

Imperialist Sanctions Starve Iranian Masses

Down With U.S. War Moves Against Iran!



Alamy (top); U.S. Navy

U.S. imperialists take aim at Iran. Top: Line at a butcher shop in Tehran amid tightened imperialist sanctions, March 18. Bottom: Aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln en route to Persian Gulf, May 17.

In an ominous escalation of U.S. threats to attack Iran, the Trump administration has deployed an aircraft carrier strike group, nuclear-armed B-52 bombers and an amphibious assault warship to the Persian Gulf region. John Bolton, the national security adviser, warns of “unrelenting force,” the Pentagon has drawn up plans to send in 120,000 troops and the White House has declared the Revolutionary Guard, part of Iran’s armed forces, to be a “terrorist organization.” Trump raged on Twitter: “If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran.” All this belligerence comes on top of ever-intensifying sanctions designed to cripple Iran’s economy by totally cutting off its oil exports.

Some 70,000 American troops are stationed in countries surrounding Iran, and the administration has recently announced the deployment of another 1,500. Yet the White House asserts, preposterously, that it is semicolonial Iran that is threatening the U.S. Claims of an impending Iranian attack have as much credibility as the U.S. rulers’ lies about Saddam Hussein’s “weapons of mass destruction,” the pretext for the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Democratic Party politicians and some Republicans are criticizing the war moves. But they share with the Trump administration the goal of “regime change” in Tehran, differing only over the approach. The Democrats prefer to return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) brokered by the Obama White House in 2015, which compelled Iran to drastically curtail its nuclear program and submit to foreign inspectors in exchange for an easing of sanctions. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the deal last May.

The Republicans and Democrats alike are parties of imperialism and war, with a common class interest in maintaining U.S. supremacy in the oil-rich Near East. The purpose of Obama’s JCPOA was to ensure Iran’s disarmament in the face of unrelenting threats from the U.S. and its regional junior partners, Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Tehran regime has always denied any intent to develop nuclear weapons. However, Iran needs such weapons to deter imperialist attack. The possession of nukes is no guarantee of security from a U.S. assault, but it does provide a measure of sovereignty against the marauders in Washington.

It takeschutzpah for the U.S. rulers, who possess enough nuclear firepower to destroy humanity many times over, to rail against Iran possibly getting its own nukes. The 1945 U.S. A-bombing of Japan, which incinerated some 200,000 people and served as a warning to the Soviet Union, shows what these nuclear madmen are capable of. And Washington’s Israeli allies, ruthless oppressors of the Palestinians, have a sizable nuclear arsenal of their own.

As part of what it calls “maximum pressure,” the White House has now imposed a complete embargo on sales of Iranian oil, including a threat to take action against any countries that continue to import it. Trump has canceled temporary waivers that exempted a number of countries, including China, from such provisions. Iran’s oil exports have already fallen by half in the past year. If a total embargo is enforced, it would cost Iran about \$50 billion annually, 40 percent of its entire government revenue.

It is in the direct interest of the U.S. working class to demand an end to all sanctions against Iran and stand for its defense against any U.S. military attack. The same ruling class that threatens war on Iran wages savage attacks on workers and on black people, Latinos and other minorities at home. Defense of Iran against U.S. assault does not imply the least political support to the capitalist Islamic regime in Tehran, which brutally oppresses women, gays and national minorities while repressing labor struggles. But U.S. imperialism is the greatest danger to the working people and

oppressed on this planet. Nothing short of the overthrow of the American capitalist ruling class through workers revolution will rid the world of this menace.

U.S. Sanctions Mean Hunger and Death

Imperialist sanctions are a modern version of siege warfare: a weapon designed to conquer through attrition. Sanctions against Hussein’s Iraq led to the deaths of some 1.5 million people while hollowing out that country in the lead-up to the U.S. occupation. It was the Democrats who took the lead in imposing the sanctions on Iran, starting under Jimmy Carter in 1979. The sanctions were expanded under Bill Clinton in the 1990s, and even more so by Obama. Among those signing on was imperialist “socialist” Bernie Sanders, who boasted in 2017, “I have voted

for sanctions on Iran in the past, and I believe sanctions were an important tool for bringing Iran to the negotiating table.”

While Iran is more populous and powerful than Iraq, the sanctions, particularly those under Obama, have devastated its economy. As oil revenue plummeted, its currency was devalued by more than 450 percent. Industry was crippled by depriving Iran of replacement parts. Disease and death spread as medications became unavailable. Unemployment skyrocketed. A 2018 BBC report noted that the average consumption of food staples had decreased by 30 to 50 percent over the previous decade.

The 2015 deal, which was cosigned by Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China, eased the sanctions and gave Tehran access to \$30 billion of its assets that had been seized and frozen abroad. Iran was able to increase oil exports, producing some economic growth. Trump’s scuttling of the JCPOA angered the European imperialists, who had expanded their dealings with Iran. For example, the French company Total had begun to develop a major Iranian gas field, but canceled this under U.S. pressure. Germany, France and Britain vowed to set up a special vehicle for barter-based trade with Iran that bypassed the American financial system, but it has proved stillborn.

The cruel effectiveness of sanctions is a result of the domination of world finance and trade by the U.S., the world’s chief imperialist power. Washington largely controls the international financial system through the supremacy of American banks and the dollar’s status as the global reserve currency. The position of the U.S. is enforced by military might, of which it continues to have an overwhelming preponderance, particularly since

continued on page 7



Reuters

Tehran, May 2018: Iranians protest against Trump’s withdrawal from 2015 nuclear agreement.



Janet and Janine Africa Paroled

Free All the MOVE Prisoners!

On May 25, MOVE members Janet Holloway Africa, 68, and Janine Phillips Africa, 63, walked out of prison on parole. Their release after more than 40 years in Pennsylvania dungeons follows the paroling of Debbie and Michael Africa Sr. last year. All of the MOVE 9 were jailed and sentenced to 30 to 100 years in 1978, framed up for the killing of a Philadelphia police officer during the cop siege of MOVE's Powelton Village home. Despite being model prisoners, Janet and Janine had been repeatedly denied parole since 2008 for "lack of remorse." Merle Africa and Phil Africa died in jail under suspicious circumstances. Chuck, Delbert and Eddie Africa are still behind bars. **Free them now!**

Soon after the predominantly black, radical back-to-nature MOVE commune emerged in the early 1970s, it became the target of vicious cop terror, not least because the group championed the right to armed self-defense. Janine's infant son, Life, was trampled and killed in 1976 when police invaded the MOVE house and knocked her over, baby in arms. On 8 August 1978, after a months-

long siege, nearly 600 cops surrounded the house to evict the residents. Police unleashed a barrage of gunfire, then stormed the home. One officer died in the cops' own cross fire. At least eight witnesses testified that no gunshots came from the house. Weapons the cops said they found inside had no fingerprint of any MOVE member on them. The MOVE 9 were all innocent.

On 13 May 1985, Philadelphia police under black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode, in collusion with the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, dropped high-powered explosives on MOVE's Osage Avenue home. Eleven people, including five children, were burned to death, and an entire black neighborhood was left in smoldering ruins. Among the dead was Janine's son with Phil Africa, 12-year-old Little Phil; Janet lost her child Delicia in the inferno. For 34 years, the Spartacist League has sought to sear this premeditated racist state murder into the memory of the working class. Ramona Africa, imprisoned for the "crime" of being the sole adult survivor of the massacre, received support from the class-war



MOVE
Janine and Janet Africa, the day of their release from prison.

prisoner stipend program of the Partisan Defense Committee, the class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the SL. The MOVE 9 were also among the first PDC stipend recipients.

Crushing political dissent and terrorizing black people exemplify what cops get paid to do as enforcers of the capitalist order. It will take a workers revolution to relegate the capitalist state's machinery of murderous repression to the dustbin of history. ■

Letters



TROTSKY

The Liberation of Working Women

A century ago, leading Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai underscored the commitment of the early Soviet workers state, which issued out of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, to emancipating women. Addressing the leadership of the Third International, newly founded as the party of world revolution, she pointed to the need to free working women from their enslavement in the family, the main source of women's oppression, through the socialization of its functions. While the Bolsheviks did every-

thing possible with the resources at hand in backward, impoverished Russia, the liberation of women required a qualitative leap in economic development that depended on the extension of proletarian power to the wealthy industrialized countries. Beginning in 1923-24, a bureaucratic caste under J.V. Stalin usurped political power from the Soviet proletariat, promoting "socialism in one country," and later rehabilitated the institution of the family.

The great Russian proletarian revolution solved the problem of political rights for women with one stroke. Working women and peasant women have now become full-fledged citizens of Soviet Russia. The goal of Working Women's Day has been fulfilled.

Yet it is now, in the heat of sharp battle with the old, obsolete bourgeois world, that life presents the international proletariat with many new, mature, and urgent challenges in the fight for women's emancipation.

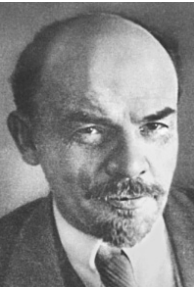
Women workers and peasant women enjoy the right to vote on a par with men. Nevertheless, despite this formal recognition, this right is nothing more than a means, a weapon for the fight against the conditions of life, the relics of capitalism, that oppress women.

Women workers and peasant women are still very much domestic slaves, still chained to the bourgeois family, still objects of shameful commerce as unwilling prostitutes.

Among the large number of extremely important tasks facing the Third International is the task of women's thoroughgoing emancipation. Today this question is no longer merely abstract and theoretical. Real life calls for action. Over the last half century women's labor acquired enormous weight in production. The further planned development of the national economy and its productive capacity has become inconceivable without the assistance of women's labor power. To use this power expediently in the communist economy, women must be relieved of their burdens and spared unnecessary, unproductive, and wasteful labor in housework and child rearing. Building the new society demands that the living, fresh energy of women must be directed toward constructing life on new principles.

Instead of doing unproductive housework, women can play an enormous role in organizing the new economic order; instead of educating the family, women can contribute greatly to strengthening and developing the beginnings of socialist public education. The new, Third, Communist International needs only to set itself the task of utilizing the female proletariat, of developing the entire breadth of its initiative in order to draw the women workers into the cause of struggling for and building a new way of life and developing a new ethic, a new relationship between the sexes.

—Alexandra Kollontai, "Working Women's Day and the Third International" (March 1919), reprinted in John Riddell (ed.), *Founding the Communist International* (1987)



LENIN

On the CP's Democratic Party Betrayal

19 May 2019

Dear comrades,

I quite liked the article on the ISO in WV No. 1154 ["ISO: Rest in Pieces," 3 May]. The following comments are *not* intended as a criticism of the article. In general, I think we should *not* add substantive and complicated points compressed into a paragraph or two that are tangential to the main theme of an article.

In considering support to the Democratic Party by leftist organizations, including those that profess to be "Marxist-Leninist," the Moscow-line Stalinists of the American Communist Party were historically much more important than the Shachtmanites. It's true that underlying the Shachtmanites' support for the Democratic Party in the late 1950s via official American social democracy was the belief that American "democratic" imperialism was preferable to Soviet Stalinist "totalitarianism." However, the Moscow-line Stalinists also worked in the Democratic Party over a longer time span and with greater effect, although, of course, with a different subjective motivation. Between the mid-1930s and the mid-1940s the CP was much more effective in tying politically advanced workers to Roosevelt's Democratic Party than were the social democrats, who were organizationally amorphous and politically disparate. In good part the CP was effective in this regard because it appealed to *pro*-Communist and *pro*-Soviet sympathies among leftist workers in the U.S. in this period.

The political influence and organizational capacity of the CP was greatly diminished by Cold War repression followed by massive defections in 1956-57 in response to Khrushchev's denunciation

of Stalin's crimes and to the Hungarian Revolution. Nonetheless, the diminished organization continued to work in the Democratic Party as a major sphere of its activity. In the late 1950s-early '60s, the liberal wing of the Democratic Party was an arena of competition (as well as collaboration) between the remaining Moscow-line Stalinists and anti-Communist social democrats, some of whom had direct ties to the CIA.

For a few months in 1963 I was in the Progressive Labor youth group shortly after the organization was formed as a left split from the CP. The PL leaders rejected working in the Democratic Party, but I don't remember whether they also opposed voting for Democratic candidates. I do remember an older PLer recounting how the CP fraction (or whatever it was called) had effectively organized the campaign of a liberal Democratic newcomer in Brooklyn who won a seat in the U.S. Congress.

Comradely,
Seymour

On Boeing

Subject: Boeing Crashes: Profit Drive Kills [WV No. 1152, 5 April]

11 May 2019

Editors,

Just a short note to thank you for the excellent subject article. It should be mandatory reading for all aviation workers around the world. I doubt there is a better article on the subject in any aviation or political journal. You are great representatives of the Vanguard.

Comradely,
Charlie M.

WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 1156

31 May 2019



Spartacist League Forum

DSA—Democratic Party "Socialists"

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Capitalist Exploitation and the Oppression of Women Mexico: Women in the Maquiladora Sweatshops

Beginning in late January, a wave of wildcat strikes swept maquiladora factories in the Mexican city of Matamoros, across the Río Bravo from Brownsville, Texas. Initially waged in direct challenge to the existing union leadership, the strikes grew to encompass some 50,000 workers, many of them women. Workers in most plants won their demands for a 20 percent wage increase and an annual bonus of 32,000 pesos (about \$1,600).

ESPARTACO

The Matamoros strikes were the most important action of the organized labor movement in Mexico in decades. The profits of the auto parts, electronics and other manufacturers were choked off, with the capitalists losing an estimated \$50 million a day. In response, the vindictive bosses unleashed police repression and punished workers by firing thousands. Many of the maquiladoras are owned by or supply U.S. companies. As we wrote in “Mexico: Strikes Sweep Maquiladora Factories” (WV No. 1149, 22 February): “This poses the need for joint struggle on both sides of the border against the capitalist exploiters.”

More than one million workers make up the total maquiladora workforce in over 3,000 plants across Mexico. Some 80 percent are women, who work in deplorable conditions, reflecting their status in the society. Women’s oppression is rooted in the institution of the family, which is a key prop for the maintenance of capitalist private property and class-divided society. It is vitally necessary for the unions to fight for the equality of women. A class-struggle union leadership would champion demands like free, 24-hour childcare, maternity leave at full pay, equal pay for equal work and free abortion on demand as part of quality health care for all. The struggle for the emancipation of women is central to sweeping away capitalist wage slavery through socialist revolution.

We print below a translation of an article from *Espartaco* No. 51 (April 2019), the newspaper of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League.

* * *

In the maquiladora factories, women workers suffer double oppression: capitalist exploitation and oppression as women. Their wages are 30 percent less than the already meager wages of the men. In order to get a job, they are required to take a pregnancy test; to keep that job, they are subjected to humiliating examinations during their menstrual cycle and risk dismissal if they become pregnant. That way, the stingy bosses cut costs by



Julia Le Duc

Matamoros, February 5: RosaMax textile workers on strike for better wages and annual bonus, part of wave of class struggle in the maquiladoras.

not having to provide maternity leave or childcare! In some cases, doctors lie about the due date of expectant mothers so that the women can be made to work as long as possible, causing them to end up giving birth in the factories.

Sexual and workplace harassment and abuse by the bosses and their lackeys is the norm. One female worker in Matamoros who took part in this year’s strikes there told our sales team about the harassment she endured. A supervisor would use sexual innuendo with her, even though she had no personal relationship with him. After she told him to stop, this bourgeois lapdog started to penalize her, using any excuse, such as for taking “extra” time in the bathroom (even during her period), and he forced her to sign on to a blacklist. To maximize exploitation, the bosses grant bathroom breaks for only five minutes and forbid drinking water so as not to interrupt work. Women workers, like all workers, are forced to meet production quotas or else they are fired. After strenuous workdays, many return to their homes to take care of their children and do domestic work. This anti-woman and exploitative hell in the maquiladoras is a direct consequence of the imperialist pillage of Mexico, principally by the United States, as well as of exploitation by the venal national bourgeoisie.

The woman question is of crucial importance in the maquiladoras. We Marxists know that the fundamental division in society is between classes, that is, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and that the emancipation of women is the task of the working class as a whole. The family, buttressed by religion and the state, is the main source of the oppression of women, who are enslaved by domestic work and the caring for and raising of children—in working-class families, the next generation of proletarians. It is also a means through which youth are taught to

obey authority. Machismo is an ideology that serves to justify the material subjugation of women (see “Communism and the Family,” Parts One and Two, WV Nos. 1068 and 1069, 15 and 29 May 2015). A large number of women working in the maquiladoras are migrants from other cities or from peasant/indigenous communities who left their homes in the hope of not being shackled to the nuclear family.

With capitalism, the incorporation of women into the working class removed them from isolation in the home and provided a prerequisite for their emancipation: participation in social production. This can be seen in the maquiladoras, where the proletariat is mostly female. It is not an accident that in many Matamoros factories, women made up the vanguard in leading and defending the strikes.

However, under capitalism, women’s integration into the working class meant wage slavery on top of domestic slavery. We Spartacists fight to end the oppression of women, the inheritance of social backwardness upheld by the bourgeoisie. We fight for full rights for women, for equal pay for equal work and for their complete integration into the workforce. We call for free and safe abortion on demand

throughout the entire country and for free, quality medical care for all. We condemn the criminalization of abortion by the Congress in the state of Nuevo León, which was supported by the Congressional representatives of the bourgeois Morena party.

We also denounce the threats by Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) [leader of Morena] to conduct a referendum on the right to abortion, which could only mean a ban in this profoundly sexist and Catholic Mexican society. In fact, AMLO, a devout Christian, is an opponent of basic democratic rights for women and gays, and has never pretended otherwise. Now, as commander-in-chief of Mexican capitalism, AMLO has cut subsidies for the privately run early childhood day-care centers that used to be funded by the now-defunct Ministry of Social Development (Sedesol). These childcare centers, which were in deplorable condition and had an endless number of problems, were the only option for many working women to have their children taken care of while they worked. No doubt AMLO’s measure will throw women back into domestic isolation. We fight for free, quality, 24-hour childcare centers as part of our struggle for socialist revolution. Break with AMLO and the bourgeois Morena party!

As Marxists, we understand that the eradication of women’s oppression requires an enormous leap in the development of existing material conditions, which can only be achieved through a socialist revolution, with its international extension that will pave the way for an internationally planned and collectivized economy based not on capitalist profits but on fulfilling the needs of all. Such an economy would allow the economic functions of the family to be replaced by the socialization of childcare and domestic chores, for example, through the establishment of collectivized childcare centers, dining halls and laundromats, permitting women to fully participate in social and political life. This perspective requires the forging of a Leninist vanguard party that acts as a tribune for all of the oppressed, mobilizing to combat all social backwardness. ■



Spartacist League Forums

Matamoros, México

Ola de huelgas sacude maquiladoras

¡Por una dirección clasista de los sindicatos!

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For a Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions!

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*The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

OAKLAND

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CORRECTION

In “Venezuela: Down With U.S. Sanctions, Military Threats!” (WV No. 1155, 17 May), we wrongly identified the organization to which the pseudo-Trotskyist Morenoite group Left Voice is affiliated as the Trotskyist Faction-Fourth International. In fact, its name is Trotskyist Fraction-Fourth International.

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August.

Our next issue will be dated June 21.

Quebec: Down With Anti-Muslim Headscarf Bill!

The following article is translated from *République ouvrière* No. 3 (Winter/Spring 2019), French-language newspaper of our comrades of the *Ligue trotskyste au Québec et au Canada*. The bill described in the first paragraph is to be voted on shortly by the Quebec National Assembly.

RÉPUBLIQUE OUVRIÈRE

One of the first decisions of the new CAQ [Coalition avenir Québec] government, elected in October 2018, was to confirm its intention to ban the wearing of religious symbols by teachers, judges and police officers. The bill, which is expected to be introduced this spring, will likely present state employees “in a position of authority” with the following choice: either remove their religious symbols or lose their jobs. Under the false pretext of defending “secularism” and gender equality, this is in fact the latest in a long series of racist attacks, carried out successively by the Liberals and the Parti québécois [PQ] when they were in power, particularly targeting the Muslim minority. Throughout this hysterical campaign, Québec solidaire [QS] has joined the racist chorus, putting forward its own measures against Muslims.

This whole campaign really took off in 2006, with the Bouchard-Taylor commission inquiry into the question of “reasonable accommodation” [of religious and cultural differences]. Since then, Quebec society has been afflicted by outbreaks of anti-Muslim racist fever triggered by capitalist politicians when they deemed it useful. In 2013, during the PQ’s “Charter of Values” affair, assaults on veiled women soared in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec. In January 2017, as the Liberals were taking up the torch of this “identity debate,” the fascist terrorist Alexandre Bissonnette burst into a Quebec City mosque and killed six Muslims. Just a few months later, the Liberals passed Bill 62, which became the “Act to Promote Respect for the State’s Religious Neutrality.” That bill’s Article 10, which prohibited anyone whose face was covered from providing or receiving public services (including boarding public transportation), was suspended by the Superior Court in December 2017.

The CAQ’s proposed bill would extend the Liberals’ Bill 62 to include the “Bouchard-Taylor consensus”—which prohibits public sector employees in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols—while adding teachers to the mix. Although [Quebec premier] Legault claims that the bill will apply to all religions equally, it is clearly aimed in particular at the Muslim headscarf (as well as the Jewish kippa and the Sikh turban) and would allow the state to preserve a “public face” that is fully compatible with



Canadian Press

Montreal, April 7: Demonstration against Quebec government’s proposed anti-Muslim headscarf ban.

Catholicism. It is in the vital interest of the labor movement to mobilize its social power to combat these racist attacks!

The “official” attacks from the National Assembly not only encourage the fascists and all sorts of reactionary riffraff to commit their own racist attacks, but also aim above all to divide the multiethnic working class in order to facilitate the capitalists’ austerity onslaught against all workers. State persecution of Muslim women, who

servitude. The institution of the family is the main source of women’s oppression and is, along with the state and religion, one of the three reactionary pillars of the capitalist system of exploitation. We stand in solidarity with women struggling to escape the tyranny of this oppressive “tradition” of the veil and all other reactionary religious traditions.

But the laws that prohibit female employees from wearing headscarves or

No Illusions in Canadian “Multiculturalism”—Independence for Quebec!

are among the most oppressed in society, is poison for workers’ struggles. The leaders of the main education unions (FNEEQ-CSN, FAE, CSQ) have taken a stand against the ban on the Islamic headscarf. A class-struggle leadership in the unions would immediately mobilize school employees of all categories to defeat the bill. **Down with the racist anti-Muslim attacks! An injury to one is an injury to all!**

The Veil and Bourgeois Hypocrisy

The false pretext of “protecting” gender equality through government bans is completely hypocritical. As Marxists, we are opposed to the headscarf and veil, which are symbols and instruments of women’s oppression, embodying a reactionary social program to confine women in the family, in the home and in a position of

from receiving and providing services while wearing a face-covering veil reinforce the oppression of these women. Our opposition to the veil and the headscarf is in fact one of the reasons we oppose these laws, which can only result in even greater isolation and oppression for the women who wear them. It is this oppression that fuels religious beliefs.

As Marx said:

“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.”

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

This means that to combat religion, we must struggle to destroy the source of oppression. It is necessary to overthrow capitalism and its state through workers revolution, not strengthen the capitalist state by increasing its powers through repressive laws.

These laws, which encourage racist attacks and pose legal threats to employees who refuse to abide by them, will worsen the seclusion of veiled women. Many of them will be pushed even more into the arms of their family and reactionary milieu. Ahlam Ghatoussi, a special education technician who wears the veil, evoked these consequences when she said:

“It discourages me because during the PQ government’s charter of values, my friends and I were attacked on the streets because of our veil. When the door opens, people feel free to attack. I’m afraid it will again be like it was four years ago.... “I think I have stayed home enough.... I had my three children back to back, and

my [last] child is in kindergarten. Now I am driven by the desire to work with people.”

—*La Presse*, 5 October 2018

Legault’s bill clearly opens the possibility of attacking not only veiled teachers but also teacher assistants and others working in education on the grounds that when a teacher is absent or out of the classroom, they might find themselves in a “position of authority.” These are often lower-paying jobs held by a relatively high number of Muslims. This underlines the extent to which the unity of all education workers requires a determined struggle against the headscarf ban.

Making the Quebec government’s hypocrisy all the more obvious is the fact that François Legault recently announced that the ban on religious symbols would not apply to subsidized private schools, which have historically been religious. More than half of private schools in Quebec are associated with a religious tradition, and 86 percent of students attending religious schools are in Catholic schools. So much for the “secularism of the state”! Schools of religious minorities (Jews and Muslims) account for only 1.3 percent of all students in Quebec. In fact, the majority of Jewish and Muslim minority students attend public schools, which are becoming more and more decrepit and abandoned. **For free, quality secular public education in French!** As a rational way to help immigrant students transition from their mother tongue to French, we demand free, quality bilingual programs.

Although the Catholic church’s almost total hold on Quebec society was shattered by the [1960s] “Quiet Revolution,” its influence remains strong today. Witness the crucifix that still hangs above the Speaker of the National Assembly. At bottom, the Catholic hierarchy and its ideology (like all religions) are just too useful to the bourgeoisie in maintaining conservatism and sanctifying capitalist class rule. For decades the Catholic clergy preached submissiveness and obedience to French-speaking workers in order to sell them as cheap labor to English-speaking bosses; they forced women to continuously have babies. Catholic “values” are the values of the bourgeoisie, not those of the proletariat! In Quebec, the dominant religion remains Catholicism. Islam will always be the religion of an oppressed minority.

We are for secularism, the principle of the separation of church and state that goes back to the time of the French Revolution. The aim was to wrest the emerging bourgeois society from the oppressive hold of an established religion (in that case, Catholicism). It was not meant to prevent people from professing or displaying their religious beliefs. Quite the contrary. It was to prevent the state from imposing a dominant religion on atheists and followers of other faiths. Religion was to become a private affair with respect to the state. This is in stark contrast to the Catholic “secularism” of Legault and the anti-Muslim “secularist” zealots of the PQ and QS.

Racism and oppression of women are inherent in any capitalist society and are necessary to maintain the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie. It will take a socialist revolution, which smashes the capitalist state machinery—at its core, the army, the police, the prisons and the courts—and replaces it with a workers state based on the collectivized ownership of the means of production, to begin to tackle the material basis of these forms of oppression. The October 1917 Russian Revolution, which was the most liberating act to date for the international proletariat (and also for women and minorities, such as the Jews, oppressed under the tsarist



Reuters

Canadian cop arrests veiled woman at U.S. border, February 2017.

empire), remains our model. The decisive factor in that revolution was the leadership of a vanguard party, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, which is the kind of party we must build today.

For a Workers Republic of Quebec!

Faced with repeated racist and anti-Muslim attacks in Quebec, some are turning to Ottawa as a supposedly progressive bulwark against the [right-wing] “identitarian” nationalists. This is a fatal mistake! The Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie is not only just as racist as the Quebec bourgeoisie but also responsible for the national oppression of Quebec, with all the anti-francophone racism that this entails.

The national question of Quebec is the strategic question in this country. The national oppression of Quebec is, along with the British crown (the queen, who is head of the Anglican church), the glue that holds the reactionary Canadian state together. Quebec’s national liberation struggle can therefore serve as a powerful motor force for socialist revolution in this country. It is crucial to fight the lies and illusions against Quebec independence propagated by the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie, particularly among immigrants and minorities.

Thus, unlike the overwhelming majority of the left, which grants the reactionary and xenophobic right a monopoly on criticism of Canadian “multiculturalism,” the Ligue trotskyste is committed to exposing the hypocritical anti-Quebec and anti-immigrant lie of “multiculturalism,” an instrument in the hands of the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie. As we explained previously:

“From the start, the politics of ‘multiculturalism’ instituted by the progenitor of the current [prime minister] Trudeau—and always supported by the pro-capitalist NDP social democrats—have had the aim of denying the national rights of Quebec, forcibly contained within Confederation. At the same time, they serve to set Québécois workers and ethnic minorities (and anglophone workers in Quebec) against one another.”

[—“Fascist Terror Attack on Muslims in Quebec,” WV No. 1106, 24 February 2017]

Specifically, Canadian “multiculturalism” denies Quebec’s national rights by presenting the people of Quebec as simply one “culture” among many others in a great mosaic. Thanks to the “official” policy of “multiculturalism,” the Liberal Party of Canada has historically been able to line up cultural communities against the independence of Quebec, while securing their vote virtually for life, notably by providing generous subsidies. It was also able to strengthen support for the government among some of the immigrant (as well as the Québécois) petty bourgeoisie and to act as a force of social conservatism to repress cultural minorities. In the name of “multiculturalism,” the Ontario Liberal government in 2004 considered the possibility of establishing *sharia* (Islamic law)



Montreal Gazette

Reactionary Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis with Catholic archbishop of Montreal Joseph Charbonneau, accomplices of Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie in exploitation of French-speaking workers, 1946.

religious courts having legal power in family disputes, while Christian and Jewish courts have been in place since 1991. We are opposed to these reactionary tribunals, which cruelly demonstrate that Canadian “multiculturalism” is the enemy of the liberation of women, Muslims and others.

Furthermore, the hypocritical lie of Canadian “multiculturalism” is but a thin gloss on the police repression that is the daily lot of many immigrants and minorities. For years, under the pretext of the “war on terror,” Muslims across the country have been persecuted by the federal state, not to mention the atrocities perpetrated by Canadian troops in Afghanistan and their crimes today in Iraq and Mali. The true face of “multicultural” Canada is seen in deportations by the thousands, which continue unabated under Trudeau. Notably, Haitian refugees have been deported since November, after a brief pause. It is crucial for the labor movement to demand: *Down with deportations! Full citizenship rights for everyone here!*

Immigrants, minorities and English-speaking workers have no interest in maintaining the oppressive and reactionary state that is Canada. Quebec’s independence would be a major blow to the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie; it coincides directly with the interest of all the workers exploited by that bourgeoisie. As a Greek immigrant said in *Comfort and Indifference* (Denys Arcand’s documentary on the 1980 Quebec independence referendum):

“All the capitalists of the Greek community are voting No. Why?... I am a worker and I want to support the Quebec workers. Because if I support Quebec workers, and if these people gain power, I too gain power.”

Indeed, Quebec’s liberation from under the boot of the dominant Anglo-Canadian nation would also be a step forward for immigrants and minorities. *Québécois and immigrant workers share the same interests. For a workers republic of Quebec!*

The racist and anti-Muslim attacks of the “identitarian” nationalists are a real gift to the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie. This

clearly shows that after two failed referendums [on Quebec independence], the bourgeois nationalists are willing to scuttle the struggle for independence by pushing immigrants into the arms of the federalist reactionaries, thus isolating Quebec workers from their combative class brothers and sisters among immigrants and minorities. For the capitalists, profits come before the fight against national oppression.

It is urgently necessary to fight to break the ties that bind Quebec workers to their bourgeois nationalist leadership, particularly through the union bureaucrats and their allegiance to the PQ. Insofar as Quebec workers are so firmly tied by nationalism to their own bourgeoisie, it is precisely because they are subjected

to national oppression. Since the federal government oppresses Quebec and the English-speaking labor movement echoes the chauvinism of their bourgeoisie, it is easy for Quebec nationalists to exploit the legitimate anger against national oppression and push the lie that the Quebec capitalists and workers have a common interest. Far from strengthening nationalism, the creation of a separate Quebec would instead allow for more clearly exposing that the interests of the multiethnic working class and the nationalist bourgeoisie are irreconcilable.

What is needed today is a struggle to build a revolutionary binational workers party that will be the most committed champion of Quebec independence. This party will also fight to win over the workers and immigrants of English Canada to the cause of independence for Quebec, against the Anglo-chauvinist poison spread by the bourgeoisie and the social democracy of English Canada. This party will be a crucial tool to unite the struggle of the proletariat, the struggle for national liberation and the defense of immigrants and oppressed minorities in the fight for a workers republic of Quebec and a socialist revolution in Canada and beyond. This perspective is reflected, in particular, in our call to build a binational party made up of 70 percent Québécois and oppressed minorities, until two parties in two separate states are established.

The “Secularism” of QS: Same Anti-Muslim Poison

Québec solidaire is in no way a “lesser evil” amid the racist and anti-Muslim attacks of the CAQ, the PQ and the Liberals. QS is simply a new version of bourgeois populism, which seeks to channel social struggles into parliamentarism by exploiting widespread illusions in the capitalist state (see “QS et GND: charlatans populistes,” *République ouvrière* No. 1, Automne/hiver 2017-2018). QS is a capitalist party that simply aspires to administer the bourgeois state and give it a “left” veneer. This would not change the nature of the capitalist state; the cops, prisons and courts would still serve to repress the working class and terrorize minorities.

The current attempts by QS to posture as the “left” opposition to Legault’s anti-Muslim attacks are totally hypocritical. QS, which put forward its own anti-Muslim measures, is in tune with the other parties of the National Assembly regarding “secularism.” In 2013, QS proposed its own so-called “Charter of Secularism,” which included the denial of public services to women wearing the *niqab* [full-face veil]. In 2017, QS parliamentary deputies stood to the right of the Liberals when QS sought to add to the Liberals’ Bill 62 a ban on the wearing of religious symbols by magistrates, Crown attorneys, police and prison guards, as well as the president of the National Assembly. The longstanding position of QS on religious symbols is therefore that of the CAQ, minus the teachers. Regardless of the “discussion” that QS is currently pursuing to appear less racist, as a small capitalist party, it is committed to maintaining the economic and social system that is at the root of the oppression of immigrants and minorities.

QS may claim to be for Quebec independence, but with the electoral trouncing of the PQ last October, its attempts to position itself as the alternative sovereignist party have instead placed it in the camp of...Trudeau. [A QS leader] Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, in the guise of criticizing Legault’s intention to reduce immigrant admissions, reinforced illusions in the Canadian prime minister:

“We rarely agree with Justin Trudeau, but keeping a number of refugees, which allows us to play our role of solidarity with the most wretched of the planet, is a good thing.”

—ICI.Radio-Canada.ca, 14 November 2018

Legault’s anti-immigrant measures, including the recent cancellation of 18,000 immigration applications, are an integral part of his racist attacks to divide workers. This poison must be fought in the working class. However, the struggle for Quebec to have its independent state cannot be separated from the struggle to control its borders. Thus, Legault’s current demand that immigration, which is now under federal jurisdiction, be brought back under the jurisdiction of Quebec is legitimate from this standpoint. Ultimately, only the seizure of power by the proletariat can lay the ground for a just and fair society for all. The current political bloc between QS and Justin Trudeau clearly shows the hypocrisy of QS’s “pro-independence” and left-sounding rhetoric.

The pseudo-socialist groups (like Alternative socialiste or La Riposte socialiste), which have committed a class betrayal by completely liquidating into QS and which sow illusions in that petty-bourgeois formation, are obstacles to the construction of a Leninist party. Only the Ligue trotskyste fights for a truly revolutionary perspective and dedicates itself, going forward, to the construction of a binational and multiethnic revolutionary workers party, the essential tool for achieving a socialist revolution. For our comrades here, these tasks go hand in hand with the building of strong communist sections internationally as part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. ■

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WORKERS TRIBUNE

Workers control resources and at the same time continue to oppress other nations. —Anarchist Engels

Newspaper of the Trotskyist League International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Number 1 (2019)

République ouvrière and Workers Tribune:

Raising the Banner

POUR L'INDÉPENDANCE ET LE SOCIALISME

RÉPUBLIQUE OUVRIÈRE

Journal de la Ligue trotskyste

À bas les attaques racistes contre les musulmans !

En haut: Manifestation contre le racisme à Montréal. 2. L'attaque contre les musulmans.

En bas: Manifestation contre le racisme à Montréal. 2. L'attaque contre les musulmans.

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SPARTACIST

NUMÉRO 44 ÉDITION EN FRANÇAIS PRINTemps 2019

République ouvrière et Workers Tribune

Levons la bannière du léninisme !

Pour l'indépendance du Québec et le socialisme !

PAGE 2

Programme et tactiques trotskystes dans la France d'après-guerre

Constitution de mai 1946 :

le PCI avait raison de voter « oui »

PAGE 12

Le Troisième Congrès du Comintern

et la lutte pour le bolchévisme

PAGE 39

A. Rosmer : L'importance et l'utilité du III^e Congrès.....43

La LCI exclut des membres de sa section polonaise.....51

Femmes et Révolution

Genèse de l'oppression des femmes

Un hommage à Lewis Henry Morgan

PAGE 84

ASTÉRIQUE.....39-54 RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE.....138-139 QUÉBEC/CANADA.....139-140A USA.....140-141

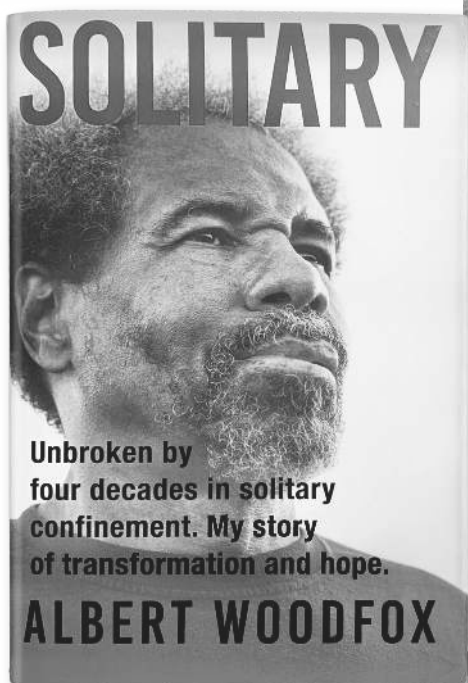
JUST OUT!

Spartacist (French Edition)

No. 44, Spring 2019 (64 pages) \$1.50

Order from/pay to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Louisiana Black Panther Albert Woodfox Chronicles Prison Hell



Modern-day chain gang at Louisiana's Angola prison, where Woodfox was incarcerated for over 40 years in solitary confinement.

Earlier this year, Grove Press released the memoir of Albert Woodfox, *Solitary: Unbroken by Four Decades in Solitary Confinement; My Story of Transformation and Hope*. The book is a testament to incredible courage and tenacity in the face of brutal physical and psychological punishment and illuminates the hideous, racist reality of the capitalist injustice system in this society based on the exploitation of labor and founded on chattel slavery. *Solitary* tells the story of the Angola 3 (Woodfox and his comrades Robert King and Herman Wallace), who collectively spent over a century in the torture of solitary confinement—mostly at Louisiana's notorious Angola prison. While there, the three formed a prison chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). The decades that the Angola 3 were locked away in solitary were retribution for their joining the BPP and organizing protests and legal challenges against unspeakable prison conditions.

Solitary depicts the harsh reality of black life in America—on *both* sides of the prison bars. As Woodfox recalls of his coming of age in a New Orleans ghetto: “We always knew the police picked up the men in our neighborhood because they were black and for no other reason.” Woodfox graphically describes the all too common grinding poverty and racism that drove his mother to prostitution, and himself to fall into the gang scene. He recounts, “When money was tight and there was no food in the house I shoplifted bread and canned goods. It never felt like a crime to me, it was survival.”

In 1969, Woodfox was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to 50 years. He managed to escape from the courthouse and make his way to New York, where he was arrested on bogus attempted robbery charges. Woodfox was sent to the Tombs detention center, where he met three members of the Panther 21, who were falsely accused of a fictitious plot to blow up the New York Botanical Gardens, department stores and police stations. Woodfox admired the poise and commitment of the Panthers amid dehumanizing conditions. In May 1971, after the longest trial in New York State history at the time, the Panther 21 were acquitted of all charges.

At the Tombs, Woodfox was given the novel *A Different Drummer* by William Melvin Kelley, which got him thinking for the first time that “one man could make a difference.” He developed a thirst for knowledge. In *Solitary*, he expresses appreciation for books donated by librar-

ies to Angola prison, which he read voraciously, including those on slavery, socialism and independence movements from around the world.

Woodfox played an active role in uprisings at the Tombs and at the Queens House of Detention against overcrowding, rotten food, filth and the brutality meted out by the guards. When Woodfox, now marked as a “militant,” was sent to Louisiana's Orleans Parish Prison, he was placed on its “Panther tier” reserved for New Orleans Panthers awaiting trial for defending themselves against a cop assault on BPP headquarters. Woodfox was soon designated for transfer to Angola. He joined the BPP and was assigned to establish a chapter and recruit members there.

Woodfox's persecution highlights the decades-long war by the capitalist state against Panther militants. Shortly after the BPP was formed in 1966, it was deemed by FBI head J. Edgar Hoover to be the “greatest threat to the internal security of the country.” Under the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program), over 30 Panthers were killed and hundreds more railroaded into prison hellholes for decades, where many died. The BPP, which represented the best of a generation of black radicals, was destroyed through a combination of FBI/cop terror and its own vicious factionalism exacerbated by COINTELPRO dirty tricks.

Despite the radicalism and personal courage of its militants, the BPP had no program for overturning the system of exploitation in which the oppression of black people is materially rooted. In particular, the Panthers rejected the centrality and strategic social power of the working class, leaving themselves more vulnerable to state repression. The Spartacist League always insisted that it was the duty of the workers movement to defend the Panthers against state victimization and sought to win black militants to a Marxist perspective—the need to build a vanguard party that would combat every manifestation of oppression and lead the multiracial working class to power through socialist revolution.

“The Legacy of Slavery Was Everywhere”

The prisons, along with the cops, courts and military, are an integral component of the state machinery of repression directed against the working class and oppressed in defense of capitalist rule and profit. Angola stands out as the most emblematic of the barbaric prison institutions dating from the defeat of Reconstruction and con-

solidation of Jim Crow segregation in the South. As Woodfox documents, Angola had been a slave-breeding plantation that covered over 18,000 acres. In 1869, the slave trader's widow rented the land to a former Confederate major, who “leased” prisoners from New Orleans and other city jails to work his land. The convicts, many charged with minor crimes, were housed in former slave quarters and worked seven days a week, starved and beaten.

In 1901, Louisiana bought the land and turned it into a state prison. As Woodfox observes, “The legacy of slavery was everywhere. It was in the ground under our feet and in the air we breathed, and wherever we looked.” He adds, “Angola was run like an antebellum slave plantation.... The harsh conditions were so hurtful that strong men would cry. They broke.”

The authorities were never able to break Woodfox. In 1972, Woodfox and Wallace were falsely accused of killing prison guard Brent Miller and convicted in classic COINTELPRO trials. The following year, King met the same fate—framed up for the killing of a fellow prisoner. The prosecutions of the Angola 3 conformed to a template for Panthers in the halls of “justice”—racist jury rigging, concealment of exculpatory evidence, phony forensics,

buying witnesses and appeals to the jury to punish them for their political activism.

Woodfox spent more than half of his life in a six-by-nine-foot windowless cell for 23 hours a day, allowed out to yard three hours a week. Despite being under constant surveillance, he was sometimes subjected to visual body cavity searches up to six times a day. Woodfox endured vicious beatings by the guards; for talking back, he was thrown into the Red Hat, a three-by-six-foot cell in which one “could stand in the middle of your cell and touch the walls on either side of you.” Kept in total isolation, eating alone and unable to attend religious or educational activities, Woodfox described in 2012 the emotional effect of years in solitary: “I ask that for a moment you imagine yourself standing at the edge of nothingness, looking at emptiness.”

Woodfox's murder conviction was tossed out by the courts in 1992; he lost the retrial six years later. The conviction was again overturned in 2012. All the while, Woodfox remained behind bars, his jailers hellbent on having him die in prison. Angola prison warden Burl Cain insisted in 2008 that even if Woodfox were not guilty, he would be kept in solitary because he still practiced “Black Pantherism.” So obvious was the frame-up that Miller's widow, Leontine Rogers, believed Woodfox to be innocent, adding her voice to those calling for his release. As the state was preparing to try him for a third time in 2016, Woodfox, whose serious health concerns were exacerbated by his incarceration, pleaded no contest to lesser charges of manslaughter and aggravated burglary. He was sentenced to time served and released.

While in enforced isolation, Woodfox came to appreciate more and more the self-sacrifice his mother had made singlehandedly raising and nurturing her family. He was devastated when he was not allowed to attend her funeral, and his first act upon his release in February 2016 was to visit her grave. *Solitary* also discusses the close personal bonds Albert developed with his comrades. Woodfox credits King, who got out of prison in 2001, for his tireless efforts to publicize the cases of Woodfox and Wallace. It was especially wrenching for him to watch the physical deterioration of Wallace, who died from liver cancer in October 2013, a mere three days after finally getting out of prison.

We honor Woodfox, along with his comrades King and Wallace. This decaying social order and its instruments of incarceration, torture and death deserve to perish. Our aim is to forge a 70 percent black, Latino and other minority party that is committed to mobilizing the working class in sweeping away the prisons and the entire apparatus of capitalist repression and establishing a workers government. *For black liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

Correction on Panthers and COINTELPRO

Since 1985, we have incorrectly reported that the number of Black Panther Party (BPP) members killed under the FBI's notorious Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) was 38. Our recent research, while unable to confirm that figure, verified that this government campaign of violence, harassment and disruption led to the killing of 32 Panthers.

Launched in 1956 against the Communist Party, COINTELPRO later took aim at the Socialist Workers Party, Vietnam antiwar protesters, the American Indian Movement and Puerto Rican nationalists, among others deemed “security threats.” Its foremost victims were the Black Panthers, who were subjected to relentless racist state terror. The Feds conspired with police departments around the country and actively collaborated with cultural nationalist groups like Ron Karenga's United Slaves organization. At the same time, the BPP was infiltrated by agents provocateurs, who

inflamed factional divisions within it.

The names of the murdered Panthers are Eugene Anderson, Welton Armstead, Steven Bartholomew, Sylvester Bell, Fred Bennett, Alprentice Carter, Mark Clark, Nathaniel Clark, Frank Diggs, Mark Essex, Carl Hampton, Fred Hampton, John Huggins, Bobby Hutton, George Jackson, Jonathan Jackson, Sterling Jones, Robert Lawrence, Tommy Lewis, Arthur Morris, Samuel Napier, Babatunde X Omarwali, Walter Touré Pope, Sandra Lane Pratt, Alex Rackley, Larry Roberson, John Savage, Zayd Malik Shakur, Joseph Waddell, Robert Webb, Anthony White and Spurgeon Winters.

The main sources consulted were *The Black Panther* newspaper (Special Issue, 21 February 1970); *COINTELPRO: The Untold American Story*, a report by Paul Wolf, Ward Churchill, Howard Zinn et al. (2001); and *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther* by Safiya Bukhari (2010).

Semenya...

(continued from page 8)

For us Marxists, the use of drugs for recreation or enhancement of athletic ability is a personal choice and should not be criminalized. A rational socialist society would seek to improve human athletic performance, including through performance-enhancing drugs, which can help athletes train harder and recover faster, while also conducting scientific studies of the potential medical dangers.

For a Leninist Party—Champion of All the Oppressed!

There is widespread support for Semenya around the world, especially among the

oppressed non-white majority in South Africa, who see in the IAAF’s dehumanization of Semenya an expression of their own subjugation and degradation. The South African government led by the African National Congress (ANC) hypocritically hails Semenya, while maintaining the system of neo-apartheid capitalism that perpetuates racial, national and women’s oppression. The ANC and its Tripartite Alliance act as black front men for the imperialists and local Randlords, upholding the superexploitation of the predominantly black working class by white capital.

The legacy of apartheid permeates sport, like all other aspects of life. Cricket and rugby continue to be dominated by the white minority, starting with wealthy schools, which have funding and facilities

far above what is available for traditionally black sports like soccer. Semenya has had to confront the grinding poverty and hideous oppression of women that are a hallmark of a society where backward traditional practices are widespread, from lobola (bride price) and forced polygamy to virginity testing (see “South African Government Promotes Reactionary Tribal Leaders,” WV No. 1031, 4 October 2013). Women suspected of being lesbians are targets of violence and “corrective rape.” The struggle for women’s liberation and for the national liberation of the black masses is inseparable from the struggle for socialist revolution. The perspective of our comrades of Spartacist/South Africa is to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the fight to overthrow neo-apartheid capitalist

rule and establish a black-centered workers government. The only way to smash all forms of social oppression once and for all is through a series of proletarian revolutions around the globe, crucially including the imperialist centers like the U.S. The working class must fight against all manifestations of social prejudice and backward consciousness in order to carry out its historic role as the gravedigger of capitalism. Revolutionary vanguard parties are needed to lead the working class at the head of all the oppressed to that victory. Only then can we begin to build a truly egalitarian world free of bigotry and scarcity. The International Communist League is committed to building such parties as sections of a reformed Fourth International. ■

Iran...

(continued from page 1)

the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state in 1991-92.

The rifts between the U.S. and European imperialists underline the inherent fissures among these powers as they pursue their own spheres of exploitation at the expense of their rivals and the oppressed masses. But the U.S. continues to hold the whip hand. As Patrick Cockburn noted in the London Independent (10 May), the European powers “have proved to be marginal players when it comes to the Iran deal.” “In the long term,” he adds, “they also want regime change in Tehran, though they oppose Trump’s methods of obtaining it as reckless.”

Iran, China and U.S. Imperialism

For its part, China, Iran’s main foreign oil market, condemned Trump’s latest edicts during a May 17 visit by Iran’s foreign minister. China has investments in Iran worth nearly \$50 billion, mainly in energy and transportation, and Beijing has advanced lines of credit to Iranian banks in euros or Chinese yuan, rather than dollars, in order to bypass sanctions. Some Chinese oil refiners have stated that they will now comply with Trump’s edicts for fear of losing access to world financial markets. But there are reports that Beijing is continuing to import Iranian oil: a tanker owned by a Chinese state company recently left the Persian Gulf carrying two million barrels of Iranian crude.

The U.S. imperialists have their sights set on the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state, where capitalism was overthrown by the 1949 Revolution. In pursuit of this strategic goal, the Trump administration has combined military provocations against China with a growing trade war. Some of the bourgeois opposition to Trump’s moves against Iran is based on worries that the White House’s attention may be shifting away from China. Right-wing New York Times columnist Ross Douthat wrote in a 19 May op-ed titled “Don’t Fight Iran”:

“The president is now in the middle of a trade war with China that by his own logic is far more important to long-term American interests than some immediate breakthrough or regime breakdown



Spartacists warned against Khomeini’s Islamist forces, called for workers to power (WV No. 221, 15 December 1978). Mullahs’ regime was disaster for workers, women, national minorities. Right: January 1989 Spartacist-initiated protest in New York City against mass executions of Iranian leftists.



WV Photo

in Tehran. So he should return to that campaign-season wisdom, and to the maxim it suggested: *Whenever possible, one war at a time.*”

As Marxists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and counterrevolution, and oppose all the tariffs and other trade-war measures imposed by Washington. At the same time, we recognize that the nationalist policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing, including its promotion of “peaceful coexistence” with the U.S. and other imperialist powers, undermine the defense of the workers state. A proletarian political revolution is needed to oust the parasitic bureaucracy, replacing it with the rule of workers and peasants councils committed to revolutionary internationalism.

U.S./Saudi/Israeli Axis of Evil

Both Sunni-fundamentalist Saudi Arabia and Zionist Israel are furious over the expanded influence of largely Shia Iran in the Near East—an unintended consequence of both U.S. imperialism’s overthrow of Iraq’s Sunni-dominated Hussein regime and, more recently, the gains made by the Iran-backed Assad regime in the Syrian civil war. Spokesmen for Tehran regularly denounce the “B-Team” that yearns to destroy Iran, including Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump adviser Bolton, who wrote a foam-flecked 2015 opinion piece

for the New York Times titled “To Stop Iran’s Bomb, Bomb Iran.”

It was against this backdrop that four years ago Saudi Arabia launched its brutal war in Yemen with the aid of the U.S. and other imperialist powers. At the time, the Saudi monarchs claimed, with no evidence, that Iran was funding and arming Houthi rebels based among Yemen’s Shia minority. Since early on, U.S. forces, as well as those of Britain and France, have directly backed the Saudi war effort, with Washington also supplying fighter jets and other military hardware. To date, some 80,000 Yemenis have been killed and over three million displaced in this savage war. A third of the population faces starvation. Thanks to Saudi destruction of infrastructure, one of the largest, fastest-spreading cholera outbreaks in history has raged uncontrollably.

Houthi forces recently staged drone strikes on a Saudi oil pipeline and a military base where U.S. forces have been deployed. The Saudi regime raged that Tehran had ordered the pipeline attack and an editorial in an English-language Saudi newspaper demanded retaliatory U.S. airstrikes on Iran. Marxists stand for the military defense of the Houthi forces and their allies against the imperialist-backed Saudi assault, without giving that movement any political support. *All U.S. troops and bases out of the Near East now!*

For a Proletarian Perspective

Iran’s clerical regime took power in 1979 amid a social upheaval against the despised, U.S.-backed autocrat Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Powerful strikes in the oil fields and elsewhere posed the potential for workers revolution. However, the then-sizeable Iranian left criminally subordinated the working class to reactionary Islamist forces whose social base was among the priestly caste of mullahs and the traditional bazaari merchant class, which had been ground down by (uneven) modernization in the country.

While reformist pseudo-socialists internationally cheered on the Islamist movement, we warned that a victory for these forces under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini would be a disaster for workers and the oppressed. Uniquely, our international tendency raised the call: “Down with the Shah! Don’t bow to Khomeini! Workers to power in Iran!” The mullahs’ ascension

to power led to the ferocious repression of Kurds and other minorities, the stoning of women who did not wear the oppressive veil, the mass slaughter of leftists and the execution of striking workers and others accused of “crimes against God.”

The British-based Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), whose American affiliate is Socialist Alternative, recently published an article titled “40 Years Since the Iranian Revolution: Learning the Lessons for Today’s New Working-Class Struggles” (socialist-party.org.uk, 6 February). This treatise laments that “the revolution did not end up as socialists expected” and that “many on the left were disoriented,” carefully avoiding any mention of the CWI’s own history. At the time, this outfit claimed that workers’ struggles were “forcing Khomeini in an anti-capitalist direction” and that the Islamic leader could well “complete the expropriation of capitalism” (Militant International Review, Autumn 1979)! This fantastical schema served to give a “left” cover to Islamist reaction.

The Iranian proletariat has still not recovered from the 1979 defeat. But the harrowing impact of sanctions and anger over poverty and the corruption of the ruling elite have fueled repeated working-class protest. Late last year, steel and sugar cane workers staged militant strikes against privatizations and unpaid wages.

The desperate conditions faced by Iran’s working and oppressed masses acutely pose the need for a revolutionary workers party. Such a party must be built in political opposition to all wings of the ruling class—religious or secular, hardliners or “reformists”—as well as implacable opposition to the U.S. and other imperialist powers, who will seek to manipulate the grievances of Iran’s masses to serve their own interests.

In Iran, as elsewhere in the semicolonial world, the bourgeoisie is too weak, fearful of the working class and dependent on the capitalist world market to break the chains of imperialist subjugation, overcome mass poverty and resolve other burning social issues. Thanks to its central role in production, the proletariat is the only class that can liberate the downtrodden urban and rural masses by smashing capitalist class rule through socialist revolution. There will be no end to ethnic and national oppression, no liberation of women, no end to the exploitation of working people short of shattering the capitalist order in Iran and throughout the region, laying the basis for a socialist federation of the Near East.

Success in this struggle crucially hinges on the international extension of proletarian revolution to the imperialist centers, including the U.S. Capitalist-imperialist rule in America is beset by contradictions. The rulers can send killer drones to take out today’s “enemy” from thousands of miles away, but at home basic infrastructure is collapsing, public education is starved of funds and much of industry is hollowed out. The multiracial working class must be imbued with the consciousness of its potential to overthrow the American capitalist order and create a new society organized to serve human needs. The Spartacist League is dedicated to forging the vanguard party necessary for this fight. ■

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7

Racist, Anti-Woman Campaign Against South African Track Star Let Caster Semenya Run Her Race!

For a decade, black South African runner Mokgadi Caster Semenya has been hounded by International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) officials, the bourgeois media and many white athletes, who all claim that her allegedly high testosterone levels give her an “unfair advantage.” On May 1, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), a governing body of world athletics, ruled against Semenya’s appeal of the IAAF regulation barring female athletes with “hyperandrogenism” from running in middle-distance competitions. Semenya, a two-time 800-meter Olympic gold medalist, can no longer compete in her race unless she submits to a regimen of potentially harmful hormone-suppressing drugs. Refusing to bow down, she has announced plans to run 2,000- and 3,000-meter races, which are not covered by the IAAF’s rule.

From their European chateaus, the colonial masters of the sports world, like IAAF president and British “Lord” Sebastian Coe, have carried out their racist vendetta against this defiant gay woman who climbed her way to success from an impoverished village in Limpopo. They have vilified her by insinuating that she is a man, subjecting her to invasive public scrutiny and “gender testing.” As Semenya has declared: “I just want to run naturally, the way I was born.... I am a woman and I am fast.” Two days after the ruling, but before the ban went into effect, Semenya won the 800 at a meet in Qatar. **Down with the bigoted and vindictive IAAF ban! Viva Caster Semenya, viva!**

The CAS ruling has already forced four black African women out of competition, including the 800-meter silver and bronze medalists from Burundi and Kenya who shared the 2016 Olympic podium in Rio with Semenya. After coming in fifth in that race, Polish runner Joanna Jozwik disparaged the three champions with racist vitriol, boasting that she finished as the “first European” and the “second white.” She grotesquely went after Semenya and others for their purportedly “male” testosterone levels, “which is why they look how they look and run like they run.” Echoing the racist trope of protecting the purity of white womanhood, the IAAF claims it is “protecting” female athletes.

The IAAF regulation, aimed at women with a Y chromosome and higher levels of testosterone to which their bodies are responsive, is based on pseudoscience that has been debunked by numerous studies. The sports czars have announced that they are specifically investigating female athletes from Africa, Asia and South America. The message is that these women excel due to some mythical “masculine” advantage and not their extraordinary talent and perseverance in the face of great obstacles—from lack of housing, medical care and proper nutrition to racist and sexist abuse. No doubt elite athletes in the advanced capitalist countries have plenty of “unfair advantages,” like access to superior training facilities and funding. This is the so-called level playing field.

Women considered by the IAAF to



Doha, Qatar, May 3: Semenya congratulated by Jamaican runner Natoya Goule (left) after winning women’s 800-meter race, the last she was allowed to run under vindictive and discriminatory ruling.

be insufficiently “feminine” are declared “suspicious” and subjected to degrading gynecological, psychological and other tests. The institution’s director of health and science insists that responsiveness to testosterone can be determined from the size of a woman’s clitoris. In 2013, doctors in France were revealed to have coerced four female athletes described as coming from developing countries into undergoing barbaric operations, including partial removal of the clitoris and vaginal surgery. These mutilations of healthy women recall butchers like the American “father of modern gynecology,” J. Marion Sims, who experimented on black female slaves without anesthesia.

Sports officials want to turn Semenya into a human guinea pig for experimental hormone reduction treatment. As we noted in our article defending the South African runner ten years ago (see WV No. 942, 11 September 2009), the treatment of Semenya is a modern-day version of the abuse of Saartjie (Sarah) Baartman: the Khoikhoi woman kidnapped by a British doctor in the early 1800s, taken to Europe and exhibited as an object of morbid sexual fascination. Her brain and genitals remained on display in a Paris museum some 150 years after her death.

In the U.S., where black people are a race-color caste segregated at the bottom of society, black female athletes struggle against the triple oppression of race, class and sex. Take Serena Williams, whose physique is one of the most scrutinized in the world of tennis. Constantly bombarded by vile insults, she has been compared to an animal, likened to a man and called the “N” word.

Sport in the capitalist world is stamped by all the pathologies of brutal and unequal class-divided societies. From its inception, international competitive sports was about showcasing not only national and racial superiority but also male physical dominance. For decades, sports administrators have forced female athletes to undergo one or another form of “sex verification”—from genital inspections during “nude parades” to chromosome testing—to maintain a strict division between the sexes. While women have grudgingly been allowed to compete in traditionally male sports, they are paid far less, that is, treated as inferior to their male counterparts.

Science, Sex and Sports

The argument that testosterone is the sole basis for gauging both sex and athleticism has nothing to do with science. Instead, it is about recycling traditional *social* norms of femininity. Sexual stereotypes flow from rigid gender roles within the monogamous, patriarchal family, which serves as a key prop for the capitalist rulers and their system of exploitation. The institution of the family, in which the subjugation of women is rooted, reinforces backward prejudices and bigotry against those who fall outside what is deemed “normal.” Bourgeois codes of morality enforce sexual conformity, fueling and legitimizing harassment and violence against gay, transgender and gender non-conforming people. Notably, sports officials have imposed hormone restrictions on transgender athletes as well.

All women produce testosterone and require it for a broad range of biological processes in addition to reproduction, such as

liver function, metabolism and bone development. For decades, geneticists and endocrinologists have argued that trying to determine sex based on one decisive

marker is flawed, given the wide range of hormonal, genetic and anatomical factors involved. However, many natural variations are falsely treated as disorders by much of the Western medical establishment, as well as bourgeois mouthpieces like the *New York Times*. People referred to as intersex or having “differences of sexual development” are preyed on by medical professionals, subjected to “corrective” surgery and behavior therapy in their early years.

An extensive 2018 report by bioethicist Katrina Karkazis and science scholar Rebecca M. Jordan-Young titled “The Powers of Testosterone: Obscuring Race and Regional Bias in the Regulation of Women Athletes” (*Feminist Formations*, Vol. 30, No. 2) exposes the folklore surrounding testosterone, referred to as “T.” Citing studies in sports science, they point out:

“T levels cannot predict athletic performance; better-performing athletes do not have higher T levels (baseline or pre-competition); individual variability in response to T is enormous. While higher T has been linked to greater strength, speed, and muscle size at the *group* level, at the *individual* level these relationships are inconsistent. Some athletes get little or no benefit from increased levels of T, while others get considerable benefits.”

Athletic performance is based on the interplay between physical traits, brain chemistry, hormone levels, psychology, training and nutrition. A plethora of biological variations confer competitive advantages, from greater endurance to more beneficial body types and more flexible joints, none of which are regulated by sports authorities, nor should they be. A case in point is American record-breaking swimmer Michael Phelps, who has innately large hands and feet as well as a long torso. No one suggested he should have surgery or take drugs to “level the playing field.” And no one is about to suggest capping testosterone levels for male athletes. From a genetic standpoint, elite athletes are statistical outliers, whose physical feats redefine the boundaries that can be surpassed by the human body.

It is no accident that the same wardens of sport who ban drugs to enhance performance are forcing athletes like Semenya to take drugs to *diminish* their performance. They use their whip hand to decree what is acceptable—who is or isn’t a woman, who does or doesn’t have an “unfair advantage,” who is or isn’t a “doper.” Much of the hysteria against steroid use and men purportedly competing as women was first whipped up against athletes from the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, and the deformed workers states of East and Central Europe during the Cold War. Accusations flew that their competitive success was attributable to cheating rather than to the enormous advantages of the planned economies of these countries where capitalism had been overthrown.

continued on page 7