Abortion is simple and safer than pregnancy or childbirth, and it should be a private matter. But the issue is explosive because it allows women to control when or if to have children, thus posing the question of women’s legal and social equality. Abortion restrictions bolster the institution of the family, the main source

*continued on page 7*



**Indian Hills East colonia near Alamo, Texas. Latino immigrants in the borderlands often live in shantytowns like this one.**