

## Defying privatization schemes

# Puerto Ricans fight to reopen schools

By Berta Joubert-Ceci  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Nov. 13 — Never before in the history of Puerto Rico has the barbarism of colonialism been as exposed as it is now after Hurricane Maria.

When President Barack Obama signed the PROMESA Law that the U.S. Congress drafted in June 2016 to charge the Puerto Rican people an illegitimate debt of \$74 billion, he never could have imagined that the conditions of the archipelago would end in the enormous chaos in which Puerto Rico now finds herself, as conditions in the country are ripe for the implementation of criminal neoliberal actions. It's as if the colony has been served on a silver platter to the empire, to be conveniently disposed of without further ado.

What are these conditions?

Puerto Rico is a country almost totally paralyzed. In a macro vision and in economic terms, it can be said that production is almost zero. Without electricity and depending on costly diesel-based generators, very few of its manufacturing industries — above all pharmaceuticals and those making specialized electronic components — have recovered some normalcy.

Underscoring the reality of the colonial state is the fact that these are large foreign companies that send their profits to the owners outside of Puerto Rico. As good capitalists, they have no interest in the welfare of the people. The persistent fear of the servile Puerto Rican rulers, however, is that these corporations will leave the island, taking with them the country's artificial manufacturing base.

This fear is further aggravated by a recent U.S. congressional proposal to impose a 20 percent tax on merchandise produced by U.S. companies based in Puerto Rico. If approved, it will be a one-way ticket for these manufacturers.

The vast majority of small Puerto Rican businesses have had to close temporarily, if not permanently, as they are unable to afford the enormous economic burden of generating their own electricity. The owner of a small ice factory — a commodity in high demand now — recently reported on a radio program that the company would soon have to go bankrupt because he cannot afford to continue paying \$1,000 a day for diesel fuel.

### Solidarity brigade from MO-WWP

This writer recently visited Puerto Rico as part of a  
*Continued on page 8*

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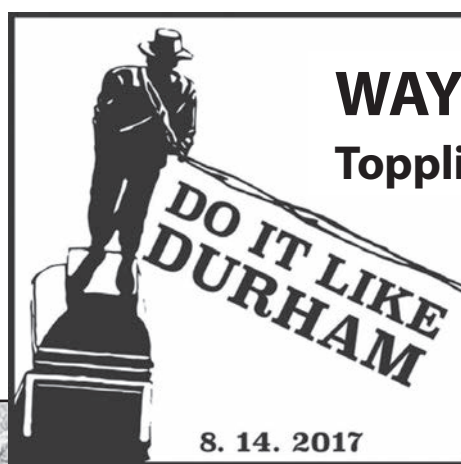
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### WAY TO GO, DURHAM!

Toppling racist icons 3



### CHE BRIGADE & CUBA

Gives solidarity, takes inspiration 6

Manila, the Philippines



### ASIA-PACIFIC SAYS NO TO TRUMP

10

PHOTO: GABRIELA

### 1917 BOLSHEVIKS: the power of the people 9

Editorial: #MeToo and the bosses 10

### SAUDI ARABIA 11

### CATALONIA 11





# Day of Mourning – Take the bus!

By Kathy Durkin

The 48th National Day of Mourning will take place on Thursday, Nov. 23, the so-called “Thanksgiving” holiday, in Plymouth, Mass. Participants will gather at noon on Cole’s Hill above Plymouth Rock and march through the town’s historic district. A speak-out, where Native people tell of their history and today’s struggles of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, will be followed by a potluck social.

United American Indians of New England says, “We will show up in solidarity with Indigenous struggles throughout the world, and especially our relations in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean and Mexico suffering from hurricane and earthquake devastation compounded by colonialism.” (UAINE.org)

There will be a special message from 73-year-old Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier.



## 48th NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING Thursday, November 23, 2017 @ 12 Noon Cole’s Hill, Plymouth, Mass. *Hill above Plymouth Rock*



For more information/orientation: **United American Indians of New England**  
✉ info@uaine.org    🌐 Facebook.com/events/187901245087869

Unite with us in our struggle to create a true awareness of Native peoples and demonstrate the unity of Indigenous peoples internationally.

Help shatter the untrue glass image of the Pilgrims and the unjust system based on racism, sexism, homophobia and the profit-driven destruction of the Earth.

We will show up in solidarity with Indigenous struggles throughout the world, and especially our relations in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and Mexico suffering from hurricane and earthquake devastation compounded by colonialism.



Special message  
from Leonard Peltier



Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigenerational organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, joblessness and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

## Join us in the fight for socialism!

Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black and Brown youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. ☐

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## WORKERS WORLD *this week*

★ In the U.S.	
Day of Mourning – Take the bus! .....	2
Labor support and a win for Durham freedom fighters ...	3
Attack on immigrants aimed at all workers .....	3
Maryland: Workers win fight for \$15 .....	3
NFL in crisis over brain and other injuries .....	4
On the picket line .....	4
Philly elects progressive DA .....	5
‘Stop criminalization of dissent!’ .....	5
Left groups commemorate Bolshevik Revolution .....	9
★ Around the world	
Puerto Ricans fight to reopen schools .....	1
Diary: International Brigade visits Cuba .....	6
‘My experience with health care in Cuba’ .....	7
Eyewitness Puerto Rico: Lacking electricity .....	7
USSR, internationalism and global revolution Part 2 .....	9
V.I. Lenin’s ‘Letter to American Workers’ .....	9
Protests in Asia say ‘No U.S. war!’ .....	10
Saudi moves threaten wider war .....	11
Catalonia: 750,000 demand Madrid ‘free the prisoners’ .....	11
★ Editorial	
#MeToo and the bosses. ....	10
★ Noticias en Español	
Radiografía parcial pos María de Puerto Rico. ....	12

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# Labor support and a win for Durham freedom fighters

*Breaking news from Durham: On Nov. 14, Durham District Attorney Roger Echols decided not to pursue any felony charges against #DefendDurham defendants for toppling a Confederate statue on Aug. 14. Our movement is powerful. After dozens of unions and community organizations spoke out, hundreds of phone calls, thousands of emails flood-*

*ing the DA, we have overcome. We still have to beat back the misdemeanor charges. Onwards now to the People's Tribunal! If you would like to testify about crimes of white supremacy, or want to be involved with the Commission of Inquiry, please direct message Workers World Party Durham Branch on Facebook. #SmashWhiteSupremacy*



By Minnie Bruce Pratt

In one step toward victory in the fight against white supremacy in North Carolina, the Durham County district attorney dropped all felony and misdemeanor charges on Nov. 9 against three people present when Durham freedom fighters toppled a Confederate statue on Aug. 14.

Six of the people charged in connection with the statue takedown were to appear in court in Durham on Nov. 14. They face very serious penalties, including “misdemeanor damage to real property” and “felony inciting a riot to cause property damage in excess of \$1,500,” which carries a potential sentence of 2 to 3½ years in prison.

Defend Durham, a community organization that has rallied around those who brought down the statue, issued a Nov. 9 statement on the dropping of charges against the three defendants. In part, the organization said: “We must remember that we cannot trust the system to change that which it upholds. This was merely representative of a lack of evidence, not an acquiescence of power. ... We must continue to fight until the remaining [people charged] walk free, until no Confederate statues remain, until all institutions of white supremacy have been abolished.”

One of the defendants, Loan Tran, a member of Workers World Party, declared in a Nov. 12 Facebook post: “We won [the recent acquittals] because we

organize and because we didn’t do anything wrong! Myself and 11 others are still facing ridiculous charges — among them two felony riot charges. ... Let’s keep flooding the streets and the phone lines. Let’s indict this system for its true crimes — the countless evictions and cession of Black and Brown neighborhoods to developers; the unending murders of our people in the streets, in the jails, at the workplace, in detention centers; the total and unapologetic protection this system offers to the statues that literally enshrine and uphold white supremacy.”

Electrical Workers (UE) Local 150, North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, issued a rousing “Labor Call to Action” in support of the freedom fighters.

The local asks people to call Durham County District Attorney Roger Echols at 919-808-3010 and North Carolina state Senate President Phil Berger at 919-733-5708 on Nov. 14, the activists’ day in court. Callers are continuing to demand that all charges be dropped against all the activists as well as urging repeal of a recent state law passed to protect Confederate monuments by forbidding “removal of historical monuments.”

The UE call “to oppose white supremacy” reads in part: “The Durham action was another powerful expression of people’s anger and disgust with how the system uses its power to remind Black, Brown and oppressed people of their ‘place’ and ongoing oppression and exploitation.” □

# Attack on immigrants aimed at all workers

By G. Dunkel

In its usual cruel fashion, the Trump administration made it obvious in the first week of November that it intends to end the Temporary Protective Status program.

TPS allows refugees from countries where there have been natural disasters like hurricanes or earthquakes, or political violence like a civil war, to live and work legally in the United States. It is granted by the secretary of Homeland Security on advice from the secretary of State.

Most of those who have been recipients of TPS come from El Salvador (195,000), Honduras (57,000) or Haiti (50,000). (Journal on Migration and Human Security, July 2017) Close to 90 percent are now workers in metropolitan areas on the East and West Coasts. They are estimated to have nearly 275,000 children,

who were born here and are U.S. citizens. About a third are buying a house. The average length of time they have been living in the U.S. is 19 years. (Center for American Progress, Oct. 10)

The Trump administration proclaims very loudly that it was elected to end TPS. These bigots single out the people of color in the TPS program, proclaiming they are the reason wages are low and jobs are scarce — instead of admitting that this is how a capitalist economy works when it can get away with exploiting workers to the utmost because of their precarious status.

A number of economists say that the presence of workers protected by TPS actually benefits the economies of the areas where they are concentrated. In addition, the money they send to family back home amounts to 15 percent of the gross national product of the three countries that

account for the majority of TPS recipients. (Pew Research Center, 2015)

But in the Trump scheme of things, inflaming white supremacy and inciting racism are worth even minor economic damage.

When Elaine Duke, the acting secretary of Homeland Security, decided she didn’t have enough information about Honduras and so extended TPS for Hondurans another six months, John Kelly, the retired general who is Trump’s chief of staff, called her long-distance from Asia to tell her to reconsider. She refused and said she will retire when a permanent secretary is confirmed.

The TPS decision for Haitians will come in late January and for Salvadorans in early March.

A number of Haitians who had moved to Brazil for jobs connected to the Olympics and the World Cup games tried to

get into the U.S. on TPS. They wound up going to Canada when they couldn’t enter the U.S. There are significant Haitian communities in Montreal and Quebec City.

Through August a large number of Haitians crossed from the U.S. into Canada and applied for asylum. Had they attempted a legal crossing, Canada would be required to send them back under existing treaties with Washington. But an “illegal” crossing lets them apply for asylum.

The Canadian government is preparing for a major influx of refugees from the U.S., especially if TPS protection is withdrawn from 195,000 Salvadorans in March. The Canadian system for hearing asylum requests is seriously backlogged, but people with a pending asylum claim can get work before their case is heard. (Globe and Mail, Nov. 7) □

## Maryland

# Workers win fight for \$15

By Kermit Leibensperger  
Rockville, Md.

Nov. 7 — Chants of “¡Sí, se puede!” and “Yes, we can!” rang out loudly here today in Montgomery County Council chambers and throughout the halls. Cadenced applause accompanied the chants as an overflow crowd of workers packed the auditorium to witness the fruition of years of struggle.

The council unanimously voted to pass a \$15-an-hour wage bill. County Executive Isiah Leggett is scheduled to sign the bill into law on Nov. 13. He had vetoed a bill in January that provided for a faster rise to the \$15 hourly rate, a bill opposed by business owners.

The law that just passed mandates that larger employers — those with 51 workers or more — will pay the \$15

hourly wage by July 1, 2021. Bosses who employ 11 to 50 workers will have until July 1, 2023, to pay the rate, and those with 10 employees or less will have another year to reach it. This legislation includes an annual increase in the minimum wage based on the Consumer Price Index, beginning on July 1, 2022. The federal minimum wage law, which has been frozen at \$7.25 since 2009, has never before included an automatic cost-of-living provision.

A joyous, raucous rally followed the win in the council. There, minimum-wage earners told of their struggles to survive. Solidarity statements were made by supporters from CASA de Maryland, an immigrant rights group, as well as Service Employees Local 32BJ and Food and Commercial Workers Local 400. Speakers called on the activists to



VICTORY! Montgomery County Council passes \$15 minimum wage.

go “On to Annapolis [the state capital] to pass \$15/hour statewide!”

Joining the rally were individuals and members of organizations that have come out consistently to similar rallies and hearings for years. The supportive groups included Jews United for Justice, Working Families and Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994.

This victory was the result of much struggle in one of the richest counties in the U.S. by workers, unions and their supporters against the resistance of retailers and restaurant and other business owners. It shows that even in the age of Trump, gains can be won.

*Leibensperger is a steward with Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994.*



# Players’ lives first!

## NFL in crisis over brain and other injuries

By Monica Moorehead

When autopsy findings were released Nov. 9, the cause of death of 27-year-old Aaron Hernandez, a National Football League player with the New England Patriots, confirmed an earlier September diagnosis. The multitalented Puerto Rican tight end was found hanging in his cell earlier this year while serving a life sentence for a 2013 murder conviction.

Medical examiners discovered that Hernandez had suffered from stage 3 chronic traumatic encephalopathy, more commonly known as CTE. Stage 4 is the most acute stage of this degenerative brain disease caused by constant trauma.

CTE has developed into a deepening crisis for players exposed to the violent physical game of football, especially helmet-to-helmet direct hits to the head or hitting their heads after being tackled on the playing field. The result of these ongoing hits is concussion. These hits are happening at such a rapid rate that established protocols for early diagnoses of concussions are being ignored.

Boston University neuropathologist Dr. Ann McKee, along with her team, have examined more than 100 brains of deceased former NFL players, including Hernandez’s. She stated, “This is the first case that we’ve seen that kind of damage in such a young individual.” She said Hernandez’s brain resembled someone typically 20 years older with the same disease. (CNN, Nov. 10)

CTE can severely impair areas of the brain that help control judgment, emotions and memory. These symptoms most resemble dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. While Hernandez only played for two years in the NFL, he also played high school and college football.

Since CTE can only be diagnosed posthumously, a number of notable NFL players — such as Junior Seau, 43, who spent most of his celebrated career as a linebacker with the San Diego Chargers, and former Chicago Bears safety Dave Duerson, 50 — tragically committed suicide

and left evidence that it was in order to donate their brains to CTE research.

### Brain injuries can start early

Up until 2016, the NFL hierarchy denied or downplayed the impact of head trauma on players in an attempt to not be responsible for providing health care to former players suffering from this incurable disease. But the NFL was ultimately forced to provide upwards of \$5 million for each of these players’ health care — small potatoes for the multibillion-dollar league.

CTE not only affects professional football players. In August, a study by the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that an alarming and growing number of high school and college players are showing signs of CTE. The disease was found in the brains of three out of 14 high school players (21 percent) and 48 out of 53 college players (91 percent).

These startling numbers indicate that this kind of head trauma can begin as early as elementary school, when many young boys start playing football. There is a growing chorus of critics who are characterizing the violent nature of football as child abuse and calling for its total abolition.

### Alarming number of NFL injuries

Along with the devastating potential of more CTE cases is the avalanche of season-ending injuries halfway through the 2017 NFL season. It is already a well-known fact that the NFL has the shortest playing span — an average of three to four years — out of the four major professional sports (the other three are baseball, basketball and hockey).

Injuries are nothing new in the NFL, but there has been much more public attention directed to them due to injuries to high-profile players like Aaron Rodgers, DeShaun Watson, Richard Sherman and J.J. Watts, to name a few.

Normally, teams play on Sunday for five months, with each team getting only a two-week break. But there are also

games on Thursday and Monday nights during the regular season. Sometimes teams play on a Sunday and four days later on Thursday.

This is hardly enough time to allow a starting player’s body to “recover” from hard tackling and traumatic hits between games, and it also makes players even more vulnerable to injuries. During a Thursday night game on Nov. 9, six players from the former Super Bowl champion Seattle Seahawks team were injured, including Sherman, an all-pro defensive player who ruptured his Achilles tendon.

A growing number of players are demanding that Thursday football games be eliminated altogether. Sherman’s teammate, Doug Baldwin, stated: “Thursday Night Football should be illegal. This shit should be illegal. It is not OK. It’s not OK. You can quote me on that.” (sbnation.com, Nov. 10)

### Put players before profits!

Life-threatening and season-ending injuries to players are not a top priority to billionaire and multimillionaire owners. Along with the NFL hierarchy, starting with NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, their main goal is lucrative TV revenue profits.

In 2016, 32 NFL teams split an estimated \$7.8 billion from this revenue, which also includes leaguewide sponsorships, licensing and merchandise sales. This is an increase of 10 percent compared to 2015, according to Bloomberg News.

Putting aside the multi-million-dollar contracts of a handful of players, the average annual salary of an NFL player is less than \$2 million. The last thing the owners want to do is pay for health care for the players, who they view as expendable gladiators — especially if they retire with debilitating injuries.

Goodell, on the other hand, is seeking an extension of his own contract from the owners until 2024: a salary increase from \$30 million to \$49.5 million, the use of a private jet for life and lifetime health insurance for his family. □

# On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

## ‘Sweeping victory’ for Iowa public unions

Public unions in Iowa, forced by a new anti-union law to hold recertification elections Oct. 10-24, won an overwhelming 93 percent victory. Of 33,252 eligible voters, 28,448 voted to retain their unions, with only 624 ballots in opposition. Of 468 elections statewide, unions won 436 and lost only 32, announced the Iowa Public Employee Relations Board on Nov. 8.

Eric Larew, past president of the Pleasant Valley Education Association, told the Quad City Times that the high margin of victory was “probably” in reaction to undemocratic rules. Instead of requiring a majority of those voting, all those not voting were counted as “no” votes. Calling it a “sweeping victory,” Danny Homan, president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 61, said it confirmed that even non-union members “value their voice in the workplace.”

The law was approved in February by former Gov. Terry Branstad and the Republican-led legislature. It severely limits the number of issues public workers, except most public safety employees, can negotiate and stipulates the new recertification rules in the final months of contracts. Union officials have protested the law, asserting it was rigged against unions, and are challenging it in court. (qctimes, Nov. 9)

## Victory against outsourcing at UTenn

Workers at the University of Tennessee just won a significant victory. The United Campus Workers, an affiliate of the Communications Workers union, defeated a \$300 million outsourcing scheme that would have ripped 1,700 custodial, repair and maintenance jobs from the community.

The deal was a flop from the start. A student-organized comparison of the current contract and the proposed contract discovered costly overruns in the latter. CWA’s path to victory was uniting labor, community and business allies with students, staff and faculty, and educating lawmakers about the flawed proposal.

Though other recent union drives in the South have been defeated, Payday Report notes: The UCW win is “a sharp rebuttal to those who say it’s impossible to win victories in the anti-union South. ... [P]ublic sector unions ... can continue winning victories by building community alliances and mobilizing their members to put pressure on lawmakers.” (Nov. 1)

## Unionizing workers at imperialist Santander Bank

A heroic union drive at Santander Bank, led by the Communications Workers, is gaining steam. CWA is trying to unionize tellers, bankers and call center staffers in the U.S. arm of Spain’s global giant, Banco Santander. This is a vital struggle, not only because of its impact on the workers’ livelihoods, but also because it could shed light on the bank’s dirty deeds in Puerto Rico.

Santander’s no ordinary bank. Here in the U.S., Santander Consumer USA has spent years since the Great Recession buying up debts and now controls a third of that market. But the bank faces a series of regulatory actions after failing to comply with national consumer protection laws. (Boston Globe, March 28)

In Puerto Rico, former head of Santander PR Carlos Garcia became head of the Puerto Rico Government Development Bank in 2009. There he misappropriated enough funds to send the bank into insolvency! This only exacerbated the island’s massive \$74 billion debt. Now Garcia heads PROMESA, the fiscal board overseeing the privatization and pillage of Puerto Rico. (For an expose of Santander and Garcia’s crimes, see WW article, “Santander Bank owes reparations to the Puerto Rican people” by Berta Joubert-Ceci, March 28, tinyurl.com/ycxxonsg/)

With Puerto Rico continuing to suffer from federal mismanagement and racism after the hurricanes, unionizing the workers at Santander USA would be a small step toward justice in the island nation.

## Kroger workers in Ohio, W. Va., Ky. ratify contract

Kroger grocery workers in 39 stores in West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new contract on Nov. 6. The contract for 4,200 members of Food and Commercial Workers Local 400, which takes effect immediately and runs through Aug. 29, 2020, provides raises while maintaining health care and retirement benefits.

“These days, it is extremely rare to ratify a contract without losing a single benefit,” said Local 400 President Mark Federici. “I cannot overstate how much the support of Kroger customers and the rest of the community made a difference in these negotiations.” Allen Nuckels, a clerk from Oak Hill, W.V., added: “I lost count of how many times someone saw us at a rally and stopped to ask me, ‘Are you guys on strike? Because I won’t cross a picket line!’” (dclabor.org, Nov. 7) □



## WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

Articles from Workers World/Mundo Obrero Newspaper  
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## Capitalism at a Dead End

Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era  
El Capitalismo en un Callejón sin Salida

For other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to  
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Available at major online bookstores.



# Philly elects progressive DA

## Community activists vow to hold his feet to the fire

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

By a 3-to-1 margin, Larry Krasner, one of Philadelphia's most progressive defense attorneys, was elected district attorney on Nov. 7. He defeated Republican nominee Beth Grossman after she was endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP).

Unlike Grossman, a career prosecutor, Krasner never served in the DA's office. In fact, Krasner has sued the Philadelphia Police Department 75 times. He gained his reputation, and his broad community support, by serving as a legal champion of social justice activists.

Krasner has provided counsel and pro bono support to hundreds of activists arrested at AIDS protests, Occupy Philadelphia and Black Lives Matter actions. In 2001, Krasner was one of the progressive lawyers who defended 400 demonstrators arrested en masse at the Republican National Convention. He has successfully defended victims of police brutality as well as demonstrators opposing police brutality.

By way of contrast, Grossman, with over two decades in a department that has become synonymous with corruption, gained notoriety handling civil asset forfeitures, a policy that let the DA's office seize cash and other property from people even if they had never been convicted of a crime. This questionable practice has come under considerable fire.

Nonetheless, the Philadelphia ruling class's major media mouthpiece, the Philadelphia Inquirer, chose to endorse Grossman. That was a surprising move, going against their long-standing tradition of endorsing Democratic candidates in a city where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans 7 to 1.

Many other upset victories occurred across the U.S. in this off-year election in which Democrats defeated Republican candidates. Krasner, however, while running as the Democratic Party nominee, was hardly that party's first choice. In this year's primary elections, Krasner gained ballot access after easily defeating six other Democratic Party contenders, many with prosecutorial credentials. He had an 18-point lead over his closest rival.

That primary victory took place in the midst of one of the biggest scandals in the history of the Philadelphia DA's office. Former DA Seth Williams, convicted on a number of corruption charges, was forced to resign and in October was sentenced to five years in prison.

Krasner campaigned on a platform that included working to end mass incarceration, stopping cash bail imprisonment, decriminalizing addiction, stopping pursuit of death sentences, ending illegal stop-and-frisk, and halting civil asset forfeiture abuse.

### Holding his feet to the fire

He spoke out against the Trump administration's attacks on immigrants and also promised to stand up to police misconduct.

While Krasner's election victory was significant, more important than his campaign promises is the potential of the movement behind his successful challenge to FOP opposition. Many participants in this effort were themselves former prisoners, drawn in by Krasner's stand against mass incarceration.

Two days after Krasner's electoral victory, the 20-group Philly Coalition for a Just DA held a demonstration and press conference outside the DA's office to present their vision of transformative policies for the first 100 days after Krasner assumes office in January.

According to their press release, the coalition "includes people directly impacted by mass incarceration; groups working on prison abolition, survivor's rights, immigrant rights and civil rights." (Their detailed platform is at [phillydaforthepeople.org/#facts](http://phillydaforthepeople.org/#facts).)

Erika Almiron, executive director of the immigrant rights group Juntos and a coalition member, stated that Larry Krasner's victory "shows that the citizens of Philadelphia choose to stand on the side of justice and are hungry for a massive revamping of our criminal justice system from one that actively punishes our community's mere existence to one that centers on family reunification and the decriminalization of Black, Brown and undocumented bodies."

Huge questions remain about Krasner's ability to fulfill his supporters' demands. One of his campaign platform promises was to "review past convictions" and to "free wrongfully convicted" prisoners. But how far will that go?

The MOVE 9 were unlawfully convicted in 1978 for defending their organization against police attacks. Political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was wrongfully convicted in 1982 for the "crime" of speaking out against rampant police brutality under the Frank Rizzo regime. Their supporters plan to seek DA Krasner's review of these cases.

It remains to be seen if they can gain

an audience. Abu-Jamal currently has an active legal appeal against the Philadelphia DA's office, seeking the release of documents related to former DA Ron Castille's involvement in his conviction.

### No good cops in a racist system

While groups that supported Krasner are speaking out in support of his platform, police in Philadelphia have been using social media to attack, threaten and denigrate him. One video post, which appears to have been made inside a police facility, showed a close-up of a notoriously violent officer prank-calling and threatening the law firm where Krasner works, which had no connection with his election campaign.

The organized racist police opposition during the election and their ongoing attacks on Krasner and the social justice platform he campaigned on demonstrate why an electoral victory by itself is not enough. It will take more than one progressive lawyer to fundamentally change

the nature of the office of the Philadelphia DA, which is part and parcel of the oppressive capitalist state apparatus.

Krasner has stated that he can work with "good officers of the PPD," who, he believes, are "the overwhelming majority." This is in strong contrast to Black activists who call for abolition of the police. One slogan of the anti-police brutality organization REAL Justice is "No good cops in a racist system."

It took a collective, mass people's movement to win this election for Krasner. It will take a continued movement, led by the most oppressed communities, to push forward the reforms they need. These communities are fighting against an establishment that wields formidable powers. Winning these reforms will certainly prove more difficult than the election itself.

It will require a united peoples' movement pushing back against the establishment, including the FOP, to fulfill the promise of this campaign. □

## 'Stop criminalization of dissent!'



Protest hits mass arrests and heavy charges during Trump inauguration. WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Nearly 100 people, complete with a giant Trump puppet, marched and rallied outside the Philadelphia Art Museum on Nov. 11 in support of the Philly J20 Solidarity team. Their goal was to raise public awareness about the mass arrests of more than 200 anti-Trump protesters in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 20 during counter-inaugural actions and to bolster support for defendants still facing trials later this year.

Along with the huge caricature of Trump, other puppets included a fully helmeted D.C. cop and a symbolic elderly woman protester, used in a skit during the demonstration. On reaching the Art Museum plaza, protesters were immediately confronted by police, who attempted to limit their access to a space 10 feet from the curb. The broad plaza extends over 100 feet to steps leading up to the museum.

Up Against the Law Collective members immediately challenged the protest

area limit, and within minutes they produced evidence to back up their claim that the plaza was fully open to the public. As a result, dozens of yellow-jacketed bicycle cops were forced to retreat to the outer edges of the plaza.

The outlandish charges faced by people arrested for demonstrating during Trump's inauguration mark a new level of political repression and could set a disturbing precedent for how dissent will be handled in the future. During the arrests, the police took away the arrestees' cell phones. They subsequently raided homes and seized social media data.

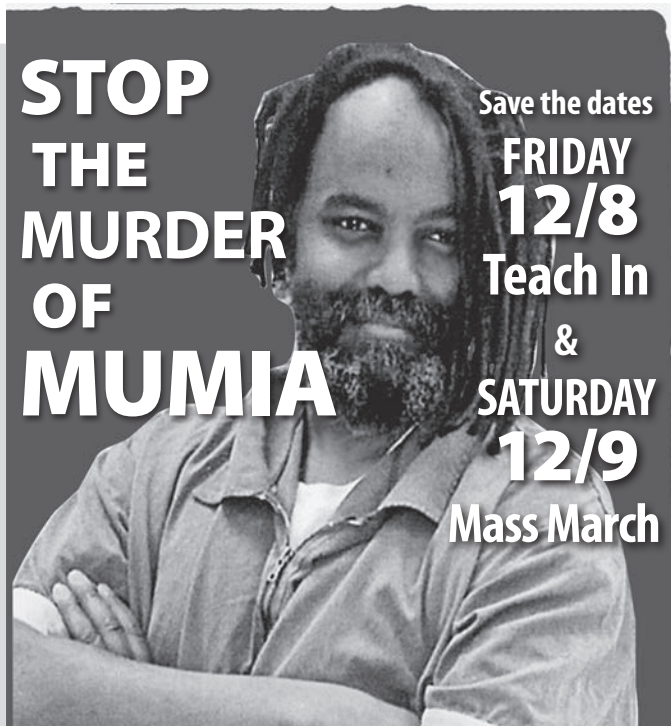
Many of those arrested face eight felony charges, with potential sentences of up to 75 years. Indictments in April added additional charges, including inciting to riot, conspiracy to riot and five charges of individualized property damage.

Rally organizers noted that the U.S. Attorney's Office is setting a repressive precedent for political expression under the Trump administration. They urged anyone who values dissent to stand in solidarity with the defendants in this case. □

**DEC 9  
11 am  
Gather at  
Frank Rizzo  
Statue at  
at Philly  
Municipal  
Services Bldg.  
1401 JFK Blvd.**

For information  
and tickets on  
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Bus to Philly  
email:  
[infomumia@gmail.com](mailto:infomumia@gmail.com)

**STOP  
THE  
MURDER  
OF  
MUMIA**



Save the dates

**FRIDAY  
12/8  
Teach In  
&  
SATURDAY  
12/9  
Mass March**

**A Voice from Harper's Ferry** Written by Osborne P. Anderson, a Black revolutionary who was there. Includes essays by Mumia Abu-Jamal, Monica Moorehead and Vince Copeland on the 'Unfinished Revolution.'

Read it at [www.workers.org/ebooks/AVoiceFromHarpersFerry.pdf](http://www.workers.org/ebooks/AVoiceFromHarpersFerry.pdf) Available at online.



# INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE VISITS CUBA

## Diary of the first week ‘IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHE’

By Addison Gaddis

In defiance of the Trump administration’s “travel advisory,” a group of 19 Workers World Party comrades from around the U.S. embarked Oct. 1-15 on a two-week journey to our socialist neighbor, Cuba. Some of us had been there before, but many hadn’t. We went as part of an international brigade sponsored by ICAP, the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, which promotes international solidarity.

“In the Footsteps of Che International Brigade” commemorated the 50-year anniversary of Che Guevara’s death in Bolivia. In addition to our party’s delegation, it included dozens of representatives from other political tendencies in the U.S. and people from 25 countries in the Americas, Africa and Europe. The 226 guests, all there in solidarity with Cuba, were the recipients of the Cuban people’s gracious hospitality. What follows is a brief rundown of the first week of experiences “in the footsteps of Che.”

### Arrival in Cuba, Oct. 1

Comrades arrived sleepless and bleary-eyed at the Julio Antonio Mella International Camp (CIJAM), an ICAP-run camp outside Havana that hosts solidarity brigades. After we were greeted by murals of revolutionary heroes Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and Camilo Cienfuegos, we ate a cafeteria-style dinner of rice and meat. After socializing with comrades from other parts of the U.S. in the cool night air on the main plaza, everyone got a good night’s sleep in communal camp-style bunk beds.

### Oct. 2-3

Comrades heard from a panel of people who knew Che personally and politically. Their anecdotes described his wit, intelligence and political acumen. It was striking to be reminded that Che exists in living memory.

We then traveled to the province of Pinar Del Rio and visited the Cave of los Portales, where Che ran a command center during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

### Oct. 4

We got our first taste of voluntary work, an important aspect of international solidarity brigades. In the spirit of Che, we pulled weeds, macheted undergrowth, hauled rocks, harvested rice and performed other helpful tasks around the CIJAM camp. That afternoon, we traveled to the Morro-Cabaña fortress complex built by Spanish colonizers but later taken over by the revolutionaries.

In the evening we were welcomed at the Casa de Amistad, or House of Friendship, a repurposed colonial mansion. After dinner and drinks, we were treated to a cultural presentation by talented Cuban singers. There was something delightfully revolutionary about our beautiful surroundings. These old-money trappings had been fitted with socialist decorations, such as vases



DRAWING: HANNAH JEREMIAH

Sketch of Cubans who knew Che personally. Meeting took place at the Julio Antonio Mella International Camp (CIJAM).

displaying pictures of Lenin and Fidel. The Casa de Amistad is across the street from the embassy of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The DPRK’s flag flew proudly near the merriment that night.

### Oct. 5

After a late night, the brigade was up at 3 a.m. to begin a long trip out to the provinces. We were headed to Sancti Spiritus, with a stop first in Santa Clara. Our caravan of six buses hit the road at 4 a.m. Comrades were solemn and respectful at the Santa Clara memorial and the mausoleum that holds Che’s remains, as well as those of his compañeros who were martyred alongside him in Bolivia.

The mausoleum was freezing cold and silent, in contrast to the heat outside. Jungle plants flanked the gravesites, simulating the Bolivian jungle where Che and his comrades perished. An attached museum features rare photographs of Che and artifacts from his life. A bronze statue of Che stands over a large plaza, where we would gather three days later for the official commemoration of his death.

A quick visit followed to a memorial of the rebels’ heroic derailing of former dictator Fulgencio Batista’s train in Villa Clara. We then attended a charming reception by local authorities and schoolchildren from Sancti Spiritus, a historic town about an hour from Santa Clara.

### Oct. 6

The brigade traveled to the municipality of Yaguahay in the province of Sancti Spiritus. There a memorial honors Camilo Cienfuegos, a hero of the Cuban revolutionary war. He is honored with a museum and an eternal flame, as well as a memorial dedicated to his favorite horse. Young people at the nearby Camilo Cienfuegos military school provide a round-the-clock guard for the eternal flame. The guard changes every 15 minutes to dramatic organ music.

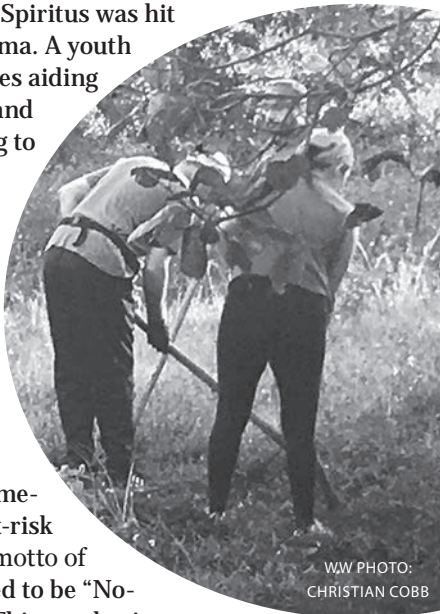
That afternoon, at the University of Sancti Spiritus, we received an in-depth talk from the Civil Defense that keeps Cuba safe in times of trouble — whether war or natural disaster. Sancti Spiritus was hit heavily by Hurricane Irma. A youth described his experiences aiding heavily affected towns and villages. It was inspiring to hear how people whose houses survived the wind and water hosted those whose homes were more vulnerable.

Before the hurricane even started, civil defense and youth organizations went door-to-door to spread awareness, while mass media were used to alert at-risk regions. The unofficial motto of the Civil Defense seemed to be “No-body gets left behind.” This emphasis on “people first, property second” stands in stark contrast to hurricane and disaster management in the U.S.

That evening, we visited a local Committee for Defense of the Revolution. These community organizations serve individual neighborhoods. The one we visited organizes blood drives, health education and other community support. Some comrades imagined the CDR visit would be like the Civil Defense talk — a sit-down in a room, a political discussion, a Q&A. What actually happened was much better — a dance party in the streets!

### Oct. 7

After doing voluntary work at an organic urban farm in Sancti Spiritus, we explored the town. Brigadistas got Wi-Fi cards, went to the natural history museum, drank coffee, bought books and souvenirs, or just happily wandered and explored the historic town with its beautiful architecture. We went to bed early because the next day would be our earliest wake-up time yet — 2 a.m.

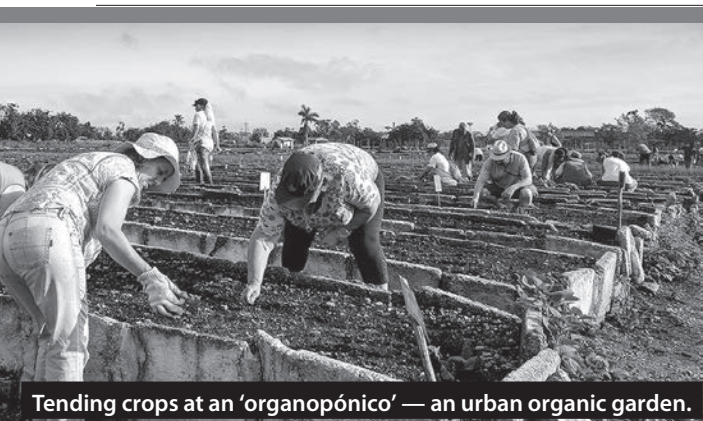


WW PHOTO: CHRISTIAN COBB



Members of WWP delegation to Cuba.





Tending crops at an ‘organopónico’ — an urban organic garden.

WW PHOTO: DAVID CARD

Oct. 8

Our bus rode through the countryside in the dark, quiet hours before dawn. We had to be in Santa Clara by 5 a.m. to get to the plaza by 6 for a ceremony that started at 7. This ceremony was the reason for our visit. The streets were filled with Cubans from miles around.

At 7:30, an entourage of family and state officials, including Raul Castro, many wearing olive green army drab, emerged from the mausoleum and took their seats at the front of the massive crowd. The sun rose high in the sky as the Cubans sang, performed music, danced and read poetry, all in honor of military and political leader Che Guevara.

Local children sang and read speeches. Military men and women laid a huge wreath in the shape of a red star at the base of Che’s statue. A speech by Cuba’s vice president met with roaring applause.

The atmosphere was solemn at times, but mostly it was celebratory. Thousands of people from Cuba and abroad had gathered, not to mourn but to celebrate this extraordinary man who, 50 years after his death, remains present in the hearts and minds of all who fight for freedom.

Hasta la victoria siempre! Long live the Cuban Revolution! Ernesto “Che” Guevara, presente!

# ‘My experience with health care in Cuba’

By Rafael E. Justo

On my second day visiting Cuba from the U.S. in October as a member of the “In the Footsteps of Che International Brigade,” I found myself suffering from a severe episode of back pain. I could not walk or put on my clothes, and I yelled out in excruciating pain. I also felt confused and worried about being in a foreign country with a different political system.



I started to think about my past experiences with back pain in the U.S., which include long waits to see a doctor in the Emergency Room and worrying about whether my insurance would approve treatment. I remembered facing discrimination in the U.S. as a person of color. I remembered being questioned whether I was an addict and being refused therapy or pain medication.

In Cuba the opposite situation occurred; I was treated with compassion and exemplary care. A security guard outside my room heard me yelling for help and immediately called for a doctor and nurse who both assisted me quickly. My stress was immediately eased as the doctor gently touched my shoulder and told me he would make me feel better, which calmed me in that moment.

The medical staff gently eased my suffering by giving me both a muscle relaxer and anti-inflammatory pill. I was then told to come back to the office in six hours, where I received a massage and an acupuncture treatment that continued to ease my suffering.

I was so appreciative and pleased by my experience that I was curious, so I asked one of the doctors why he chose to become a doctor. His response was that being a doctor in Cuba is not about economic gain but about the ability to help others in need. He said it was his calling in life, and his answer brought a huge smile to my face.

In Cuba, everyone has access to doctors, nurses, specialists and medications. There is a doctor-and-nurse team in every neighborhood in Cuba. If someone doesn’t like their neighborhood doctor, they can always choose another they are more comfortable with.

House calls are routine, in part because it’s the responsibility of the team to understand you and your health issues in the context of your family, home and neighborhood. This is key to the system that makes health care successful on the island. By catching diseases and health hazards early, the Cuban medical

system can spend more time on prevention rather than treatment. This prevents epidemics and diseases from spreading through the island population.

When a health hazard like dengue fever or malaria is identified, there is a coordinated, nationwide effort to respond. Cubans no longer suffer from diphtheria, rubella, polio or measles. They have the lowest AIDS rate in the Americas and the highest rate of treatment and control of hypertension.

For health issues beyond the capacity of the neighborhood doctor, polyclinics provide specialists, outpatient operations, physical therapy, rehabilitation and labs. Those who need inpatient treatment can go to hospitals. The neighborhood medical team helps make the transition go smoothly for the patient.

Doctors at all levels are trained to administer acupuncture, herbal cures or other complementary practices that Cuban practitioners have found to be effective. Cuban researchers develop their own vaccinations and treatments when medications aren’t available, due to the U.S. blockade, or when they don’t exist.

I was quite pleased with what I experienced with the health care system in Cuba and how effective and humane it was. I wish one day for this system to be replicated in the U.S. so others can experience it. □



WW PHOTO: MAGGIE VASCASSENNO

WWP brigadistas leave from Los Angeles International Airport.

## Eyewitness Puerto Rico

# Lacking electricity, people support each other

By Joe Piette

Nov. 12 — Access to electricity has been fundamental to modern life since the beginning of the 20th century, yet 75 percent of the people of Puerto Rico have had to live without electric power for over six weeks, after two hurricanes in succession.

First, Hurricane Irma struck on Sept. 7, knocking out electricity for 1 million residents. Then, on Sept. 20, Maria dealt a body blow to the island, ending electric power for all its residents.

As part of a Nov. 1- 7 Solidarity Brigade to Puerto Rico, four members of the Philadelphia branch of Workers World Party experienced what it means to be without electricity when they landed in San Juan, a modern seaside city with tall buildings, expressways and a beautiful, historic section. The majority of people and businesses there have no lights, except from candles, flashlights or noisy and expensive generators.

When it grew dark, the sound of generators in the neighborhood where we stayed made it hard to sleep, but it was hot and we had to keep the windows open anyway. Of course, no power meant no air conditioning.

Refrigerators and freezers couldn’t function, affecting what people could eat and drink. Without working traffic lights, drivers contend with perilous intersections. Restaurants and other businesses must close at dark, if they open at all, adding to Puerto Rico’s already high unemployment rate.

Without power for television or cell phones, communication is difficult. Many health and sanitation systems cannot function unless they have expensive generators. More than six weeks after the storms hit, many schools remain closed.

### People power plus solar power

Before our brigade left for Puerto Rico, we collected over 300 pounds of supplies. Besides medicines, batteries, flashlights and food items, our bags were stuffed with 18 solar kits costing \$69 each, donated by members of the Calvary Center for Culture and Community and other supporters. The solar-powered kits include two lights, plus a USB port capable of charging cell phones.

Many Puerto Rican community, union, youth, religious and other groups are volunteering their time and resources to deliver supplies and other assistance to neighborhoods and villages hit hard by the disaster.

We wanted the solar panels to go to people with the greatest need. Assuming that electricity will be restored in San Juan before isolated communities, we drove 65 miles to Utuado, located in the central mountainous region known as La Cordillera Central. The name of this Spanish colonial town, built in 1739, comes from the native Taíno word “otoao,” which means “between mountains.”

There, we hooked up with a religious group of about 30 energetic puertorriqueños/as who had accumulated a truckload of groceries and cases of water to distribute to area residents. With vehicles full of supplies and people, three of the Philadelphia brigadistas walked up the steep mountain roads alongside other participants.

After catching up to the vehicles at the top, we spent several hours slowly walking down the mountain, stopping at homes along the way to see what supplies were needed and if people required any medical aid from two nurses in our group.

Families with no electricity or generator were offered a solar kit. The first family we encountered included an older woman who had just moved in with her son. She pointed out her home, 100 feet downhill, which was wrecked during Hurricane Maria. She had spent two nights there before being finally rescued.

As we handed out solar kits to families, we noticed some homes had blue tarp roofs replacing permanent roofs destroyed by wind and rain. We gave a family with a leaky tarp a new one donated by people in Philadelphia.

The hurricanes were called a natural disaster, but the failure of the U.S. government to restore electricity to Puerto Rico is a human-made calamity. Many people, however, are organizing their own bottom-up relief efforts without any government involvement. That movement of person-to-person aid holds a promise of future political solidarity beyond sharing food, water and solar panels. □



# Puerto Ricans fight to reopen schools

Continued from page 1

solidarity brigade sent by Mundo Obrero/Workers World Party, along with comrades Cornelious Moody, Mike Wilson and Joe Piette. One afternoon we went for a walk through Old San Juan, a representative historic site on the island, with numerous business establishments, restaurants, café-theaters and shops.

Normally this area is full of both Boricuas — Puerto Ricans — and tourists. Now, on street after street there was a succession of padlocked doors. Some small shops were open in darkness; others had light, but it comes from bad smelling, noisy and polluting electric generators, as their owners try hard to survive this catastrophe. As I walked by, it was hard not to think about the lyrics of Rafael Hernández’s song, “Lamento Borincano,” about what will become of Borinquen.

There is now what could be called an “emergency economy.” A wave of contractors — real vultures — hover above the island in search of coveted Federal Emergency Management Agency dollars. Luxury hotels, whose owners are mostly from the United States, rake in super-profits housing FEMA personnel, troops and contractors. Obscene corruption spreads to all levels of government, in both Puerto Rico and the U.S.

The government of Gov. “Ricky” Roselló signs contracts left and right behind the people’s backs, taking advantage of the lack of communication due to the lack of cell phones and electricity, and with the people unable to follow the news on television or radio. He is supported by a series of executive orders, which can easily grant him the title of “dictator.” It’s ironic that “transparency” was the slogan in his race for governor.

In one of these contracts, blame is being thrown from one side to the other, between the Puerto Rican government and FEMA. It involves the much talked about Whitefish company. An unknown firm from Montana created just two years ago with only two employees, Whitefish made a \$300 million bid to restore the island’s immense electricity network — and got the job! It’s revealing that Ryan Zinke, Trump’s interior secretary, is from Montana, grew up in Whitefish, and although he denies his role in granting the contract, there is strong suspicion that he influenced the deal.

After enormous criticism at both the local and the international level, in which the government of Puerto Rico was depicted as the laughingstock of the world, Roselló ordered the contract canceled. Now an investigation is in the hands of the FBI and the U.S. Congress.

But the one with Whitefish is not the only predatory contract. Another, for \$200 million, was signed with Cobra Energy, a subsidiary of Mammoth Energy Services, based in Oklahoma.

Meanwhile, more than 50 days after Maria struck, more than 70 percent of the country is still without electricity.

**Harder hit in the mountains**

Traveling to the mountains in the center of the island, where the people suffered much more than in the low areas, we saw completely shattered houses and whole families, plus neighbors, living however they could in the only room where María had spared the roof. We saw how they drink contaminated water, witnessed their hunger and how dangerous the paths are they walk on; the flood carried away part of their lives.

We then went to the municipality of Ceiba. This is a vast region where the U.S. Navy once had its largest base, Roosevelt Roads. The base closed in 2004 after the Puerto Rican people struggled to drive the U.S. Navy off of Vieques island, which was part of that naval complex.

In Ceiba we saw huge white tents with air conditioning, similar to those that are rented for graduations and other mass events. They were the FEMA barracks in the region, with military personnel everywhere. They were surely for low-ranking soldiers, not the ones who stay in the luxury hotels. However, they enjoyed a roof and electricity, which no longer exist in hundreds of homes in the mountains, which are still waiting for the famous blue tarps from FEMA.

Meanwhile, in an unprecedented exodus, thousands of Puerto Ricans are heading to the U.S. They go in search of work, medical treatment and, above all, education for their daughters and sons.

In just four hours at the Luis Muñoz Marín airport in San Juan — a privatized airport in the hands of a Mexican company — I observed three flights to different cities: Atlanta, Orlando and Philadelphia. Each flight carried approximately 200 pas-



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Puerto Rican kids demand the reopening of their schools.

sengers — entire families, some even with their pets. And this was just one airline.

Six hundred people in four hours. Approximately 100,000 Boricuas are believed to have left in little more than a month. Whether temporarily or permanently, this exodus is another economic, political and cultural crisis.

There is much to talk about: the Fiscal Control Board and how it seeks to expand its powers on the island; who is truly governing in PR; the schemes for corruption; unemployment; and many more topics.

**Attack on education and fightback**

However, one aspect just cannot be ignored at this time. And it is education, the basis for the future of the country and one of the first causes of migration.

The subject of education also demonstrates the complexity of life in PR at this time.

Brigades of people go from site to site to clean up. Most of the clearing of the roads has been done by the people themselves within their communities and with organizations that have been set up to solve the immediate problems as best they can.

Teachers have also joined in this effort. However, teachers also find themselves in an open struggle organizing schools and communities to defend public education.

Privatization of education was part

of the neoliberal plan before Maria. The Boston Group had recommended the closing of 500 schools; 179 had already closed their doors before the hurricane. Education Secretary Julia Keleher, a North American born in Philadelphia whose salary is more than \$20,000 a month, was actually hired to privatize PR public education.

Her objective is to open charter schools. It is no accident that U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos — known for her privatizing efforts — visited Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in recent days.

After Hurricane Maria devastated the schools, parents and teachers joined together at the national level to clean up debris and try to restore the schools in their communities. Dozens of them were ready to begin receiving students. However, Secretary Keleher prohibited them from opening. She also prohibited the use of school cafeterias, which might have been the only source of nutrition for the students.

Faced with this scenario, the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico began a campaign to demand the opening of schools that were in suitable condition.

The schools earmarked to remain permanently closed are in the poorest parts of the country, both in the mountains and on the coast. Students will have no other school to go to nearby; closing them will deny education to the people.

Keleher and the privatizing entities, however, face a people determined to defend their education. Parents along with teachers organize meetings to discuss the steps needed to reopen their schools. To get the news media to report on their actions, they organize pickets early in the morning in front of schools demanding they open.

In Old San Juan, this writer participated in a picket in front of the Abraham Lincoln School. This school serves the students in the famous neighborhood of La Perla. The school looked in perfect condition and had been used as a community center to provide and coordinate aid during the days following the hurricane. That same day, while we were picketing in front of the school, we found out it was being used to prepare lunches so the governor’s spouse could give them out at other sites. However, the Department of Education and Secretary Keleher want to keep it closed and prevent the children of La Perla from getting an education.

Despite the secretary’s refusal to open dozens of schools, the mobilization of parents, teachers and the community in general is forcing the opening of more schools each day. □



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## Bolshevik Revolution, Part 2

# USSR, internationalism and global revolution

*The following is part 2 of a talk given by Mond Jones, a youth leader of the Detroit branch of Workers World Party, to a meeting commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, held in London, Ontario, Canada, on Nov. 4. The meeting was organized by the London chapter of the Young Communist League.*



Mond Jones

The Soviet Union had become a vanguard for the socialist bloc and inspired socialist revolution and national liberation movements throughout the global south. All over the world, oppressed people were taking up arms, expelling colonizers from their lands and loosening the yoke of capitalist exploitation.

The Soviet Union played a huge role in supporting the socialist revolutions in Cuba, the [Democratic People's Republic of Korea], Vietnam, China before the Sino-Soviet split, Angola and many other countries fighting for socialism and liberation from colonialism. The October Revolution showed that capitalism and imperialism can be defeated and provided a framework for how to go about organizing the revolution and the structuring of a society where capitalism had been crushed.

There is a reason why Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, Thomas Sankara, etc., all identified as Marxist-Leninists. Leninism again provided a workable framework that put the works of Marx and Engels into practice for the first time on such a large scale.

The 1900s were a time of global revolution for the global south, and Russia's material and military aid to the other countries in the socialist bloc showed the nature of their internationalism.

### Fall of USSR, counterrevolution and what we learned

But we also realize that no country is perfect, and although the USSR had many social and economic gains, it still had to make many concessions to bourgeois elements of society, which inevitably led to its demise. This was a product of the difficulties of trying to build socialism in a relatively backward country, magnified by the fact that the socialist revolution did not spread to other more developed capitalist countries as anticipated by Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders.

It's common sense that it takes people to build a society. There is a need for industrial workers, but also skilled tradespersons, as well as intellectuals and many other classes of people who would have aligned themselves closer with the capitalist bourgeoisie in opposition to the

workers and peasants.

Many of the most advanced workers in the society died fighting in the revolution, which meant that there was a vacuum of skilled workers needed to help rebuild society.

It was necessary for the Bolsheviks to build alliances with the peasantry, but the peasantry had a different set of values at the time than the industrial proletariat. The proletariat was focused on the socialization of society, whereas the peasants valued private property and the private ownership of their land. This alliance would obviously come with contradictions.

One of the biggest contradictions was how to keep the loyalty of the peasants who valued privatization over socialization in the process of socializing society.

The Bolsheviks issued the New Economic Plan in 1921, which opened up the markets again to stimulate food production which had dropped to a low after the attempted counterrevolution. Although more food was produced, it created a subclass of rich peasants, kulaks as they were called, while the majority of the peasantry remained poor.

After Lenin's death, the difficulties of how to move forward with collectivization of agriculture created problems and even pushback from many peasants. There was also the issue of having to rely on the old czarist administrative apparatus for organizing society, because they were skilled and able to play administrative roles. Using the old apparatus caused problems, because the old czarist officials used their positions in government as an opportunity to build privileges and hierarchies within the Communist Party.

Also, as a result of making arguably necessary concessions to officials from the old society, they brought with them the oppressive ideas from that society. After Lenin's death, women's rights and LGBTQ rights were set back as well.

We know that social systems don't change overnight, and we understand that, like a revolution, a counterrevolution is protracted and strategic. The material conditions of the Soviet Union,

the reopening of markets and bureaucratization over the course of decades were a factor in the counterrevolution. Of course, what was fundamental to the difficulties of building socialism was the unrelenting opposition and attack from the imperialist powers, from the 14 countries that invaded the USSR after the revolution, the loss of 20 million lives in repelling the Nazi invasion, to the Cold War and massive military build-up during the Reagan years.

However, with all the difficulties, we hail the gains of the Soviet Union. It provided for its people's basic needs, hous-

ing, jobs, education and a rich culture, like no capitalist country has ever been able to do. It built a backward capitalist country into a great socialist federation that stood as a counterweight to imperialist domination. And it provided a model for recognizing the right of oppressed nations, even creating a special Soviet of Nationalities, which stands in stark opposition to the white supremacy and national chauvinism of every capitalist country manifested to an unprecedented degree today in the era of Trump and capitalism at a dead end.

*To be continued.*

## Left groups commemorate Bolshevik Revolution

By G. Dunkel  
New York

About 250 people gathered in Manhattan on Nov. 7 to celebrate, commemorate and analyze the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. The meeting was held at the Center for Workers Education in Manhattan's financial district, steps away from where the bronze Wall Street bull proclaims the power of finance capital.

Speakers from a large number of left groups helped organize the event. There were written greetings from 14 nationalities and Skype messages from Russia, India and Ukraine. The event was live-streamed through Facebook.

While the speakers had their own views, common themes ran through the salutes to the Russian Revolution, including the need to struggle for unity and to respond to the national oppression of Black and Brown people.

A partial list of the organizations involved in the meeting included BAYAN, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, Workers World Party, Marxism Leninism Today, Harlem Coalition Against War, Party of Communists USA, Party for Socialism and Liberation, United National Antiwar Coalition, International Action Center, U.S. Friends of Soviet Peoples and the International League of Peoples Struggles.

Several nonaffiliated Marxist academ-

ics spoke and chaired, including Anthony Gronowicz and Manny Ness. Dr. Anthony Monteiro stressed the revolution's impact on the colonized world.

The meeting was opened by Kirbie Joseph, an organizer of the Justice for Akai Gurley campaign and struggles against police brutality.

Michela Martinazzi of Freedom Road Socialist Organization raised Lenin's contribution on national oppression and building a party.

Ray Laforest of the Haiti Solidarity Network connected events to the impact of the Haitian Revolution.

Brian Becker of Party for Socialism and Liberation described the impact of the loss of the USSR and the contradictions and limitations of imperialism.

Angelo D'Angelo of U.S. Friends of Soviet Peoples explained how as a teenager seeing a society without bosses, the Soviet Union affected his whole life.

Larry Holmes, first secretary of Workers World Party, described how the Russian Revolution lifted consciousness of the oppressed globally. He raised defending the most oppressed workers — precarious workers, prisoners, LGBTQ people — as part of the struggle for a higher level of unity, while keeping focused on socialist revolution as "our endgame."

Vijou Bryant provided a rousing revolutionary ending. The evening concluded with singing of "The International." □

## V.I. Lenin's 'Letter to American Workers'

By Mike Kuhlenbeck

Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin's "Letter to American Workers," written in 1917, stressed the role of the U.S. working class in the ongoing global struggle against oppression. It contains important lessons for workers on the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution.

The Bolsheviks established the first workers' state in Russia on Nov. 7, 1917, and pulled the country out of the imperialist slaughter of World War I. Surviving revolution, civil war and foreign invasion, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (later the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) ended Czarist rule in the Russian Empire — "the prison house of nations." It was under these conditions that Lenin's letter was written.

The story of the document's creation and publication is nearly as interesting

as the letter itself. There were rumblings of revolution in the U.S. even before its entrance into World War I, a global catastrophe accompanied by anti-labor violence and anti-union crackdowns on the home front.

The Shilka, a former Czarist naval vessel, arrived in Seattle harbor on Dec. 21, 1917. The ship had left Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution and the sailors were excited to hear about the victory of the Soviets. U.S. workers greeted their Russian comrades when the ship docked in Seattle.

American journalist Anna Louise Strong, in her 1935 memoir "I Change Worlds," reported the following: "The vessel left Russia under the rule of Kerensky; it arrived in our port in the era of Bolshevik rule. Somehow a soviet of workers had been elected on board the ship under which the captain functioned. This caused some consternation among

Seattle Port authorities."

The sailors were arrested and the ship raided by the police. They were freed after protests from the Industrial Workers of the World, the AFL-CIO and other allies of organized labor. The Shilka left on Jan. 8, 1918, carrying a letter co-written by lumberjack Roy Brown and other Seattle I.W.W. leaders. The document, describing the conditions confronting the U.S. working class, was hidden in a life-belt by Commissar Nikolai Kryukov.

The letter was addressed, "To Nicolai Lenin and the Representatives of the Bolshevik Government, and through them to the Workers of Russia." In this document, the Seattle workers declared "there is no such thing as freedom of press, freedom of speech in the U.S.," calling the democracy boasted by capitalists "a trap." They also expressed their solidarity with the workers of revolutionary Russia: "Your

struggle, in its essence, is our struggle. Your victory is our victory. And your defeat will be a blow to us."

Lenin finished drafting his response in August 1918. Addressing his "Comrades," Lenin recognized, "American revolutionary proletarians are destined now to play an especially important role as irreconcilable foes of American imperialism."

Lenin referred to the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War as "liberating wars of which there have been so few compared to the vast number of wars of conquest which, like the present imperialist war, were caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or capitalists over the division of usurped lands or ill-gotten gains."

One of those who demonstrated this kind of solidarity was the Socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs, who

*Continued on page 10*



WORKERS WORLD

editorial

#MeToo and the bosses

There are times when a few words speak volumes. “Me too” succinctly expresses the pain of millions of women and others who retweeted the hashtag or posted on Facebook, saying they too had experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace.

The #MeToo campaign was a reaction to the publicity around the criminal sexual abuse perpetrated by Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. Since that story broke, about 80 actors, models and other industry professionals have come out publicly with horror stories of molestation and even rape. Oscar winners have been among those exposing Weinstein’s 30+-year pattern of misogynistic conduct.

All of these abuse survivors demonstrated tremendous strength and courage.

The Weinstein story followed earlier revelations about Fox News executive Roger Ailes and right-wing commentator Bill O’Reilly, not to mention the bigot in chief’s unchecked bravado around vagina-grabbing. Now dozens of high-profile personalities in media, entertainment, commerce and politics (Democrats as well as Republicans) have been identified as purveyors of workplace sexual abuse.

Former Alabama Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore, who at one time adamantly displayed the Ten Commandments as “the law” in his court chambers, has been named by women who were underage teenagers when he allegedly assaulted them. Now a candidate for the Senate, he was a 30-something county district attorney at the time.

The ruling class, through its mass media and political mouthpieces, indoctrinates the masses with its class perspective. As Karl Marx explained, the dominant ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class. Today they’re from the owners of capital.

Despite all the gains of the women’s and LGBTQ liberation movements, the rich and powerful still view women, young men and nonbinary and trans people who work for them — even “big stars” — as property to be exploited economically and sexually. Sexual abuse pervades the entire news, publishing and entertainment industry under capitalism — an industry that perpetuates woman-hating, racist, xenophobic, anti-LGBTQ and anti-working class stereotypes for mass consumption.

So the experiences of well-paid professional women who felt relatively safe speaking out are not even the tip of the



PHOTO: MAGGIE VASCASSENNO

Tarana Burke (right), founder of #MeToo, with Rebecka Jackson, Workers World Party, at #MeToo March in Los Angeles. It was called by California for Progress coalition, cohosted by WWP, on Nov. 11.

iceberg. The vast majority of workplace sexual abuse survivors labor at menial jobs at subsistence wages. If, in a 24-hour timeframe, 12 million posted their “#MeToo” stories on social media, how many tens of millions who work in retail, food service, factory, health care, agricultural, domestic, public and other sectors are suffering in silence?

And how many LGBTQ workers are being doubly targeted by bigoted bosses?

Despite Anita Hill’s role in 1991 describing sexual harassment by current U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, women of color remain marginalized in public discourse on this injustice. Yet they have been dealt the harshest treatment, from abuses suffered during the theft of Indigenous lands and chattel slavery to present day immigration raids that render Latinas and other women of color vulnerable. Witness the 2011 sexual assault of African immigrant hotel housekeeper Nafissatou Diallo by former International Monetary Fund President Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

But isn’t any kind of sexual harassment illegal now? Since 1986, sexual harassment has been legally recognized as a specific form of sex discrimination under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Yet the state and federal agencies charged with enforcing the law have not made even a dent in the problem. Why?

For millennia privileged men have circumvented whatever protections might exist — and until three decades ago there were no legal ones for working class and oppressed people. Today’s workplace sexual abuse and assault is yet one more vile way for bosses to attempt to intimidate, divide and control workers who are just trying to survive in a cold, hostile, unjust capitalist world.

The prevalence of workplace sexual violence is another reminder of the irreconcilable antagonism between labor and capital. Putting an end to all systems of exploitation will finally enable humanity to rid itself of the entrenched patriarchy that only serves the interest of the bosses. □



Protests in Asia

say ‘No U.S. war!’

By John Catalinotto

With the Pentagon poised to sail three massive aircraft carriers toward north Korea and the U.S. president blow-hard-ing deals in Asian-Pacific capitals, mass demonstrations protested his presence from Manila to Seoul.

On Nov. 11 and 12, thousands of demonstrators marched toward the meeting place of the Association of South East Asian Nations conference in Manila, where Donald Trump was representing the world’s most destructive imperialist power.

Demonstrators burned U.S. flags and an effigy of the U.S. president shaped like a Nazi swastika, meant to symbolise fascism, war and plunder. Large contingents held banners reading “Dump Trump”



Manila, Philippines

and demanding the U.S. get out of its military bases. Filipino police turned a water cannon on protesters.

Demonstrators in south Korea days earlier rallied in the thousands to reject the U.S. war threatened against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea that endangers the lives of everyone on the Korean peninsula.

In support of sovereign foreign policy, independent of U.S. imperialism, protesters gathered in Seoul’s Gwanghwamun Square, an historic center, on Nov. 7. A sign seen everywhere in the photos read, “Say no to Trump, say no to war!!!”

Despite the presence of more than 15,000 police officers, thousands of protesters attempted to block Trump’s entrance to the Blue House, the office of south Korean President Moon Jae-In. □

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V.I. Lenin’s ‘Letter to American Workers’

Continued from page 9

was jailed for opposing U.S. involvement in WWI. Debs had told a crowd in Canton, Ohio: “The master class has always declared the wars, the subject class has always fought the battles. The master class has had all to gain and nothing to lose, while the subject class has had nothing to gain and all to lose — especially their lives.”

Being knowledgeable about U.S. history and the struggle between classes, Lenin said he was not surprised that the so-called liberal President Wood-

row Wilson, “the head of the American multi-millionaires and servant of the capitalist sharks,” imprisoned Debs under the Espionage Act of 1917. The law was passed during what became known as the First Red Scare, to intimidate workers from revolutionary activities.

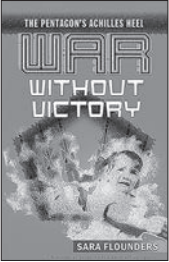
The radical journalist John Reed, author of “Ten Days That Shook the World,” an eyewitness account of the Bolshevik Revolution, secured the publication of Lenin’s letter in the U.S.

The letter became an influential document in socialist and communist circles.

International Publishers founder Alexander Trachtenberg wrote, “It played an important part in developing among American Socialists an understanding of the nature of imperialism, of the aims of the October Revolution and of the role of social-chauvinists in the labor movement.”

Many lessons contained in this largely forgotten document are still relevant to revolutionary workers for the struggles that lie ahead. As Lenin concluded, “In short, we are invincible, because the world proletarian revolution is invincible.”

Lenin’s “Letter to American Workers” can be read at marxists.org. □



WAR

WITHOUT

VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

PentagonAchillesHeel.com

“By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity.”

– Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009; Foreign Minister of Nicaragua’s Sandinista government.

Available at online booksellers.



# Saudi moves threaten wider war

By Chris Fry

Stunning events in Saudi Arabia have stepped up the threat of a wider war in the Middle East.

The prime minister of Lebanon, Saad al-Hariri, is being held captive in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, after the Crown Prince forced him to announce his resignation. More than 200 leaders, including billionaire media moguls, 11 royal princes and several major investors, have been arrested on corruption charges and confined to a luxury hotel.

The Saudi regime, which has been waging a brutal war against the people of Yemen, declared what amounts to war against both the Hezbollah organization in Lebanon and the government of Iran, after a missile was launched from Yemen toward Riyadh. (newsweek.com, Nov. 7)

The Israeli regime under Benjamin Netanyahu has chimed in with its own war threats against Lebanon and Hezbollah, and Washington has voiced its strong approval of Saudi actions.

Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman (MbS), nicknamed “Mr. Everything” because he controls the military, the economy and all foreign affairs, is now the apparent heir to the throne.

The Brookings Institution wrote on June 23: “The two-and-a-half-year-old war in Yemen is his signature policy initiative. The Saudis are bogged down in a quagmire with enormous consequences

for the people of Yemen. For Yemenis, the war has brought mass starvation and malnutrition. Cholera has broken out. A child dies every ten minutes as a consequence of the war. Seven million people are at acute risk. The United Nations has called the crisis the worst humanitarian disaster in the world.

“And the son [MbS] is also behind the Saudi quarrel with Qatar. The Gulf Cooperation Council is broken into hostile camps. The Saudis have now produced 13 demands that would reduce Qatar to being a satellite of the kingdom.”

**Oil ‘denationalization’**

In early 2016, in the midst of the global oil glut that saw prices drop by more than 50 percent, MbS announced that 5 percent of Saudi Aramco, the Saudi national oil company, would be put up for sale on a major stock market using an initial public offering, or IPO.

Imperialist bankers and oil corporations were delighted at the prospect of getting a slice of ownership of Saudi oil, which the Saudi regime values at around \$2 trillion. U.S. oil companies had owned Saudi oil until 1972, but by 1980, the Saudi monarchy had purchased control of all its oil facilities and reserves.

The higher the world price of oil, the more money the IPO will generate for the monarchy. But with the easing of sanctions on Iran, plus the fracking boom in the U.S., some in the Saudi kingdom ob-

viously question the wisdom of selling a share of the country’s major asset when oil prices are low.

With the full support of U.S. imperialism, including a \$350 billion arms deal with the U.S. signed last May, the Saudi regime has escalated its conflict with Iran, its major competitor. Not only has it attacked Iran-backed organizations in Yemen, it has also supplied major aid to military groups fighting the Syrian government, including ISIS. And it has tried to prevent the Iran-supported Hezbollah faction from being part of the Lebanon government. All of this is with the full support of U.S. imperialism.

But these schemes have failed. The Syrian government is on the verge of victory. The Yemeni resistance has fought off the indiscriminate bombing and blockade by the Saudi regime and even managed to construct a missile that it launched toward the Saudi capital on Nov. 4. The Saudi regime and the Pentagon both claim that the missile was Iranian-made, which the Iranian government denies.

The main Yemeni group that the Saudis are attacking is the Houthis. The Houthis’ news channel, Al-Masirah, said on Twitter: “We repeatedly affirmed that capitals of aggression states won’t be spared from our ballistic missiles in retaliation for the constant targeting of innocent civilians.” (nytimes.com, Nov. 4)

And Hezbollah is an active participant

in the delicately balanced coalition government in Lebanon.

**Saudi night of the long knives**

In the face of all these failures, MbS decided to imprison any possible opponents, including the visiting prime minister of Lebanon and the 200 or more leaders of the Saudi kingdom.

Just before these arrests, Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law and a top advisor, visited Saudi Arabia and held lengthy meetings with the prince. Trump himself tweeted after the arrests: “I have great confidence in King Salman and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, they know exactly what they are doing,” That was at the same time that the Saudi regime declared it was at war with both Hezbollah and Iran.

The right-wing Israeli regime is boasting of its readiness to launch a new invasion of Lebanon. “ ‘If a war breaks out in the northern arena we need to act with full force from the beginning,’ Israel’s outgoing air force commander, Maj. Gen. Amir Eshel, told a conference. ‘What we could do in 34 days during the second Lebanon war we can now do in 48 to 60 hours. The growth of our strength has not been linear.’ ” (theguardian.com, Nov. 11)

Because of imperialism’s insatiable greed for Middle Eastern oil, what ought to be a source of wealth to the people of the region has turned into the root of conflict and terrible suffering. □

## Catalonia

# 750,000 demand Madrid ‘free the prisoners’

By John Catalinotto

Some 750,000 people took to the streets of Barcelona on Nov. 11 to demand the release of Catalan pro-independence political prisoners jailed by the Spanish regime in mid-October. The march also demanded an end to the Spanish takeover of the regional Catalan government.

Jordi Sánchez, chairperson of the Catalan National Assembly, and Jordi Cuixart, head of the cultural association Òmnium Cultural, have been imprisoned since Oct. 16. The “two Jordis” are charged with “rebellion” for organizing massive peaceful demonstrations to defend an Oct. 1 referendum on independence from repression by the Spanish state.

Another eight ministers of the Catalan government, which the central Madrid government deposed by decree on Oct. 27, have also been charged with sedition and misuse of public funds — funds they used for carrying out the referendum.

The rightist People’s Party (PP) government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy used Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution to deprive Catalonia of its guaranteed right to regional autonomy. Rajoy also ordered new regional elections for Dec. 21. The “Socialist” Party (PSOE) and the Citizens’ Party backed Rajoy’s takeover.

The latest mass protest in Barcelona, coupled with a general strike and militant protest earlier that week, which stopped much of the rail and road traffic in the region, showed that the struggle for self-determination of Catalonia is still deep in the hearts of a large part of the population.

In addition, whether in an independent Catalan republic or as part of the imperialist Spanish state, the workers of Catalonia will still be subject to the bosses’ attacks on their wages and social benefits. Since

the 2008 worldwide capitalist crisis, Catalan’s working class, just as the workers in the rest of Spain, have been hit by massive unemployment, wage cuts and cuts in pensions, health care and education.

**Puigdemont in Brussels**

The deposed president of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, and four of his ministers have been in Brussels, the capital of the European Union, since Rajoy’s government brought charges against them. Puigdemont’s party, the European Democratic Party of Catalonia (Pdecat), has opted to take part in the Dec. 21 elections, even though the Spanish state is imposing the elections on the region.

Puigdemont says he has chosen to run the campaign from Belgium rather than going back to Catalonia and being arrested. Another of the pro-independence parties, the Republican Left (ERC), has also opted to run in the elections. Unlike in the last elections, in which a joint pro-independence slate won a small majority in the assembly, the ERC says it will run separately on Dec. 21.

Both the Pdecat and the ERC are pro-capitalist parties. They appeal to the European Union, even though the EU leaders have, up to now, sided with the Spanish state. An independent Catalonia, subject to the economic domination of EU imperialism and NATO membership, would do nothing to relieve the economic hardships of the Catalan working class.

Meanwhile, Rajoy is attempting to stir up even greater chauvinism among those in all the regions who identify as Spanish. In the past decade especially, the PP, the PSOE, the monarchy and big business have all been exposed as corrupt exploiters. As expected, the last refuge of these scoundrels is Spanish patriotism and nationalism.

The enemy of all the workers of the Spanish state — whether they identify as Catalan, Basque, Galician, Castilian or another nationality — is the imperialist ruling class and its parties running the Spanish state. That means mainly the PP and PSOE, the parties that have alternated in ruling over all the peoples of Spain since the 1978 “Transition.”

**Working-class solidarity**

For working-class revolutionaries, the most important goal is to build solidarity among the workers of all nationalities. The only way to do this is to support the self-determination of all the peoples in the Spanish state. This was a cornerstone of the united front since Spain’s 1936-39 Civil War.

In the Puerta del Sol plaza in the center of Madrid, a demonstration on Nov. 5 called by the Marches for Dignity and the S25 Platform denounced “the latest judi-

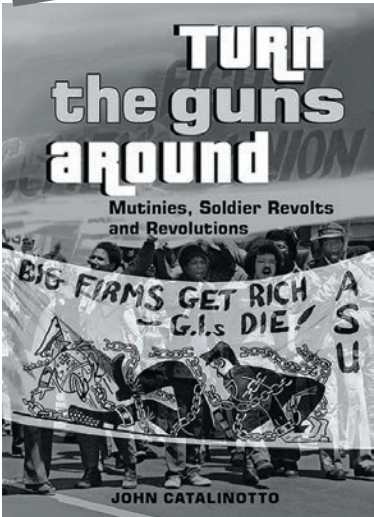
cial actions taken against independentist political leaders” and defended the Catalan Republic.

Before more than a thousand people, Ángeles Maestro, speaking for the Marches for Dignity, said that support for the Catalan people is not only a question of solidarity but of struggle against common enemies, including the PP, the PSOE, the Citizens’ Party and “the monarchy, the legislature and the court system and all the machinery that continues the heritage of the [Franco fascist] dictatorship.”

Maestro ended by underlining “the absolute necessity of unity of all the peoples of the Spanish state against the Regime of 1978, that each people can’t do it alone, so there is a need to support each other in the historical memory of the anti-fascist resistance that raised the cry of ‘They shall not pass,’ that the struggle of the peoples has made their own, as the Catalans have now.” (lahaine.org, Nov. 5) □

## TURN THE GUNS AROUND

### Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions



Weaving together GI letters, interviews and first-hand narratives with historical research, the author brings to life GI resistance in the Vietnam War era, shows its relation to capitalist state power and highlights why breaking the military chain of command is an essential step to ending oppression around the globe.

*“If schools in the United States really wanted to impart historical truth, Catalinotto’s ‘Turn The Guns Around’ would be required reading. He tells the true story of this epoch. Few participants know more about the massive GI rebellion against the Vietnam War, the anti-war veterans’ movement or the history of soldier revolts from the Paris Commune to the Portuguese coup.”*

— Pvt Larry Holmes GI resister and organizer for the American Servicemen’s Union 1972-74.

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## Radiografía parcial pos María de Puerto Rico

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci  
San Juan, PR

13 de noviembre — Nunca antes en la historia de Puerto Rico la barbarie del colonialismo había quedado tan expuesta como ahora tras el paso del huracán María. Cuando el presidente Barack Obama firmó la ley PROMESA que el Congreso estadounidense creó en junio de 2016 para cobrarle al pueblo boricua una deuda ilegítima de \$74 mil millones, nunca imaginó que las condiciones del archipiélago desembocaran en el enorme caos en que ahora se encuentra. Condiciones propensas para implantar sus criminales medidas neoliberales. Es como si le sirvieran al imperio su colonia en bandeja de plata para que disponga como mejor le convenga sin mayor reparo.

¿Cuáles son estas condiciones?

Un país casi totalmente paralizado. En una macro visión y en términos económicos, se puede decir que la producción es casi cero. Sin electricidad, dependiendo de costosos generadores eléctricos que funcionan a base de diésel, son muy pocas las industrias manufactureras — farmacéuticas y de componentes electrónicos especializados sobre todo — que han recuperado alguna normalidad.

Señalando además la realidad del estado colonial, está el hecho de que éstas son grandes compañías foráneas las cuales envían las ganancias a sus dueños fuera de Puerto Rico y que — como buenos capitalistas — no tienen ningún interés en el bienestar del pueblo. Sin embargo, el persistente miedo de los arrodillados gobernantes criollos es que se vayan de la isla todas estas compañías y con ellas su artificial base económica manufacturera.

Esto además está agravado por la reciente propuesta de un proyecto del congreso estadounidense de imponer un 20 por ciento de arbitrio a las mercancías producidas por sus compañías radicadas en Puerto Rico. Si se aprueba, significará el pasaje de ida de estas manufactureras.

La gran mayoría de los pequeños negocios puertorriqueños/os ha tenido que cerrar temporalmente y quizás permanentemente por no poder costear la enorme carga económica que implica la electricidad por generadores. Una pequeña fábrica de hielo — mercancía en alta demanda ahora — informaba recientemente en un programa radial, que pronto tendría que irse a la bancarrota por no poder seguir costearlo el inmenso costo de diésel, \$1000 diarios.

### Brigada solidaria

Esta escritora estuvo recientemente en Puerto Rico como parte de una brigada solidaria del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero, junto a los camaradas Cornelious Moody, Mike Wilson y Joe Piette. Una de las tardes fuimos a dar un paseo por el Viejo San Juan, lugar histórico representativo de la isla, donde se encuentran numerosos establecimientos de negocios, restaurantes, café-terratias, tiendas.

Normalmente se encuentra lleno tanto de boricuas como de turistas. Ahora, calle tras calle lo que hay es una sucesión de puertas cerradas con candados. Algunas tiendas pequeñas abiertas a oscuras,

otras con el pestilente, ruidoso y contaminador generador eléctrico tratando sus dueñas/os de sobrevivir esta catástrofe. Mientras caminaba, era difícil no pensar en la letra de la canción de nuestro Rafael Hernández “Lamento Borincano”: qué será de Borinquen...

Hay ahora lo que se podría llamar una “economía de emergencia”. Una marea de contratistas — verdaderas aves rapaces — arriba a la isla en busca de los codiciados dólares de FEMA. Hoteles lujosos cuyos propietarios son en su mayoría estadounidenses, hacen su agosto alojando personal de FEMA, militares y contratistas. Es obsceno el despliegue de corrupción a todos los niveles gubernamentales, tanto de PR como de EUA.

A espaldas del pueblo, valiéndose de la falta de comunicación por la ausencia de telefonía celular y de electricidad para seguir las noticias en televisión o radio, el gobierno de “Ricky Roselló” firma contratos a diestra y siniestra, avalados por una serie de órdenes ejecutivas que fácilmente le pueden otorgar el título de “dictador”. Y eso que la propaganda para su candidatura a gobernador era la “transparencia”.

### Ryan Zinke y Whitefish

Uno de estos contratos, pese a las descargas de culpa de uno y otro lado — gobierno de PR y FEMA — es el tan cacareado de la firma Whitefish. ¡Una desconocida firma de Montana con solo dos personas, creada hace solo dos años, cobra \$300 millones para restablecer la inmensa red de electricidad de la isla! Resulta revelador que Ryan Zinke, el secretario del interior de Trump es también de Montana y aunque niega su papel en la otorgación del contrato, hay una gran sospecha de su influencia en el trato.

Luego de críticas a nivel local e internacional donde se pinta al gobierno de Puerto Rico como el hazmerreír mundial, Roselló mandó a cancelar el contrato. Ahora la investigación está en manos del FBI y del congreso de EUA.

Pero ese no es el único contrato leonino. Por \$200 millones se firmó otro para que junto a Whitefish levantaran el servicio eléctrico: Cobra Energy, subsidiaria de la empresa Mammoth Energy Services, con sede en Oklahoma.

Mientras tanto, a más de 50 días del paso de María, más del 70 por ciento del país sigue sin electricidad.

### Casas completamente destruidas

Luego de ir a las montañas del centro de la isla donde su población sufrió el embate mucho más que las zonas bajas, ver casas completamente destruidas y a familias enteras más vecinos viviendo como pueden en el único cuarto que María les perdonó el techo, ver que tomaban agua contaminada, con hambre y caminaban por veredas peligrosas donde la corriente de agua se llevó parte del camino, fuimos a Ceiba. A la extensa región donde la marina estadounidense tenía su base más grande fuera de EUA — la Base Roosevelt Roads — hasta que cerró en 2004 luego de la lucha boricua por echar la marina de Vieques, que hacía parte del complejo naval de RR en Ceiba.

Allí en Ceiba, vimos enormes tiendas blancas de campaña con aire acondicio-



nado parecidas a las que se alquilan para graduaciones y otros eventos multitudinarios. Eran los cuarteles de FEMA en la región. Militares por todas partes. Eran quienes no se alojaban en los hoteles lujosos. Seguramente eran soldados rasos. Sin embargo, gozaban de un techo y electricidad, lo que carecen cientos de hogares en la montaña que aún esperan los famosos toldos azules de FEMA.

Mientras, miles de boricuas se dirigen a los EUA en un éxodo sin precedente. Van en busca de trabajo, tratamientos médicos, pero sobre todo, educación para sus hijas e hijos.

En término de solo cuatro horas en el aeropuerto Luis Muñoz Marín de San Juan — aeropuerto privatizado en manos de una compañía mexicana — observé tres vuelos a diferentes ciudades: Atlanta, Orlando y Filadelfia. Cada vuelo tendría aproximadamente 200 pasajeros/os. Familias enteras, incluyendo algunas mascotas. Y esto de sólo una línea aérea. Seiscientas personas en cuatro horas. Se estiman ya cerca de 100.000 boricuas en poco más de un mes. Ya sea temporal o permanentemente, este éxodo es otra crisis tanto económica como política y cultural.

Hay mucho de que hablar: de la Junta de Control Fiscal y cómo busca ampliar sus poderes en la isla; sobre quién verdaderamente está gobernando en PR; sobre los esquemas de corrupción, el desempleo, y muchísimos temas más.

### La privatización de la educación

Sin embargo, hay un aspecto que no se puede ignorar en estos momentos. Y es la educación, base del futuro del país y una de las primeras causas de migración.

La educación además nos da una visión de la complejidad de la vida en PR en estos momentos. Brigadas de personas van de sitio en sitio para limpiar — no hay que olvidar que la mayor parte del despeje de los caminos lo ha hecho el mismo pueblo, comunidades, organizaciones que se han ido constituyendo para resolver como pueden los problemas inmediatos. El magisterio también se ha unido a este esfuerzo; sin embargo, maestras y maestros también se encuentran en una batalla campal organizando escuelas y comunidades para defender la educación pública.

La privatización de la educación era parte del plan neoliberal antes de María. El Boston Group ya había recomendado el cierre de 500 escuelas, y 179 ya habían cerrado sus puertas antes del huracán. La secretaria de educación Julia Keleher, una estadounidense nacida en Filadelfia

quien cobra más de \$20.000 al mes fue contratada realmente para privatizar la educación pública de PR.

El objetivo es abrir escuelas tipo chárter. No es un accidente que la secretaria de educación de EUA, Betsy DeVos — conocida por su empeño privatizador — visitara hace unos días a PR y a las Islas Vírgenes estadounidenses.

Luego de la devastación de planteles por María, padres, madres y maestras/os se han unido a nivel nacional para limpiar escombros y tratar de restituir las escuelas de su comunidad. Decenas de escuelas se hallaban listas para comenzar a recibir estudiantes; sin embargo, la secretaria Keleher prohibía que se abrieran, prohibiendo además el uso de comedores para estudiantes quienes quizás esa fuera la única fuente de nutrición. Ante ese escenario, la Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico comenzó una campaña de exigir la apertura de los planteles que estuvieran en condiciones aptas.

Las escuelas programadas para no abrir — y cerrarlas luego permanentemente — pertenecen a los sectores más pobres, tanto en la montaña como en la costa. Esas/os estudiantes no tendrían otra escuela cerca donde ir, negándole así la educación al pueblo.

Sin embargo, la Keleher y los entes privatizadores se han dado con un pueblo decidido a defender su educación. Madres y padres junto a maestras/os organizan asambleas donde discuten las acciones a seguir para que abran sus planteles. Temprano en la mañana, para que los medios noticiosos informen en sus programas, organizan piquetes frente a las escuelas exigiendo su apertura. Incluyendo en el Viejo San Juan, donde esta escritora participó en un piquete frente a la Escuela Abraham Lincoln. Esa escuela le sirve a las/os estudiantes del famoso barrio de La Perla.

La escuela se veía en perfecto estado y había sido utilizada como centro comunitario durante los días siguientes al huracán para proveer y coordinar ayudas. Ese mismo día del piquete se estaba usando para preparar almuerzos para que la esposa del gobernador distribuyera en otros lados. Sin embargo, el Departamento de Educación y su secretaria Keleher la querían mantener cerrada e impedirle a las/os niños de La Perla su educación.

Pese a que la secretaria estaba renuente a abrir decenas de escuelas, ha sido la movilización de madres, padres, maestras/os y la comunidad en general que están obligando a que cada día se abran más escuelas. □