

‘To unite the
working class
would be
tremendous’

BY MARY MARTIN

“It’s the working class that basically has all the numbers. If we were to come together the amount of change we could make would be tremendous,” apprentice welder Nicholas Murtagh told Communist League member Katy LeRougetel when he

SWP FALL ‘MILITANT,’
BOOK, FUND DRIVE

overheard her discussing the *Militant* and books by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party with his friend Mohamed on his doorstep in Surrey, part of the Lower Mainland in Vancouver, British Columbia. He said he was low on cash and could she come back.

When LeRougetel returned with *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes and the paper, Murtagh said he was happy to see her again and set up an installment plan to pay for them. “This is to hand around to others, too,” he said.

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Fall campaign to sell
Militant subscriptions
and books

Sept. 16 - Nov 21 (Week 3)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold
UNITED STATES				
Albany	95	27	95	30
Atlanta	85	31	85	26
Chicago	115	41	115	31
Colorado	30	5	30	5
Lincoln	30	9	30	11
Los Angeles	135	41	135	25
Miami	45	12	45	7
New York	180	64	180	65
Oakland	125	64	135	55
Philadelphia	70	33	70	24
Seattle	105	31	105	22
Twin Cities	75	18	75	29
Washington	80	32	80	22
Total U.S.	1,170	408	1,180	352
Prisoners	20	6		
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	65	31	65	17
Manchester	60	20	60	16
Total U.K.	125	51	125	33
CANADA				
Montreal	60	24	60	24
Vancouver	45	17	45	17
Total Canada	105	41	105	41
New Zealand	50	17	50	8
Australia	45	17	45	15
Total	1,515	540	1,505	449
SHOULD BE	1,500	500	1,500	500

US colonialism is root of
carnage in Puerto Rico

More than a century of working-class resistance



Comité Boricua en la Diáspora

Students march in San Juan March 31 to oppose cutting University of Puerto Rico budget to make payments on \$74 billion debt to wealthy bondholders. U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico has plundered the island and its people, magnifying impact of hurricanes.

BY TERRY EVANS

More than two weeks after hurricanes Irma and Maria ravaged Puerto Rico, over 80 percent of the island was still without electricity, especially outside San Juan, the capital. The depth of the social catastrophe unfolding in Puerto Rico is a direct result of the island’s colonial subjugation to U.S. imperialism.

The fundamental decisions facing the Puerto Rican people are made not in San Juan, but in Washington. Ever since Washington sent 15,000 U.S. troops to wrest control of Puerto Rico from Spanish rule in 1898, U.S. capi-

talists have distorted and twisted production on the island to fit their needs, exploited the labor of working people, and plundered the island’s natural resources in search of superprofits. Colonial rule means working people face not only the exploitation of domestic and foreign capitalists, but also direct rule from Washington.

But the U.S. rulers have faced resis-

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Supreme Court
set to take on
anti-union case
vs. dues checkoff

BY SETH GALINSKY

Union officials are up in arms after the U.S. Supreme Court announced Sept. 28 it will hear a challenge to an Illinois law that requires all workers covered by union contracts to pay union dues.

The anti-union lawsuit was filed by

AS I SEE IT

Mark Janus against the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union where he works and the Illinois state government. “The union’s fight is not my fight,” Janus says.

Echoing the union officials, the *New York Times* claimed that if the court overturns the law it “could deal a crush-

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Revolution in
Cuba shows
road forward
for workers

There were two great working-class revolutions in the 20th century — the one led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin in Russia in 1917 and the victory of workers and farmers in 1959, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26th Movement. The Cuban Revolution continues today to set an example for working people across the globe. Workers everywhere should join in

EDITORIAL

demanding that Washington end its economic war against Cuban working people and get out of Guantánamo.

Every day Washington and the imperialist powers and other capitalist classes around the world show they are incapable of ruling in the interests of humanity. The endless wars from Afghanistan and Syria to Iraq and Yemen, the senseless deaths on the job as the bosses speed up production, the contamination of the environment, police brutality, discrimination against women around the globe, racist violence, denial of national rights, like the right of the Kurdish people to independence — these are the reality of capitalist rule today.

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Rulers political crisis continues as
Democrats, Republicans splinter

BY TERRY EVANS

The political crisis unfolding in both Democratic and Republican parties continues, as the liberals and middle-class radicals drive to bring down the administration of President Donald Trump.

Both the Republican and Democratic parties are fracturing. As Trump makes it increasingly clear he

is not a Republican, members of that party, from Sen. John McCain to former Trump backer Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Corker, have taken their distance from his presidency. Corker said the White House “has become an adult day care center” with a staff fighting to keep

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Kurds stand firm
for independence
against blockade
by Baghdad

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Since the overwhelming 93 percent vote for independence in Kurdistan Sept. 25, the capitalist regimes in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria — all with substantial Kurdish populations — have been moving to tighten a blockade against the Kurdistan Re-

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Railworkers face frame-up trial
in Lac-Mégantic disaster

Labour Party mayor in London
puts Uber drivers out of work

Communist League joins debate in NZ election

BY MIKE TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — “Whichever party heads the next government, it will continue the course of successive National and Labour Party governments, attacking working people, our unions and past social gains,” Felicity Coggan told supporters here on election night Sept. 23. She was one of two Communist League candidates standing for Parliament, along with Michael Tucker.

After the ballot counts were completed Oct. 7, neither of the main bosses’ parties had won enough seats to form a government. Both are courting the New Zealand First Party, which came in third.

The ruling National Party won 56 seats, Labour 46, New Zealand First 9 and the Greens 8. The Greens say they would join Labour in forming a government if they can get another partner.

Winston Peters, leader of New Zealand First, touts himself as a maverick who speaks for the working class, a supporter of Brexit in the U.K. and fan of Donald Trump in the U.S., and an opponent of most immigration.

“What’s happening in New Zealand is that people have simply had a gutsful,” Peters said at the party’s conference July 17. “They want to know why as working men and women they are so damn poor, and why so many ‘shiny bums’ in Wellington are not doing anything to help them.”

“These ‘shiny bums’ in Wellington and latte sippers in Auckland, who think people in the regions, the middle class and blue collar New Zealanders are thick because they don’t think like them,” he said. “You know, these people who think a BA in sociology studies entitles you to more opinions than a trades-

woman or tradesman.” Peters has served in both National and Labour Party cabinets.

“The heart of the Communist League campaign was going door to door, where we met and spoke with many hundreds of working people on their doorsteps and in their homes, as well as at factories where we work,” Coggan said. “We found a very open response, including many who are dismayed at what is happening to our class and open to a communist explanation of what we as working people need to do to confront this crisis of capitalism.

Reaching workers on their doorsteps

“Many workers told us we were the only party to visit in person and discuss their opinions and concerns,” she said.

“The party’s views are getting a good hearing on working-class doorsteps,” Tucker said in the Sept. 9 *Otago Daily Times*. “There is a significant shift in mood.”

The effects on working people of the ongoing capitalist economic crisis became a major issue in the election debate, with both National and Labour pledging to reduce the rate of child poverty, which is estimated to have doubled over the past 35 years.

“But it’s not just ‘child’ poverty,” Tucker told the election night gathering. “It’s the growing impoverishment of layers of the working class of all ages as a result of the relentless assaults of the bosses and their government.”

Both Labour and the New Zealand First parties called for sharp cuts in immigration, saying this was the road for working people here to have a better shot at jobs and housing. The ruling National Party opposed such broad re-

strictions, saying bosses need a larger labor pool to draw from.

“But immigrant workers aren’t our enemies, or the problem,” Tucker said. “We need to reject scapegoating of immigrants and fight to bring all workers into the unions.

“The capitalist crisis and their profit system, and their drive to make us pay for their problems, is behind the decline in jobs, wages and pensions, the decimation of our unions, and the erosion of the social wage,” he said. “Less than 9 percent of private sector workers in New Zealand are in unions today.”

“The main thing that concerns me is jobs and training, especially for our young people,” Diane Timu, a hospital-ity worker, told Tucker Aug. 7, when he met with her to discuss the campaign and renew her *Militant* subscription.

“A central demand of the Communist League campaign,” Tucker said, “is for a massive, government-funded public works program to create

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Militant/Annalucia Vermunt

Felicity Coggan, Communist League candidate for Parliament in Sept. 23 New Zealand elections, speaks at rally July 29 demanding shelter for homeless people. At left is Rangi McLean, a Maori leader in South Auckland.

Walmart workers give ‘blood money’ to build SWP

In September, 11 members and friends of the Socialist Workers Party who work at Walmart contributed \$1,045.76 from “MyShare” blood money to the SWP Capital Fund. The contributions ranged from \$26 to \$154. “Enclosed is \$203.65 in blood money from three of us working at Walmart in the area here,” Carole Lesnick from Oakland, California, wrote. “Two of us are getting rather small checks. The company says this is due to increased accidents on the job and ‘bad’ customer service. They blame the workers though most of us know this is a lie. Then they schedule us for fewer hours to work!”

Communist workers use the term blood money to describe bonuses and other bribes from the bosses that are designed to get us to accept speedup, lower wages, concession contracts and dangerous working conditions. Refusing to be beholden to boss bribes is the political and financial foundation of the SWP Capital Fund, which finances the long-range work of the party, and helps fellow workers understand what the SWP stands for.

“Enclosed is my contribution of \$35.41,” writes Ilona Gersh from Chicago. “It’s the first time I’ve ever received a ‘MyShare’ check. The company usually comes up with excuses that affect their bottom line of profits at this store.”

If you want to join in turning a boss’s attempted bribe into something that can help advance the line of march of the working class, contact the SWP in your area listed on page 8 to make a contribution.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

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Pacific Islands: Send NZ\$55 for one year to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland 1140, New Zealand.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

THE MILITANT

Prosecute NY cops who killed Mohamed Bah!

It’s been five years since Hawa Bah called 911 to get medical help for her son Mohamed. Cops came, barged into his apartment and killed him. The ‘Militant’ covers fights like this against cop brutality and killings, demanding they be prosecuted and put on trial.



Militant/Sara Lobman

Hawa Bah, left, Mohamed’s mother, leads Sept. 25 march 5 years after cops killed him.

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'To unite working class would be great'

Continued from front page

The SWP — and Communist League members in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom — are entering week four of a nine-week drive to increase readership of the books and the *Militant*. The heart of the effort is knocking on workers' doors in cities large and small, discussing the attacks on working people today as the bosses seek to place the burden of the capitalist economic and political crisis on our backs, and the need for workers to join a revolutionary party and fight for political power. The response is good, and the drive is a little ahead of schedule.

LeRougetel said Communist League members and supporters also visited workers on Vancouver Island for two days, long a center of Canada's lumber industry. "When we asked a young roofer if he knew anyone who works in the sawmills, he said no," she wrote. "It really brought home how many of the sawmills have been shuttered. Three people bought books, one decided to subscribe for a whole year, others bought single copies of the *Militant*, and we got a \$10 donation."

The drive runs concurrently with the SWP's \$100,000 fall party fund to finance the party's ongoing work. At the

end of the third week, contributors have sent in \$20,701. Stepped-up efforts are needed to get on schedule to complete the drive in full and on time.

"We sold four copies of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and three copies of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* to co-workers where I work," Jane Herndon writes from Minneapolis. Party members across the country are talking to co-workers about revolutionary literature and opportunities to introduce them to friends and family.

"One of the *Workers Power* books went to a co-worker who is taking a leave, who also made a modest donation to the party fund," Herndon said. "She got together with co-workers to say goodbye, and held up the book and a copy of the *Militant*, telling everybody it was her good fortune and theirs to work with someone who has a workers party that looks to working people throughout the world.

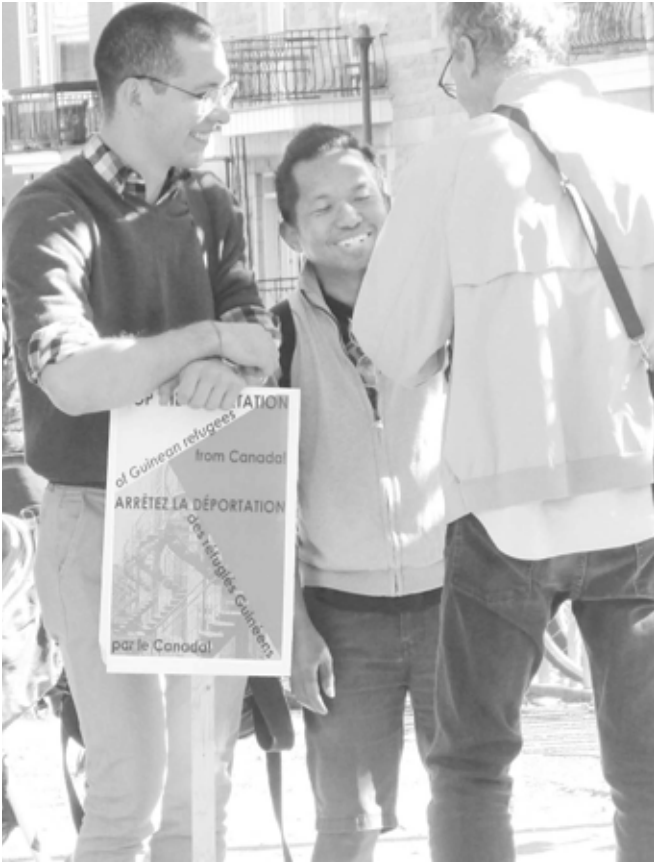
"I plan to have extra books and papers with me when I go back to work, as well as the extremely useful *Militant* supplement reprinting the introduction to the *Workers Power* book," she said. "It's got a couple big pages of pictures and captions from the book that really

help show what it's about."

This supplement is available from the *Militant* for 50 cents.

"Another co-worker who took the *Militant* and a few party books home to look over said it turned out her father was even more interested than she was," Herndon said. "He told her the literature spoke to what he has been going through his whole life. Now I'm invited to come out and follow up with both her and her dad." The books on special are listed below.

SWP and Communist League members are using their election campaigns to boost the drive. Philippe Tessier, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal, filed over 200 signatures Sept. 28 to officially certify him for ballot status in the Nov. 5 election.



Militant/John Steele
Philippe Tessier, left, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal, joins Oct. 1 rally against Canadian government threats to deny Guineans refugee status and to deport them.

"I didn't know there were communists running for office," retiree Guy Trépanier told Tessier Oct. 5 when he knocked on his apartment door. "That's a good thing."

Pointing to the example of the Cuban Revolution, where working people "are building a society organized to satisfy the needs of the producers and not profits for a handful of rich capitalist families," Tessier explained that building a revolutionary party to lead millions of working people was the only way forward out of the "unending and worsening economic, social and moral crisis of the capitalist system."

"This is the goal of the Communist League," Tessier said. Trépanier got a subscription along with the French-language edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* and made a donation to the campaign.

If you'd like to have a party member come out to your home and discuss the SWP and the literature, or to make a contribution to the party fund, contact the party office nearest you, listed on page 8.

SWP fund director Chris Hoeppner and John Steele in Montreal contributed to this article.

Communist League joins debate in New Zealand election

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the jobs we need at union-rate wages. This could provide work and income for the unemployed and the underemployed and help to unite and strengthen our class.

"Moreover, we could repair and build housing, schools, medical facilities and other things working people need in our communities, and upgrade infrastructure that is in decay," he said.

Housing was also a major issue in the election debate, with rents and house prices ballooning, resulting in widespread overcrowding and homelessness. Twenty percent of workers spend over half their income on rents or mortgages.

Both National and Labour said they would subsidize housing construction to aid new homebuyers. But in Auckland, where one-third of the population lives, the average price of a house is over \$1 million, far beyond the reach of most working people.

"We need to demand that the buying and selling of houses for profit is ended

and that quality, affordable, warm rental housing is provided for all as a basic human right," Coggan told a July 29 protest of 180 in South Auckland called to demand a shelter for homeless people after two died that month in the winter cold. "No one should die alone and cold on the street because of the brutality of the capitalist system."

Both National and Labour campaigned to increase the number of cops on the street. This was a central issue at an Aug. 21 election debate of 80 people organized by the Ellerslie Residents Association.

"The role of the police in this capitalist society is to protect the wealthy ruling class and their property, and enforce their laws and social relations on working people," Tucker said. "I believe working people need to change which class rules and build a society based on human solidarity, not the exploitation of

labor."

Tucker noted that one reflection of the social crisis today is an increase in petty crime and violence, often carried out by working people against other workers or small shopkeepers. "This is a problem for our class," he said.

Tucker disagreed with the other candidates, who said crime is driven by poverty. "It is a product of alienation and the dog-eat-dog values promoted by capitalist society that seek to set worker against worker," he said. "In times of mass working-class struggle, crime drops, because as workers organize together to fight for our rights, human solidarity grows.

"That's what young people need, a fighting perspective that offers a way forward — a road to organize and fight the economic, social and moral disaster we face," he said, "And the prospect of a better life that's worth fighting for."

Socialist Workers Party Fund Drive

Sept. 16 - Nov. 21- Week 3

Area	Quota	Collected	%
Albany	\$5,000	\$1,094	22%
Atlanta	\$11,200	\$3,590	32%
Chicago	\$12,000	\$3,285	27%
Colorado	\$700	0	0%
Lincoln	\$300	\$106	35%
Los Angeles	\$9,400	\$2,170	23%
Miami	\$3,500	\$570	16%
New York	\$17,000	\$2,123	12%
Oakland	\$14,500	\$3,837	26%
Philadelphia	\$4,200	0	0%
Seattle	\$8,200	\$2,130	26%
Twin Cities	\$4,800	\$400	8%
Washington, DC	\$7,250	\$1,396	19%
Other	\$1,200	0	0%
Total	\$99,250	\$20,701	21%
Should Be	\$100,000	\$33,333	33%

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The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class.

\$7 EACH WITHOUT SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe or purchase books at these prices, contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 8.

Kurds fight Baghdad blockade

Continued from front page
gional Government, demanding it back down.

Baghdad took advantage of formalities in international conventions covering air travel to halt all international flights to and from the Kurdistan region for at least three months Sept 29. Ankara and Tehran have both sent troops to join Baghdad in military exercises on Kurdistan's border. The Iraqi government is demanding that all dealings on oil exports from Kurdistan be done directly with Baghdad, and claimed Oct. 10 it sent engineers to divert the flow out of the pipelines that carry the KRG's oil to the port in Turkey. The KRG relies on these oil exports for almost 90 percent of its revenues.

Washington, which opposed the independence referendum and has made clear it's for maintaining one Iraqi state, is urging "dialogue." The goal of the U.S. rulers is to prevent new fighting that would disrupt its coalition efforts to advance its economic and political interests in Syria and Iraq.

With virtually all flights halted, except a few flying out of Erbil airport, officials have said they may not be able to afford to stay open. With hundreds of Kurdish tourist and travel companies affected, some 7,000 workers would lose their jobs, reported Kurdish news service Rudaw.

Several days after the flight ban was put into effect, Iraq's central bank informed the KRG that it would stop selling dollars to four major Kurdish banks and halt all foreign currency transfers to the region.

Further tightening the squeeze, arrest warrants were issued Oct. 11 by an Iraqi court against members of the Kurdistan Region's High Electoral and Referendum Commission. Asked whether this will include a warrant to arrest Kurdish President Masoud Barzani, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi told Rudaw, "We are awaiting legal procedures in this regard."

The KRG has refused Baghdad's demands to turn over control of its borders or allow Iraqi authorities into its airports. Protesting the government in Baghdad for a "tsunami" of illegal and unconstitutional measures against the people of Kurdistan, members of Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party in parliament announced they would stop attending sessions and seek to win others to join them. Barzani has called for talks with the Iraqi government, which they have refused.

The Kurdish referendum victory has inspired the 30 million Kurds throughout the region — the largest nation worldwide without its own state — and won sympathy and support from workers around the globe.

And there are some barriers to Baghdad's moves to seize Kurdish oil from the Kirkuk area. The Russian oil Rosneft oil company recently signed a multibillion-dollar deal to extract Kurdish oil and gas to be exported to Europe through Turkey.

Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has stated his opposition to Kurdistan's referendum. Through the course of a more than six-year civil war in Syria, Kurdish forces have made gains. The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have been the most effective force there in pushing back reaction-

ary Islamic State, and in the process some 2 million Kurds have carved out an autonomous area called the Democratic Federal System of Northern Syria along the border with Turkey. The Assad regime now says it's open to discussing an autonomous Kurdish region within Syria's borders — after the end of the civil war there.

With the agreement of Tehran and Moscow, Ankara has begun an incursion into northern Syria, supposedly to "de-escalate" abutting areas in Idlib province controlled by rebels and the Syrian army. However, several reports say Turkish military forces are instead positioning themselves to encircle the Kurdish canton of Afrin controlled by the YPG.



AP Photo/Hassan Ammar

Kurds in Beirut, Lebanon, wave Kurdish flags at Sept. 17 rally in support of referendum on independence in Kurdistan. Sept. 25 vote has brought attacks from Baghdad, Tehran, Ankara.

Capitalist crisis, attacks on autonomy behind Catalan vote

BY EMMA JOHNSON

The violent crackdown by the Spanish government cut down participation but failed to stop the Oct. 1 referendum on independence in Catalonia. Madrid deployed 10,000 Civil Guard and National Police forces, backed up by hundreds of soldiers. The brutality backfired when images of cops in full riot gear lashing out with batons, firing rubber bullets and dragging people by the hair out of the voting stations began to spread. Madrid's brutality shifted the focus of the discussion to the right to debate and vote, which has a wider backing than independence itself.

The present showdown in Spain and Catalonia come out of two developments. The first is the global capitalist crisis of production, trade and employment. The steep downturn in 2007-2008 further increased the economic and class divisions throughout the imperialist world, including Spain. Unemployment is officially 17 percent and for youth more than double that.

Interrelated with the consequences of the capitalist crisis is the 2010 decision by Madrid's Constitutional Court to overturn key aspects of Catalan autonomy that were granted in the 1978 Spanish Constitution adopted after the fall of Francisco Franco's dictatorship and expanded by Catalonia's 2006 Statute of Autonomy. The ruling was a blow to Catalan autonomy, removing recognition of "Catalonia as a nation" and the Catalan government's powers over courts and judges. It ruled unconstitutional the preferential use of the Catalan language over Spanish. The ruling provoked a surge in support for Catalan self-determination.

Spain is also very much part of the crisis in the European Union. It is the "S" in the PIIGS — the derogatory and contemptuous term coined by the capitalist rulers and their mouthpieces for Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and

Spain. More economically powerful ruling classes in Germany and elsewhere have squeezed more and more surplus value from workers and farmers in those countries and imposed onerous economic and social conditions on workers there, along with ever-growing debt. In light of Brexit, election results in France and Germany, and other pressures on the EU from immigration and the capitalist economic crisis, capitalist rulers across Europe have backed Madrid's harsh opposition to Catalonia's separation.

Fight for Catalan autonomy

The recognition of national rights for Catalonia in the 1978 constitution came after four decades of Franco's brutal dictatorship. The use and teaching of the Catalan language was banned and Catalan culture repressed. Along with the Basque country, Catalonia was the center for resistance against the dictatorship, and mobilizations there played a vital role in bringing it down after Franco died.

Catalonia, the Basque country and the Madrid area are the three most economically developed regions and main industrial centers in Spain, with the highest standard of living. Catalonia's gross domestic product per capita is about 15 percent higher than Spain's, while in the southern Andalusia region it is over 15 percent lower. Catalonia's official unemployment rate at around 15 percent is high, but pales compared to Andalusia's almost 30 percent.

The responses to today's crisis conditions reflect social class. Substantial layers of the professional and middle classes, along with small and medium business owners, have responded by pressing for independence, arguing that Catalonia is "subsidizing" the central government budget and poorer regions in Spain and they would fare better on their own. This anti-working-class position is not held by all pro-independence forces, but is one of the factors fueling the rise of support for separation.

The world communist movement unconditionally supports the right to self-determination for Catalonia — and all other oppressed nations — but takes no position on independence. They are two separate questions. This can be seen in Catalonia today.

Referendums and polls over the recent period put support for independence at between 40 and 50 percent of the population. This was reflected in the Oct. 1 vote, and in both pro-Catalonia

and pro-continued union with Spain rallies held in Barcelona.

The urban professional and middle classes, teachers and other government workers, university students, and layers of farmers form the social base of the pro-independence organizations. Industrial workers in auto plants, chemical factories and on the docks have not been central to the mobilizations, and the backing for independence in working-class areas is smaller.

With its high industrialization and job opportunities, many workers moved to Catalonia beginning in the 1960s, both from the rest of Spain and other countries. They make up a significant percentage of workers living in the industrial suburbs of Barcelona.

But support for national rights, including the right to vote on independence, is much higher. Dockworkers, firefighters and other unionists were in the front ranks defending the voting against attacks by Madrid's cops. A poll conducted by the Catalan government in June showed 62 percent think Catalonia has an "insufficient level of autonomy." While most major Spanish union federations opposed the referendum, their affiliates in Catalonia joined the large mobilizations and general strike Oct. 3 against Madrid's attempt to stop the vote. In most cases, they made clear they weren't pushing for a break from Spain.

The big capitalists — the owners of Catalonia's banks and industries — reject independence. After the Oct. 1 referendum, the owners of the two largest banks, CaixaBank and Banco de Sabadell, as well as the insurer Catalana Occidente, Gas Natural Fenosa and other industries registered their company's headquarters elsewhere in Spain. They don't want to endanger access to markets in Spain and the EU, or travel and trade access across Europe. Madrid changed the corporate code to make such moves easier.

Outside Catalonia the treacherous conduct of the parties claiming to speak for working people and the trade union officialdom is what stands out. The Socialist Party supports the government's position that the referendum is unconstitutional. Izquierda Unida, formerly the Communist Party, and the new leftist formation Podemos, both give lip service to Catalonia's right to self-determination, but didn't back the right to hold the referendum. None have taken any initiative to organize demonstrations or protests against the Spanish state's brutal crackdown in Catalonia.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester

Oppose Crackdown of Catalan Independence Referendum: Part of Rulers' Deepening Political Crisis and Fracturing of European Union. Speaker: Peter Clifford, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 20, 7 p.m. 301 Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. M1 2EH. Tel.: (0161) 478-2496.

Railworkers face frame-up trial in Lac-Mégantic disaster

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE
AND JOHN STEELE

SHERBROOKE, Quebec — The state began presenting its frame-up case against locomotive engineer Tom Harding and train traffic controller Richard Labrie, members of United Steelworkers Local 1976, in court here Oct. 2. The two unionists are charged with 47 counts of criminal negligence causing death from the July 6, 2013, derailment and explosion of a runaway 72-car Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway oil train in downtown Lac-Mégantic. In addition to the multiple deaths, the disaster wiped out most of the city's downtown. Also on trial is former low-level company manager Jean Demaitre.

All three are fighting the charges. They could face life in prison.

Some 50 people attended the first day of the trial, including several activists from the Citizens' and Groups Coalition for Rail Safety in Lac-Mégantic, and others who came to show their support for the rail workers.

"Why isn't Edward Burkhardt, the MMA CEO in the courtroom?" said Lac-Mégantic coalition spokesperson Robert Bellefleur. "What about Transport Canada, which gave the MMA special permission to run the train with a crew of just one person, Tom Harding?"

"I don't want answers from the three men on trial," Jean Paradis, told the media. The Montreal, Maine and Atlantic executives are "in the [United] States. Transport Canada has let those cheap companies run railroads for less money, for making more money instead of act-



Militant photos/John Steele

Left, Train bosses "run railroads for making more money instead of acting for the safety of the people," Jean Paradis, survivor of July 2013 oil train explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, tells media, in defense of locomotive engineer Tom Harding and train traffic controller Richard Labrie at start of their frame-up trial Oct. 2. Above, Harding's attorney Thomas Walsh also speaks to media.

ing for the safety of the people. Safety should come first, not third."

Paradis barely escaped with his life as the massive fireball from the explosion that night engulfed the Musi-Café where a majority of those killed were incinerated, including three of his close friends.

"The three accused are victims of the system. The ones at the end of the line are always targeted," Richard Custeau told the *Journal de Montreal*, explaining his hopes that one day those higher up in the hierarchy of the rail industry will be punished. Custeau's brother Réal was killed at the Musi-Café.

"The MMA was a railroad bought

cheap by investors, in order to increase its profits and then sell it," Harding's lawyer Thomas Walsh explained to a crowded hallway full of reporters at the lunch break. "Today most of the same people are running its replacement. Only the name has changed. Profits are being made at the expense of safety. Transport Canada looked the other way."

Many in Lac-Mégantic consider Harding a hero. On the night of the disaster, he parked the train on the main line on a grade at the village of Nantes about 7 miles from Lac-Mégantic, left the lead engine running to power the locomotive air brakes, set hand brakes on seven tanker cars and took a taxi to a Lac-Mégantic hotel to get his night's rest, as he had done many times before. As he slept a small fire broke out on the lead engine due to cost-cutting inadequate maintenance by Montreal, Maine and Atlantic.

When local firefighters arrived to put out the flames, they shut down the locomotive and, unknowingly, the locomotive air brakes. Harding received a call about the fire and offered to go to the train to make sure everything was OK. He was told that it was all taken care of and to go back to sleep. A short time later the train began to roll to-

wards the city.

Awoken by the explosion, Harding rushed to the site, risking his life helping firefighters detach and move a number of unexploded tanker cars, preventing an even worse disaster.

Harding the main target

The prosecution said Harding's actions were criminally negligent, claiming he didn't set a sufficient number of hand brakes and didn't go to check the train after the fire.

"Harding didn't make the decision to park the train on a slope with the engine running. This was company policy," Walsh told reporters. "It's all about saving money at the expense of safety. This was a tragedy waiting to happen."

The *Toronto Globe and Mail* reported in a March 2016 exposé that if the backup automatic air brake system on the tanker cars had been used, the train would not have rolled at all. But Harding was forbidden by company policy from using the system because it would cost time — which means money — to replenish the system with air before the train could depart in the morning.

The trial is the rulers' way to make Harding take the fall for the disaster, instead of the rail bosses and the Canadian government.

"Tom Harding and the others should not be in court today," Chris Yeandel, a locomotive engineer and vice general chairman of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, Locomotive Engineers East, told the *Militant*. "Why aren't the MMA and Transport Canada officials on the stand? If Harding and the others are convicted, other rail workers will face criminal negligence charges for more tragedies caused by the profit-driven policies of the rail companies."

The trial is expected to last at least two months.

Messages in support of Harding and Labrie should be sent to USW Local 1976 / Section locale 1976, 2360 De Lasalle, Suite 202, Montreal, QC Canada H1V 2L1. Copies should be sent to Thomas Walsh, 165 Rue Wellington N., Suite 310, Sherbrooke, QC Canada J1H 5B9. E-mail: thomaspwalsh@hotmail.com.

Labour Party mayor in London puts 1,000s of Uber drivers out of work

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON — The agency regulating underground, bus and taxi travel here, Transport for London, announced Sept. 22 that "ride-hailing app" Uber's license to operate in the city would not be renewed at the end of September. Transport for London is chaired by Labour Party Mayor Sadiq Khan. The decision, which puts tens of thousands of Uber drivers' jobs at risk and deepens divisions between them and the city's "black-cab" drivers, was hailed as a victory for workers' rights by union officials and Labour Party leaders.

Since 2012 Uber has used substantially lower rates to break into the central London market, traditionally monopolized by London's 20,000 black cabs.

Facing a squeeze on their incomes, black-cab drivers have organized protests to oppose Uber's encroachment. This has pitted drivers employed by Uber, who are more often immigrants, against black-cab drivers, a greater proportion of whom are native-born workers. Uber drivers, organized by the General Municipal and Boilermakers union and other smaller unions, have staged their own protests demanding Uber improve wages and conditions.

Ashraf Ahmed, a driver who left Uber last year, explained that drivers face high costs for financing, insurance, licenses, fuel, maintenance and vehicle checks. After weekly expenses, "you may earn £300 [\$396] for 60 hours. That's not acceptable," he said.

Union officials in the GMB and the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union, which represent black-cab

drivers, have appealed to government authorities to ban Uber rather than organizing drivers in a common fight. A GMB-initiated petition which gathered over 100,000 signatures, called on Transport for London "not to renew the license unless Uber guarantees safe working practices and basic employment rights." Black-cab driver Paul

Continued on page 9

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



October 23, 1992

MONTREAL — A fight by 450 flight attendants for a new collective agreement at Nationair, Canada's largest charter airline, is continuing following company owner Robert Obadia's rejection of a mediator's proposed truce, which sends the workers back to work without a contract.

The flight attendants, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Montreal and Toronto, have been locked out since November 1991. They earn an average annual salary of \$15,600, and have been seeking to negotiate better wages and working conditions. The workers have organized protest marches and spoken to scores of union gatherings.

The most recent rally on October 5 drew as many as 150 union members and supporters to a protest in front of the Nationair ticket counter at Dorval Airport in Montreal.



October 23, 1967

The murder of Major Ernesto "Che" Guevara by the Bolivian military dictatorship is a grievous blow to the world struggle for socialism. But the struggle will continue and it will inevitably triumph. That was Che's deepest conviction and history will affirm him.

History will surely judge him one of the world's great revolutionary figures. It will record his magnificent contributions to the victory and shaping of the Cuban Revolution and his dramatic departure to carry on the struggle in Bolivia. But it will say even more. Che's greatness lay in the totality of his revolutionary consciousness. He was a thinker and a man of action. For Che the thought and the deed were inseparable.

His capacities sprang from his conviction that mankind could not lead a decent life until imperialism and capitalism were rooted out of this planet.



October 24, 1942

FLINT, Mich. — Auto workers of Chevrolet Plant 3, most militant union group in Flint General Motors plants, took another big step forward last week in winning production jobs and 15 cent hourly increases for all Negro janitors.

The decisive factor in this victory was militant action mapped out by the Negroes organized in the United Auto Workers, CIO, in support of the union negotiators. The recently organized Flint branch of the March-on-Washington Movement was centered mainly in that plant and its action actually forced the management to capitulate to the union demands.

The group arranged for a mass march on the main office, with all the Negro supporters they could muster in the city. This same group held mass meetings of as many as 200 and 300 Negroes from this area, and Chevrolet management knew of its influence and power.

‘Cuban Revolution will never yield sovereignty, principles’

Díaz-Canel: ‘Che says you can’t trust imperialism’

BY MAGGIE TROWE

SANTA CLARA, Cuba — “The example of Che grows and multiplies in our people, who will never betray and will always defend our revolution,” Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party and first vice president of the Council of State and Ministers, told 60,000 people gathered here Oct. 8 to mark the 50th anniversary of the fall of Cuban revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara in combat in Bolivia.

“Faithful to the legacy of Che and Fidel, we reaffirm that Cuba will grant no concessions to its sovereignty and independence and will not negotiate its principles,” he said. “The changes necessary in Cuba are decided by the Cuban people themselves!”

A sizable contingent of international guests joined Cuban workers, farmers and youth, including more than 200 participants in the “In the Footsteps of Che” International Brigade.

Díaz-Canel said the slander by Washington that Cuba used “sonic” attacks to damage the health of U.S. Embassy personnel in Havana — and Washington’s unprovoked decision to tell the Cuban government to cut its embassy staff in the U.S. by 15 — were aimed at discrediting Cuba and cutting travel there. He quoted Che Guevara, saying, “We can’t trust imperialism one bit, not one iota!”

“When it was clear Hurricane Irma would slam Yaguajay, we had already created a group of students ready to help,” Luis Ernesto Cabellos, president of the Federation of University Students at Las Villas Central University, told the brigadistas Oct. 7. “We went door to door explaining the need to evacuate. We witnessed the solidarity among the Cuban people — in some neighborhoods people with sturdier houses invited others to stay with them. It is a revolutionary principle that no one is abandoned. After the storm we helped



Cuba’s *Granma* features photo of members of U.S. contingent of ‘In Footsteps of Che’ brigade in Cuba. More than 200 brigade members from around world joined 60,000-strong Oct. 8 action commemorating 50th anniversary of death of Che Guevara in combat in Bolivia.

clean houses and neighborhoods, cleared trees and helped bring belongings home.”

Brigadistas spent a morning weeding in an “organoponic” public garden in Sancti Spiritus, helping workers there prepare for planting, which was delayed by the hurricane. “We learned to produce our own food and other necessities we had previously imported” when Cubans

had to respond to the sudden end of aid and favorable trade as the Soviet Union collapsed, Raúl Cardosa Cabrera, Sancti Spiritus delegate of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, told us. The vegetable garden was set up as part of that response. “The garden’s produce goes to the local hospital, schools and child care centers, and some is sold to local residents.”

US gov’t uses pretext of ‘mystery illness’ to attack Cuba

BY SETH GALINSKY

Using the pretext of mysterious illnesses Washington alleges were inflicted on U.S. diplomats in Havana, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced Sept. 29 he was slashing the U.S. Embassy staff there by more than half. Four days later he ordered the expulsion of 15 Cuban officials from the Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C.

While admitting Washington has no evidence that Cuba had anything to do with any reported medical conditions, Tillerson claimed the decision was made “due to Cuba’s failure to take appropriate steps to protect our diplomats.”

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez responded to the U.S. action and slanders the same day. “Cuba has never perpetrated nor will it perpetrate attacks of any kind against diplomatic officials nor their families, without exception,” he said. “Nor has it permitted nor will it permit its territories to be used by third parties for this purpose.”

Regardless of the depth of the political differences between the workers and farmers of revolutionary Cuba and the propertied capitalist rulers in the U.S., and the brutal economic war Washington wages against the Cuban people, the Cuban government has always fought for normal diplomatic relations between the two countries. Washington broke off such relations in 1961 and only began



AIN/Marcelino Vázquez
Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez.

steps to re-establish them in 2015.

Tillerson has said the U.S. government will “continue to maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba and will continue to cooperate with Cuba.” But with the U.S. Embassy down to just “emergency personnel,” the State Department announced it had ceased honoring a 1994 agreement with Havana to grant visas to some 20,000 Cubans a year who want to emigrate to the United States.

The U.S. government claims that the first “incident” took place last November and the most recent one in August this year. In its first reports on the alleged attacks, the State Department said that one of the “victims” had a serious blood disorder. As late as Sept. 22 it said some had “concussions.” But by Sept. 29 the only symptoms the department listed were “ear complaints, hearing loss, dizziness, headache, fatigue, cognitive issues, and difficulty sleeping,” reported by 21 embassy personnel.

A covert weapon ‘that doesn’t exist’

The *New York Times* Aug. 11, in the first public report of the State Department allegations, wrote — with not a shred of evidence — that the illnesses “appeared to be caused by some kind of sonic wave machine.”

The Verge, a webzine dedicated to examining “how technology will change life in the future,” decided to look into the charge. After State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said that no “piece of equipment” that might be causing the symptoms had been discovered, the Verge pointed out Sept. 16, “That could be because a weapon that covertly uses sound energy to injure people, doesn’t actually exist.”

Noting that the Cuban government would have no reason to attack U.S. diplomats, the *Washington Post* came up with its own theories of who could be behind such attacks, from a “rogue faction” in Cuba to North Korea. “Perhaps Moscow is trying to drive a wedge between communist Cuba and the West?”

it asked. “Or, most unsatisfying: Maybe it’s no one at all.”

Whatever the reason, the U.S. government and the media that promote its foreign policy is using the allegations as an excuse to step up attacks against the Cuban Revolution.

Twisting reality on its head

Lack of evidence didn’t stop the *Post* from running an editorial titled, “Cuba Plays Dumb in Attacks on American Diplomats.” Twisting reality on its head, the *Post* editors state that “it begs disbelief that Cuba does not know what is going on. . . . If Cuba sincerely wants better relations with the United States, it could start by revealing who did this.”

At a State Department “background briefing” Oct. 3, the *Post*’s Carol Morello asked if they had ruled out the view of some physicians that the symptoms could reflect “some degree of psychosomatic mass hysteria going on.”

The answer? “The symptoms that we’ve previously described are occurring.”

“So if you don’t know what caused it, who did it, and the symptoms are different among victims,” asked CNN reporter Michelle Kosinski, “why are you calling it an attack?”

“There’s no other conclusion that we could draw,” answered the State Department official.

Despite the bizarre nature of the charges, the Cuban government has patiently and repeatedly offered to cooperate “seriously, expertly and immediately.” For the first time in more than 50 years, it allowed the FBI to come to Havana and conduct investigations. It has implemented extra measures to protect U.S. Embassy personnel and their families.

U.S. officials have refused to cooperate. They wouldn’t allow Cuban investigators to visit residences where most of the incidents allegedly occurred.

And the State Department has not allowed Cuban doctors to examine any of

the alleged victims or even talk directly to the doctors who treated them, Rodríguez said.

Unlike the alleged illnesses of U.S. diplomats in Havana, there is nothing mysterious about the long history of U.S. attacks on Cuba’s workers and farmers ever since they overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship in 1959. From the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to assassination attempts on Fidel Castro to the ongoing U.S. economic war against Cuba and occupation of Guantánamo, Washington has never given up hope that it can overthrow the Cuban Revolution.

Nonetheless, Cuban workers and farmers continue to favor “a respectful road based on sovereign equality to deal with our differences and to coexist in a civilized manner to the benefit of both peoples and countries,” Rodríguez said.

Example of Cuban Revolution for workers

To Speak the Truth: Why Washington’s ‘Cold War’ Against Cuba Doesn’t End

Fidel Castro, Che Guevara
In speeches before UN bodies, Castro and Guevara address the peoples of the world, explaining why Washington fears the example of the socialist revolution and why its effort to destroy it will fail.

Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground

Armando Hart Also in Spanish

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

Jack Barnes

Also in Spanish, French, Farsi

Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution

Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, Yolanda Ferrer

Also in Spanish, Greek

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US colonial rule in Puerto Rico

Continued from front page
tance from working people in Puerto Rico from the very beginning.

To meet the needs of the U.S. market, the propertied rulers boosted sugar production, developing large capitalist plantations and pushing small farmers off the land.

A series of strikes by workers in sugar, tobacco, garment, trucking and on the docks, culminated in major walkouts by sugar workers in 1934. Around that time U.S. capitalists owned some 50 percent of the sugar plantations and 85 percent of coffee plantations. The sugar workers asked Pedro Albizu Campos, leader of the Nationalist Party and well-known fighter for independence from colonial rule, to represent them and they pushed the sugar bosses back.

By the 1950s and ‘60s shifts in world sugar production pushed Puerto Rican industry into decline. The U.S. rulers responded by taking advantage of low wages to profit by industrializing Puerto Rico through a program known as Operation Bootstrap, which gave long-term tax breaks to U.S. bosses who opened up shop there.

U.S. companies set up dozens of factories, from pharmaceutical to tuna processing, attracted by the cheap labor and tax incentives. Since Hurricane Maria battered Puerto Rico, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned about drug shortages on the mainland, since some 10 percent of all medicine taken there is still manufactured on the island.

The capitalist industrialization decimated agriculture. In 1938 some 65 percent of the food consumed in Puerto Rico was produced there. Today the island imports some 85 percent of its food, mostly from the U.S.

The 1920 Jones Act, which requires that all cargo shipped to the island from U.S. ports be carried on U.S.-owned ships, increased shipping costs, and the profits of U.S. companies at the expense of workers and farmers in Puerto Rico.

From 1996 to 2005, as falling profit rates led U.S. capitalists to cut investment in production, Washington phased

out many tax breaks, accelerating the impact of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis on the island.

Bonds: deeper colonial plunder

As factories closed, throwing thousands of workers to the curb, capitalists saw another way to profit off the people of Puerto Rico — debt. From 1996 to 2015 various Puerto Rican government bodies more than quadrupled the “sale” of bonds. Hedge funds and other coupon clippers poured billions of dollars into high-interest speculative bets, hoping for inflated returns. Bonds sold by the colonial regime were not to invest in infrastructure or other projects benefiting working people, but often to pay off the interest and principal on previous bonds coming due.

The colonial government and PREPA — the Puerto Rican power utility — were buried in debt.

As the capitalist crisis and the debt load increased, the colonial regime slashed social services, decreased pensions for government workers, increased sales taxes and laid off tens of thousands of public workers. The workforce at the government-owned electric utility was slashed nearly in half, undercutting even routine maintenance of antiquated equipment. Even with these drastic measures the government couldn’t keep up with its debt payments.

Last year then President Barack Obama appointed a fiscal board with extraordinary powers to control the finances of Puerto Rico in an attempt to ensure payment on the debt. The board ordered Gov. Ricardo Roselló to make even deeper cuts.

When hurricanes Irma and Maria hit, the colonial debt stood at \$74 billion, the island’s infrastructure was falling apart,



Jack Delano
1940s sugar workers’ strike in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico. “Strike for higher wages. Workers need everybody’s cooperation,” says sign. Puerto Ricans have fought U.S. colonial rule for 120 years.

and unemployment was double that on the mainland.

Even before the hurricanes, the labor force participation rate — the percentage of workers who are employed or classified as “actively” looking for work — stood at just 40 percent, compared to 63.1 percent in the U.S. Per capita income was half that of Mississippi, the poorest of the 50 states. More than 1,000 people were leaving for the U.S. every week, where they become part of the U.S. working class and its struggles.

When President Donald Trump visited the island Oct. 3, he said the bondholders should “say goodbye” to hopes of getting paid. But then the White House backtracked, saying it would stay out of the fiscal board’s handling of the debt.

Resistance to colonial rule

The 1959 Cuban Revolution gave a boost to those fighting for an end to

colonial rule in Puerto Rico. Like it did to Albizu Campos — who was jailed several times for his opposition to U.S. colonial rule — Washington and the colonial regime clamped down on the growing independence movement. He was one of the tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans targeted by FBI spies and disrupters.

The FBI and colonial police framed up and jailed independence fighters like Rafael Cancel Miranda and Oscar López. They executed independence fighters in cold blood, like former political prisoner Filiberto Ojeda Ríos in 2005.

Looking at this history, it’s easy to see why Cancel Miranda says, “The hurricanes caused a lot of damage, but not as much as colonialism has.”

But in the 120 years the U.S. rulers have run roughshod over Puerto Rico, they have never been able to stamp out the resistance to colonial rule.

Anti-imperialist youth festival kicks off in Sochi, Russia

BY BECCA WILLIAMSON

LOS ANGELES — Some 20,000 young people from 150 countries worldwide are preparing to attend the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi, Russia, Oct. 14-22.

The festival will feature dozens of sessions such as “100th anniversary of the great October socialist revolution,” “Friendship of the peoples and the struggle against fascism, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia,” “Against the development and use of nuclear weapons,” and “The struggle against women’s inequality,” where delegates can debate how to build the fight against imperialist exploitation and oppression.

The festival comes on the heels of the “In the Footsteps of Che” brigade, where volunteers from the U.S. and elsewhere are spending two weeks in Cuba learning about the revolution.

“We are going to the festival to bring attention to U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico and our history of struggle and resistance. We want to win more international support,” Angélica Acosta, head of the festival’s National Preparatory Committee in Puerto Rico, told the *Militant*. In addition to her party, the Frente Socialista, Acosta said the Independence Party, the Socialist Workers Movement and the National Hostosiano Independence Movement are all members of the committee.

“Oscar López will speak at the anti-

imperialist tribunal,” Acosta added. López spent 35 years in U.S. prisons framed up for his support for the fight against U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Maria “interrupted our fundraisers and final preparations for the festival,” Acosta said. “Some compañeros lost the roof of their homes. The damage was reinforced by Puerto Rico’s colonial status.”

From the United States more than 50 delegates from the Young Socialists, Communist Party, League of Young Communists and Students and Youth for a New America are going, along with a number of people who signed up through Russian cultural centers. The Russian hosts are planning cultural and sports events for participants.

“We will be explaining why we are organizing to build a mass working-class movement to make a socialist revolution in the U.S., like they did in Cuba,” said Jacob Perasso, one of the co-chairs of the U.S. delegation and a leader of the Young Socialists. “As we knock on workers’ doors across the country, we find real anger at the economic and social crisis the bosses and their government are putting on our backs, and wide interest in a revolutionary perspective.

“It’s the polar opposite of the view many delegates get about the working class from the capitalist media, which paints workers as reactionary and rac-

ist,” he said.

Organized under the banner “For peace, solidarity and social justice, we struggle against imperialism — Honoring our past, we build the future!” the festival is dedicated to Ernesto Che Guevara, Mohamed Abdelaziz and Fidel Castro. Abdelaziz, who died last year, was a central leader of the Polisario Front fighting for independence of Western Sahara.

“Since Puerto Rico lives under the colonial rule of Washington, we identify with the struggle led by Abdelaziz,” said Acosta.

Joan Cabo Mijares, a leader of Cuba’s Union of Young Communists (UJC), told Prensa Latina that their delegation will be one of the largest, with some 290 members. The UJC will be a central part of the anti-imperialist tribunal, speaking out against the more than 55 years the U.S. government has tried to overturn the Cuban Revolution.

Young people from the U.S. have been setting up meetings to report back on their experiences at the festival, on the Che brigade to Cuba, and what they learn about the struggles workers and youth they met are engaged in.

At a Nov. 9 meeting at the United Food and Commercial Workers union hall in Huntington Park, participants will expand solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and other struggles within the U.S. and around the world.

‘Cuba’s revolution acts with the will of the entire people’

The excerpt below is taken from Che Guevara Talks to Young People, one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for October. It’s from his remarks to 900 delegates at the July 28, 1960, opening session of the First Latin American Youth Congress held in Havana, a year and a half after Cuba’s workers and farmers took political power.

Argentine-born Guevara was a central leader of the revolutionary struggle in Cuba. After the victory on Jan. 1, 1959, he carried a number of responsibilities in the new revolutionary government and frequently

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

represented Cuba internationally, including at the United Nations. In 1966 Guevara went to Bolivia where he helped lead forces seeking to build a revolutionary movement to overturn the military dictatorship there and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. Copyright © 2000 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

We would also like to greet two of the delegations representing the countries that have perhaps suffered the most in the Americas. First of

all, Puerto Rico, [applause] which even today, 150 years after freedom was proclaimed for the first time in the Americas, continues fighting to take the first — and perhaps most difficult — step of achieving, at least formally, a free government. And I would like the delegates of Puerto Rico to convey my greetings, and those of all Cuba, to Pedro Albizu Campos. [Applause] We would like you to convey to Pedro Albizu Campos our deep-felt respect, our recognition of the example he has shown with his valor, and our fraternal feelings as free men toward a man who is free, despite being in the dungeons of the so called U.S. democracy. [Shouts of “Get rid of it!”]

Although it may seem paradoxical, I would also like to greet today the delegation representing the purest of the North American people. [Ovation] I would like to salute them not only because the North American people are not to blame for the barbarity and injustice of their rulers, but also because they are innocent victims of the rage of all the peoples of the world, who sometimes confuse a social system with a people.

I therefore extend my personal greetings to the distinguished individuals I’ve named, and to the delegations of the fraternal peoples I’ve named. All of Cuba, myself included, open our arms to receive you and to show you what is good here and what is bad, what has been achieved and what has yet to be achieved, the road traveled and the road ahead. Because even though all of you come to deliberate at this Latin American Youth Congress on behalf of your respec-



Oswaldo Salas

Che Guevara addresses opening session of First Latin American Youth Congress in Havana, July 1960. He gave special attention to welcoming delegations from Puerto Rico and North America.

tive countries, I’m sure each one of you came here full of curiosity to find out exactly what is this phenomenon born on a Caribbean island that is called the Cuban Revolution. ...

That is one of our greatest strengths: the strength being exerted throughout the world — regardless of partisan differences in any country — to defend the Cuban Revolution at any given moment. And permit me to say this is a duty of the youth of Latin America. Because what we have here in Cuba is something new, and it’s something worth studying. I do not want to tell you what is good here; you will have to assess that yourselves.

There are many bad things, I know. There is much disorganization, I know. If you have been to the Sierra Maestra, then you already know this. We still use guerrilla methods, I know. We lack technicians in fabulous quantities commensurate to our

aspirations, I know. Our army has still not reached the necessary degree of maturity nor have the militia members achieved sufficient coordination to constitute themselves as an army, I know.

But what I also know — and what I want all of you to know — is that this revolution has always acted with the will of the entire people of Cuba. Every peasant and every worker, if they handle a rifle poorly, are working to handle it better every day, to defend *their* revolution. And if right now they can’t understand the complicated workings of a machine whose technician fled to the United States, then they are studying every day to learn it, so *their* factory runs better. And the peasants will study *their* tractor, to fix its mechanical problems, so the fields of *their* cooperative yield more.

All Cubans, from both city and countryside, sharing the same sentiments, are marching toward the future, totally united in their thinking, led by a leader in whom they have absolute confidence, because he has shown in a thousand battles [applause] and on a thousand different occasions his capacity for sacrifice, and the power and foresight of his thought.

The nation before you today might disappear from the face of the earth because an atomic conflict may be unleashed on its account, and we might be the first target. Even if this entire island were to disappear along with its inhabitants, its people would consider themselves completely satisfied and fulfilled if each of you, upon returning to your countries, would say:

“Here we are. Our words come from the humid air of the Cuban forests. We have climbed the Sierra Maestra and seen the dawn, and our minds and our hands are filled with the seeds of that dawn. We are prepared to plant them in this land, and defend them so they can grow.”

From all the brother countries of the Americas, and from our own land — if it should still remain standing as an example — from that moment on and forever, the voice of the peoples will answer: “Thus it shall be: Let freedom triumph in every corner of the Americas!” [Ovation]

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Cuban Revolution shows road forward

Continued from front page

Just look at the conduct of the U.S. rulers and their junior “partners” in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico. More than 100 years of colonial rule has left millions without electricity, medical care in shambles and tens of thousands who can afford it trying to flee.

On an island frequently struck by hurricanes, the lack of preparation for hurricanes Irma and Maria was criminal. After the storms, containers of basic necessities stacked up in the port for days — undistributed — while thousands of people had nothing to eat or drink. And the people of Puerto Rico are still saddled with an utterly unpayable debt to the capitalist bondholders.

The same disregard for working humanity, turns natural disasters in country after country into social catastrophes, including in the U.S., where tens of thousands in Florida and Texas still have no home to return to. But not in Cuba.

That’s because the Cuban Revolution brought the working class to power.

In Cuba, working people, organized by their government, were prepared for the storm. Those most in harms way were evacuated. Shelters had food, water,

beds, doctors. Reconstruction began the second the storm ended. No one was left on their own.

“We share what we have, not what’s left over,” Cuban revolutionaries like to say. Hundreds of thousands of Cuban internationalist fighters defended Angolan sovereignty and defeated the invasions of South African apartheid in the 1970s and ’80s. Che Guevara and other Cuban fighters gave their lives as they fought to win political power for working people in Bolivia and throughout the southern cone of Latin America. Thousands of Cuban health care workers are working across Venezuela in the face of Washington’s threats against the country’s sovereignty.

Their principled stand opposing nuclear weapons is a beacon the world over.

It is fitting that the World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi is dedicated in part to Cuban revolutionaries Che Guevara and Fidel Castro.

“What does the Cuban Revolution teach? That revolution is possible,” states the Second Declaration of Havana. Workers and youth appalled at the consequences of capitalism and imperialism are drawing the same conclusion today.

Rulers political crisis continues as parties splinter

Continued from front page

him from “the path to World War III.”

The Democrats are deeply divided between centrist “progressives,” like Hillary Clinton and Sen. Chuck Schumer, and the “revolution” army of Sen. Bernie Sanders. The former hope they can win congressional majorities for the Democrats in 2018, while Sanders’ supporters care more about reforming the party, even if it means losses in the short term.

And behind all these divisions is growing concern about the working class. Under the blows of the continuing crisis of capitalist production and trade, workers are fed up with “politics as usual” and looking for a way to force change. In 2016 many workers backed Trump, noting how different he was from his 16 Republican challengers and the Clintons. They were determined to “drain the swamp.”

The meritocratic layers trying to force Trump from office see the anger and determination to wring change amongst workers and recoil with fear. Unable to see the reality of the disaster these workers face, they see them instead as an increasingly racist, reactionary mob that must be controlled. The impact of their votes must be diluted.

The liberal Swedish Academy of Sciences gave the Nobel economics prize to Richard Thaler Oct. 9. Thaler co-wrote the 2008 book *Nudge*, which advocates anti-working-class “libertarian paternalism” to get workers to do things that are “good for them,” without workers having a say.

Similar political developments are occurring in a growing number of the world’s major imperialist countries, reflected in the Brexit vote and the recent votes against the long-established governing parties in France and Germany.

There is no end in sight to the carnage workers in the U.S. face. Real wages have declined for nearly 20 years. As a result many workers feel they’ll never be able to make what they had anticipated in the course

of their lifetimes.

Never-ending wars, declining life expectancy and rising deaths from drug overdoses are part of a broader social crisis that drives workers to look for alternatives.

Neither Trump, a real-estate mogul who governs in the interests of the propertied owners, nor any other capitalist politician has a way to turn around the conditions workers face.

Liberals, left push violence

The sustained fervor among liberals and the left to oust Trump has introduced a new and ongoing violence into politics.

In June, James Hodgkinson, a campaign volunteer for Sanders, attempted to assassinate as many Republican congressmen as he could at a congressional baseball practice in Virginia, severely wounding Rep. Steve Scalise. Many liberals argued it was Trump and his “extremism” that was responsible.

Following the killing of 59 people at a Las Vegas country and western music festival, by gunman Stephen Paddock Oct. 1, CBS executive Hayley Gftman-Gold said she was “unsympathetic” towards those slaughtered. She complained, “Country music fans are often Republican gun toters.” Echoing the disdain for those killed, the *Los Angeles Times* labeled country singers and fans as “violent.”

Alongside the vitriol directed at Trump supporters by the middle-class left, goes the drive to restrict free speech on campuses. Some students saying they represented the Black Lives Matter chapter at the College of William & Mary in Virginia shut down Claire Guthrie Gastañaga, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union in the state. They broke up a meeting, scheduled to discuss “Students and the First Amendment,” complaining the ACLU had defended the right of right-wingers to speak in Charlottesville.

Labour Party puts Uber drivers out of work

Continued from page 5

Walsh complained to the *New York Times* that recently arrived immigrants become taxi drivers. “They come here and push down our living standards,” he said “You have to say, ‘Stop.’”

Transport for London said concern about Uber’s background checks was one reason for its decision. Both unions welcomed its announcement. Uber will continue to operate while it appeals the ruling.

Uber driver James Farrar, chairperson of the Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain, told the *Times*, “This is a devastating blow for 30,000 Londoners who now face losing their job and being saddled with unmanageable vehicle-related debt.”

While saying he was “over the moon” that Uber was being taken on, driver Ashraf Ahmed criticized the grounds for the decision. “They keep stereotyping minicab drivers as criminals,” he said.

“Uber drivers face bad conditions. I see Uber, the company, as the enemy. We should work together as workers, but the employers pit us against each other,” Kazim Asutay, a black-cab driver in Manchester, told Communist League member Peter Clifford.

“I don’t agree with the decision,” Clifford responded. “Calling on authorities to regulate competition and putting thousands of workers onto the street is not a road to organizing all cabbies into the union to fight together.”

Union dues checkoff

Continued from front page
ing blow to organized labor.”

But the problem facing workers is that our unions — and us along with them — have been losing ground for decades. The central reason is not anti-union laws. It’s because top union officials have tied our unions to getting out the vote for (mostly) Democratic Party politicians, instead of mobilizing to organize workers and build a broad social movement in the interests of workers, the unemployed and the oppressed.

The union bureaucracy fosters the illusion that by being the foot soldiers for “friendly” politicians, our “friends” will get elected and take care of us.

How’s that been working out?

Over the last 43 years the number of unionized workers in manufacturing has declined nearly 80 percent, from 38.9 percent in 1973 to 8.8 percent in 2016.

Public workers union membership ros, going from 23 percent in 1973 to 34.4 percent last year. But this was based reliance on Democratic Party politicians passing laws that expand the number of government workers who have to pay dues.

Fighting the carnage

Today workers don’t have health care, we have health insurance with deductibles so high, it’s often like no insurance at all. Real wages are stagnant. Tens of millions who want to work can’t find full-time jobs that pay a living wage. Homelessness is on the rise. Retired union members have seen their pensions slashed to the bone when pension funds go bankrupt. It’s a growing carnage.

Many union officials say the turning point was in Wisconsin, where Gov. Scott Walker, elected in 2010, pushed through anti-union Act 10, which both ended mandatory dues checkoff and restricted public workers unions from bargaining over pensions, health insurance, anything beyond wages.

Union officials blame the law — and the Republicans — for the loss of 70 percent of AFSCME’s membership in two districts.

They say the answer for workers is to put more time and money into getting out the vote for Democratic Party politicians. Their protests at the Capitol in Madison, saying the answer was to kick Walker out of office, disoriented workers. The officials campaigned to recall Walker, or stop his reelection. They failed.

A dead end for workers

When the unions were expanding in the 1930s, workers used a qualitatively different approach. They won members — and the dues needed to maintain a small staff — by fighting for gains against the bosses and their backers in both capitalist parties. They backed other fights — workers, farmers, the unemployed, youth, Blacks and immigrant workers.

Teamsters Local 574, led by members of the Socialist Workers Party and other militants, dealt with these questions in Minneapolis. Local 574 relied on the education, mobilization and democratic participation of its members to win thousands to the union.

In his book *Teamster Power*, former Local 574 and SWP leader Farrell Dobbs pointed out that “whether an elected officer or an apprentice organizer, all on the union staff got the same pay.” And we’re not talking about the corporate executive level salaries that union tops get today.

For the union bureaucrats, Dobbs said, a closed shop — compulsory union membership and dues payments — was a “liberating instrument” because it enabled them to “more or less freely ignore or go against the wishes of the rank and file.” Whatever they did, the dues money was flowing into the union treasury.

Rank-and-file Local 574 members had “a healthy resentment against freeloaders,” who didn’t pay dues, Dobbs said, but received the benefits of union gains.

SWP members and 574 officers called on workers to break with the two bosses’ parties and build their own party to advance workers’ struggles and to fight for the working class to take political power.

After the union defeated the employers in a militant strike, the Local 574 staff and rank and file would regularly organize to comb the city talking to workers on loading docks, shipping rooms and warehouses to collect back dues and sign up new members.

And, if they won dues checkoff, they continued to fight exactly the same way.

That’s the kind of unions we need to fight for today.