

## U.S. Warship Kills 290 Airline Passengers

# Massacre in the Persian Gulf



Pentagon orders: shoot first, ask questions later. U.S. cruiser *Vincennes* firing Standard missile like one that blasted Iranian Airbus jetliner out of the sky. At right, anguished Iranian who lost entire family on Flight 655.

Bloated corpses floated in the water. Distraught relatives broke down in tears, overcome by grief and anger over the senseless killing of their loved ones. One man who had just seen off 13 members of his family, including wife and children, went mad when he heard they were all dead and began hanging his head against a wall. The scenes were shattering and grisly.

Minutes after taking off from Bandar Abbas early on the morning of July 3 on its short 120-mile hop to Dubai airport, piloted by an experienced 17-year veteran, Iran Air Flight 655 was blown out of the skies by a U.S. surface-to-air missile. Every man, woman and child aboard the A300 Airbus was flung into the Persian Gulf like so much debris. In one fiery instant, they were all dead: 66 children, 52 women, 290 people in all.

It was a wanton, gruesome massacre—made in the U.S.A. The same rapacious, racist ruling class which turned two Japanese cities into irradiated rub-

### U.S. Out of the Persian Gulf!

ble, which slaughtered two million Vietnamese peasants and napalmed their babies, which bombed an entire neighborhood of black Philadelphia, had once again recklessly killed innocent people in pursuit of its deranged imperialist mission.

After the massacre came the lies. It was an "understandable accident," said Reagan, justifying the USS *Vincennes*' missile attack on a civilian airliner as a "proper defensive action." The capitalist media snapped to attention, retailing the government's lies, as the war criminals in Washington draped themselves in a blood-drenched Stars and Stripes for the Fourth of July. Vice President Bush praised "those heroic kids...the finest young sailors this Navy has ever had" to loud applause from an

Independence Day rally near Chicago.

The imperial president showed arrogant racist contempt for his victims, not bothering to interrupt his Camp David weekend, while Secretary of State Shultz nonchalantly completed 18 holes of golf as reports of the carnage poured in. In Britain, Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher gave her blessings to Reagan's cover-up; after all, she ordered the wanton murder of over 300 Argentine sailors aboard the *Belgrano* while enjoying a lunch at her country residence, Chequers. The Italian government (which recently received the U.S. F-16s kicked out of Spain) acted as whores for Reagan, volunteering substantiation for Washington's line that the plane had been amply warned before being blown away. As the lies unraveled, they issued a "clarification."

The Democrats on Capitol Hill rallied behind Reagan. Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis blustered he was no wimp, declaring: "Plainly our armed forces have a right to defend themselves when attacked." So what the hell was the U.S. doing there in the first place? It is, after all, the *Persian Gulf*. But Washington made it clear from the start that it went in to stop "the

spread of Soviet influence." The pro-Democratic Party popular-front "left" showed where it stood by its silence: across the country scarcely a couple of hundred people turned out to protest, many of them Iranian leftists. In contrast, Spartacist League signs at a New York protest said: "Reagan, Democrats: Blood Is on Your Hands!" "U.S. Out of the Persian Gulf!" "U.S. Get Your Bloody Hands Off the World!"

By any standard of decency and morality, the captain and responsible officers of the *Vincennes* should be facing a court-martial. Instead, they're being treated as heroes. Because their orders were cut right at the top, shoot first and ask questions later. Reagan's cops of the world are subjecting the people of the Near East to a grotesquely magnified version of the murderous treatment racist cops mete out to racial minorities in American ghettos. This gang is capable of blowing up a lot more than 290 people. With a whole trigger-happy U.S. fleet in this tiny lake, the Gulf has become one more trip wire for nuclear World War III.

#### Reagan's Story Stinks!

When the Iranians announced early on July 3 that the U.S. had shot down an unarmed airliner, Washington at first insisted that it was an attacking Iranian

*continued on page 8*

**Reaganite Court Throws Out Pratt Appeal**

**S.F. Demo: "Free Geronimo!"**

SEE PAGE SIX



# Build Low Cost, Quality Public Housing! Integrate Boston Housing!

BOSTON—As long overdue measures are finally being enacted for the integration of Boston's woefully inadequate public housing facilities, this city may again be headed to the brink of race war. On June 16, after months of wrangling and foot-dragging to cover up years of systematic denial to black families of access to affordable housing, liberal mayor Raymond Flynn reached an agreement with the federal government to allow for the integration of Boston's notoriously segregated housing projects. On June 11, two courageous black families, who had been evicted from apartments in Mattapan, moved into the old South Boston Mary Ellen McCormack project. Meanwhile hundreds of racist poor whites, whipped up by demagogic Democratic Party politicians and a couple of "pious" priests, are assembling under the grotesque banner of "No to forced housing."

You know the discrimination had to be really extreme to come to the attention of the Reaganite Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Last October, HUD warned the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) that its practices opened the city to potential legal liabilities. In two South Boston



Loo/NY Times Photos

For decades public housing project in South Boston was for "whites only."

projects, Mary Ellen McCormack and Old Colony, where 2,345 families reside, there is exactly one Hispanic family and no blacks. Two-thirds of those on the waiting list for the project in white

Charlestown are minorities, but presently less than 1 percent of the units are occupied by blacks. This blatant discrimination is no surprise in the city where "Southie" became synonymous with racist anti-housing backlash in the '70s. As of the 1980 census, there was not a single black family in all of South Boston or Charlestown.

The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR) and the NAACP filed suit against the city on behalf of three black families. Typical was the case of Amey Murphy. When she told BHA authorities, who were apparently confused by her Irish surname, that she was black, she went from 28th on the list for a South Boston project to 517th. The BHA was shameless. While 600 black families waited on the list to get into the Charlestown project, housing authorities took out advertisements for the white readership of the Charlestown Patriot Ledger indicating apartments were immediately available.

At first Flynn charged that HUD's accusations were "outdated." Later he allowed that dozens and then hundreds of black families had been discriminated against. But rather than assign housing on a first-come, first-served basis for any available unit, in negotiations with HUD the mayor has come up with a complicated series of citywide and project-specific lists. The recent "settlement" gives first choice in upcoming vacancies to the 500 or more minority families who have been passed over in the biased selection process. Of course, HUD let the city off without paying a dime of restitution for the poor families blatantly denied equal access.

Right after the HUD-BHA agreement, two Irish Catholic priests decided to go public with their opposition to the "specifications" of the plan and thereby give their blessing to the most brazen racists in their "flocks." Shortly thereafter Flynn was forced to announce the imminent desegregation of the McCormack Development when two brave black families accepted placement in this, the oldest housing project in New England, under emergency provisions agreed to before the HUD deal. In the last attempt to desegregate a South Boston project, in 1978, a black pre-med student, Faith Evans, and her one-year-old son were harassed, intimidated and victimized by arsonists until they moved out of the Old Colony development.

One of the leaders of the mob that forced the black family out was James M. Kelly, then president of the South Boston Information Center. "She'll never be an acceptable member of the South Boston community," he said

Kelly has certainly remained true to his vile racist traditions. He is now orchestrating the firestorm of bigotry in the mayor's home district of South Boston. He and fellow Democratic city councilman Albert O'Neill have twice led jeering, screaming whites in confrontations with Flynn in a South Boston Catholic church. Kelly has made thinly veiled threats of violence against black families. When asked to elaborate on "potential trouble," he said: "Let your imagination run wild." It is not hard to imagine racist vigilantes in the streets like the South Boston Marshals who in tandem with the limousine liberal Democrats in Congress effectively killed busing in the '70s as a means to desegregate education.

South Boston Democratic pols have cynically exploited their constituency's social backwardness and precarious economic situation to whip up a dangerous racist climate. There are pockets of poverty in South Boston that rival and exceed poverty levels even in majority black Roxbury. The 1980 census showed four census tracts out of eleven in South Boston with median household incomes below \$7,000 while the overall more impoverished Roxbury area had three out of 21. The "Southie" racists are not "lace-curtain Irish" but poor whites, jammed together in triple-decker firetraps; their aging parents live not in nursing homes but in the projects. They are mobilized by slick racist demagogues whipping up fears that integration will only lead to the ever-worsening conditions of ghetto life. Kelly even hypocritically proposed integrating white suburbs like Weston—not to extend, obviously, but to stop desegregation in South Boston. Kelly has often defended the bloodsucking real-estate moguls and condo converters who are "yuppiefying" Boston, throwing thousands out of apartments (and contributing handsomely to his electoral campaigns).

As for Ray Flynn, it's a case of chickens coming home to roost. Flynn got his start in Boston city politics hand in hand with Kelly, mobilizing white mobs against "forced busing." One white woman at St. Monica's church shouted, "I wish I was dealing with the Ray Flynn of ten years ago." That Flynn can posture today as some kind of advocate of integration is patently absurd, but the mayor feels he can afford to alienate his home district as he eyes statewide or national office. (There was even short-lived talk of Flynn as vice presidential candidate on Jesse Jackson's ticket.)

Meanwhile, the liberal nationalist sponsors of the failed "Mandela, Mass." black secession movement exposed their defeatist strategy when they, too, opposed plans to integrate South Boston. Sadiki Kambon, chairman of Project F.A.T.E. (Focusing Attention Toward Empowerment), cited justifiable concern over the safety of black families while charging that Flynn's policies were forcing blacks out of "their" neighborhoods "We feel the plan is dangerous, illogical and we call on Mayor Flynn and the BHA to provide our community with a full explanation of this proposed South Boston

continued on page 11



TROTSKY

## Latin America: For Revolutionary Working-Class Independence

In Mexico, as in Latin America generally, the working class and its unions are subordinated to the semi-colonial bourgeois state. Thus, the struggle against Yankee imperialist exploitation and domination is necessarily a struggle for the independence of the unions from the state and for workers parties opposed to all forms of bourgeois nationalism and popular-frontism. This was the revolution-



LENIN

ary perspective outlined by Leon Trotsky in a collective statement denouncing a Stalinist trade-union front claiming to represent the unity of the Latin American proletariat.

"Democratic" imperialism, which is infinitely stronger in Latin America than fascist imperialism, endeavors—and not without success—by means of bribery, doles, and privileges to establish its own political agents in our countries, not only within the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois bureaucracy, and the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, but in the upper strata of the working class as well....

To this must be added the fact that in Mexico where the unions, unfortunately, are directly dependent on the state, posts in the union bureaucracy are frequently filled from the ranks of the bourgeois intelligentsia, attorneys, engineers, etc.—by people who have nothing in common with the working class and who seek only to use the trade union organizations in the interests of their own personal material well-being or their political careers....

We, the undersigned, are ardent and devoted supporters of the unification of the Latin American proletariat as well as of the closest possible ties between it and the proletariat of the United States of North America....

Our proletariat must step out in solid ranks into the arena of history in order to take the fate of Latin America into its hands and make its future secure. The unified proletariat will attract to its side the tens of millions of Indo-American peasants, eliminate the hostile horders dividing us, and unite the two dozen republics and colonial possessions under the banner of a Workers' and Peasants' United States of Latin America.

—Draft petition by Leon Trotsky, "Tasks of the Trade Union Movement in Latin America" (October 1938)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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Spartacist Forum

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Saturday, July 16, 4:00 p.m.

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# Victory to Electric Boat Strikers!

## 10,000 Out at General Dynamics Shipyard

GROTON, Connecticut—Over 10,000 workers at the General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard here struck this key Pentagon supplier July 1. Chanting "Out the Gate in '88," angry workers voted down by a five-to-three margin Electric Boat's "final offer" of a wage freeze and huge cuts in benefits. Members of the ten unions which form the Metal Trades Council (MTC) at Electric Boat packed up their tools and shut down work on seven nuclear-powered Trident missile submarines and another eight Los Angeles-class attack subs.

The 10,000 MTC members at Electric Boat are a key industrial concentration of workers, with a strategic position at the heart of the war industry. The strikers have the power to win against the giant General Dynamics, showing the rest of labor that some hard class struggle can reverse the years of union-busting and givebacks. As we said in the *Workers Vanguard* supplement "Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win," which was distributed on the picket line at Electric Boat:

"No decisive gain of labor was ever won in a courtroom or by an act of Congress. Everything the workers movement has won of value has been

prepared with savings and outside jobs.

And it won't be so easy to isolate and defeat the strikers at EB, as the bourgeoisie and their labor lieutenants did to the PATCO air controllers' and Midwest meatpackers' strikes, which were knifed in the back as workers were tied to useless, impotent "strategies" of consumer boycotts and "corporate campaigns." As with the longshoremen's strike which briefly shut down East Coast ports in 1986 before it was scuttled by the union misleaders, the capitalists are well aware the EB strike is an important class confrontation. Labor had better play hardball as well.

### "Scab Patrol"—Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross!

The night the contract expired, buses and squad cars of cops from surrounding towns, accompanied by Connecticut state troopers with riot gear, were positioned near the yard to intimidate union members. As the strike deadline approached, police tried to clear workers from the street in front of the main gate. But the cops backed down when 200 unionists picked up their picket signs and marched down the street to greet the



Last day shift pours out of Groton shipyards with their tools on eve of strike.

achieved by mobilizing the ranks of labor in hard-fought struggle, on the picket lines, in plant occupations. What counts is power."

The workers at this key shipyard have got real power, but they're going to have to use it to win. Their last strike, in 1975, lasted for more than five months. Now General Dynamics, which in 1986 raked in \$175 million in profits from Electric Boat alone, is out to extract another round of givebacks before the Reagan years draw to an end. When the strike began, Electric Boat (EB) general manager Fritz Tovar threatened to hire scabs and move work out of Groton, announcing "we will still be building submarines" (*Hartford Courant*, 1 July). But the workers at EB are in no mood to eat the massive medical co-payments the company is demanding, or take paltry lump-sum payments in place of a real wage increase. Chanting "Dump the Lump" as they picked up picket signs, workers told *WV* they are digging in for a long, hard-fought strike and have

thousands of workers who poured out of the shipyard gates at midnight, and the strike was on.

If the unions are going to win this one, they must act immediately to shut the yard down tight. Just hours before the strike the company delivered an advanced attack sub with new sonar technology and cruise missile capability, the USS *San Juan*, to the Navy for sea trials. EB plans to use 3,000 salaried employees to try to perform the strikers' highly skilled work, and the company is already boasting that 153 MTC members have scabbed in the first week of the strike. In addition, some 1,500 members of the Marine Draftsmen Association, a United Auto Workers affiliate, are crossing the picket lines. (In a 1983 strike by MDA-UAW draftsmen at the yard, the MTC unions along with 900 draftsmen crossed the lines, as the strike dragged on for 14 months.) The MTC unions, backed up by area labor, must mass pickets at the EB gates. Scabs, whose names are listed on the



WV Photo

Unionists in Metal Trades Council shut down work on Pentagon submarines.

MTC's "Scab Patrol" banner, should he given a lesson from the Kentucky coal fields: "Scabbing is hazardous to your health."

Untouched by the strike thus far is Electric Boat's huge facility at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, where 4,400 non-union workers fabricate submarine hulls for the Groton yard and where the company has announced plans to send struck work. Quonset Point workers average even less than the lousy wages at Groton, and workers at both yards start at \$4.80 per hour! Conditions at Quonset Point are so bad that last year even Reagan's OSHA proposed fines of \$615,000 against EB. The Groton strike must be extended to Quonset Point, organizing the workforce there into a common industrial union of all shipyard workers—trades, draftsmen and clericals—and shutting down the entire EB operation.

### Union-Busting for "National Security"

The complete collapse of commercial shipbuilding in the U.S., coupled with intense pressure from the Pentagon to "reduce labor costs," has led to an all-out assault on shipyard and waterfront workers. Shipbuilders at the Bath Iron Works in Maine, who waged a bitter strike in 1985, face an August 14 contract deadline. The Pentagon has pitted the Bath workers against those at Litton's shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Last year, striking workers at Todd and other West Coast shipyards were beaten after the treacherous International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union tops worked overtime to prevent united strike action by shipyard workers, striking tugboat men and longshoremen.

The Pentagon is also using Reagan's and the Democrats' "war on drugs" to regiment the three million employees of "defense" contractors by using mandatory drug tests. But strikers told *WV* that Electric Boat, in a move exposing the real purpose of Reagan's drug war, isn't testing the newly hired seabs!

For months leading up to the strike, the Navy and EB have sought to pit Groton workers against their even lower-paid brothers and sisters at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in Virginia, the only other facility capable of building subs. Workers at the Tennessee conglomerate's Newport News yard, organized by Steelworkers Local 8888, fought a three-month strike for union recognition in 1979, where scores of strikers were injured and arrested. Last year, Local 8888 members had a four-year wage freeze and health benefits cuts rammed down their throats, as the company and the Pentagon whipsawed them against workers at Electric Boat. Now Groton workers are told to "sacrifice" for "national security." Enough! The MTC at Groton and Local 8888 at Newport News must demand common bargaining and expiration dates, with joint strike action.

One Groton striker carried a sign reading "National security begins with us!" But "national security" means union-busting at home, while Reagan lays a wreath on Nazi graves at Bitburg to further his "holy crusade" against the Soviet Union. The bipartisan war drive which targets the gains of the October Revolution in Russia is literally being paid for out of the sweat and blood of workers and minorities. The highly skilled workers at Electric Boat face

continued on page 9

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Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

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# North Sea Workers Burned Alive

The following article is adapted from *Workers Hammer* No. 99, July/August 1988, newspaper of the Spartacist League of Britain.

LONDON, July 9—It was the worst disaster in the history of North Sea oil production. Some 166 workers were killed when the oil platform Piper Alpha turned into a giant fireball on the night of July 6. Most of the men, trapped in the crew quarters located directly above the gas compression module where the initial explosion erupted, hardly stood a chance. Others clawed their way up to the helipad, hoping desperately to be rescued by helicopters. But nothing could get close to the Piper Alpha because of the intense, searing heat. It was, as one survivor grimly put it, "fry and die or jump and try." So men launched themselves from heights of up to 100 feet into the sea below, desperately attempting to cling to debris until they were rescued. Many didn't make it—and had this been wintertime, there would have been far fewer survivors. As it is, 21 workers are still in hospital, half of them badly burned and others with spinal fractures.

It was shortly before 10 p.m. that a horrific high-pitched wail pierced the Piper Alpha. It was the first indication that gas lines had ruptured. The "automatic" gas detection system gave no warning. Thirty seconds later came the first explosion, wiping out the control room and plunging the oil platform into darkness. In a short time came more explosions, and the Piper Alpha was consumed with flames and smoke that rose 700 feet in the air, while giant natural gas bubbles exploded as they rose to the surface of the ocean. The platform was split in two and its oil derrick toppled. The heat was so intense that pilots could feel it from over a mile away. The crew of the *Sandhaven*, a standby oil tug, courageously attempted to launch a rescue dinghy, but this also was consumed by flames as the rig collapsed above it.

Today the capitalist press, assorted royalty and, most obscenely of all, Margaret Thatcher, are hypocritically paying tribute to the courage of the oil workers. "The men know the risks, and they're well paid for it," goes their chorus. But Armand Hammer, the chairman of Occidental Petroleum, admitted that the design of the oil rig was fundamentally deficient. The mass slaughter on the Piper Alpha was not an "accident"—it was industrial murder! What else can you call it when they pack the crew quarters in right adjacent to large amounts of combustible materials, power generation equipment and processing machinery. The Piper Alpha

## Oil Bosses: Murder, Inc.



Occidental's Piper Alpha oil rig in flames off northeast Scotland, July 7.

[London] Guardian

was a major gas collection centre, pumping methane from neighbouring Occidental and Texaco installations to the mainland. Enormous pressures of up to 7,000 pounds per square inch are produced in the piping and manifolds, probably making this the most dangerous area in the complex. And if you were an oil worker on Piper Alpha, you slept right above that!

The Piper Alpha, commissioned 12 years ago, had a history of safety problems. Occidental's former loss prevention manager in the North Sea, Jack Donaldson, termed it "the most highly dangerous platform in the North Sea" (*Observer*, 10 July). Veteran divers point out that it was common knowledge that it had been slipping into the seabed for a long time. Six years ago three workers died when a gangway collapsed. Then in March 1984 there was a gas explosion, and the oil platform had to be evacuated. The subsequent inquiry and report was suppressed by the company and government! Protesting the company's refusal to take safety matters seriously, the union pulled its representatives off the "safety" committee at Piper Alpha. One survivor of the earlier gas explosion put it bluntly: "Every time I went on that rig I had a feeling that something was going to happen. It was a timebomb just waiting to go

off" (*Daily Mirror*, 8 July).

Of course, there are safety measures that can be taken: adequate separation of the living area from production facilities or even better, quartering the crew on an entirely separate platform ("floatels"). In the Norwegian sector of the North Sea oilfields, they are introducing flame-proof evacuation chutes and escape capsules as a backup to the lifeboats. But safety costs money, and as long as the oilfields are subject to capitalist exploitation, the industrial murder will continue. Already 500 people have died directly in North Sea oil disasters, while another 100 have perished on the hazardous helicopter transport system. Not much has changed since 1977, when the Texas oil troubleshooter "Red" Adair warned that "...there'll be a disaster in the North Sea, sooner or later. There are no proper facilities for coping with it" (*New Yorker*, 27 January 1986).

If you are highly skilled and land a permanent job, you can make relatively good money on an offshore oil rig. In exchange for that, oil workers labour on platforms battered by 100 mph winds and 60-foot waves on 12-hour shifts, two weeks at a stretch—doing a job nine times more dangerous than even coal mining. Then there's the prison-like regime—no alcohol and no women. But the majority, employed by contractors, don't even get the pay and benefits, and have to pay for essentials like emergency evacuation training out of their own pockets. Angry workers, interviewed on BBC television, bitterly displayed pay stubs showing earnings of under £4 an hour. And now, as the bosses cut costs to compensate for lower oil prices, wage cuts of up to £5,000 a year and elimination of holiday pay are commonplace. On top of that, safety has been one of the first things thrown out the window. Is there anyone foolish enough to believe that it's a coincidence that the rate of serious accidents on oil rigs has shot up 80 per cent over the last three years!

As we wrote when 45 oil workers were killed in November 1986 aboard a defective Chinook helicopter operated by Robert Maxwell, newspaper tycoon and big-time Kinnoek supporter: "For the capitalist bloodsuckers, the bottom line—literally—is their profit statement at the end of the fiscal year; and to that end, human life is expendable. In particular, the English-centred bour-

geoisie has routinely treated Scottish working people as expendable, be it as cannon fodder in the Scottish regiments or as workers on North Sea oil rigs" (*Workers Hammer* No. 84, December 1986/January 1987).

Some 115 oil workers employed at three British Petroleum gas platforms in Humberside angrily walked off their jobs a day after the Piper Alpha disaster, demanding better health and safety conditions. The entire industry should be shut down in protest! Workers must demand that effective independent union safety committees be established with the power to shut down unsafe operations on the spot! Hit the bosses where it counts—in their pocket-books! North Sea oil adds something like £2 million per hour to the coffers of the oil magnates—every pence leached out of the blood of the workforce.

Thatcher has predictably called for another whitewash public inquiry. This is a sick joke: the same government just gave Piper Alpha a clean bill of health ten days before it blew up! The capitalist state's assault on safety standards goes hand in hand with union-busting. After the powerful miners strike was defeated, the bosses unleashed a wholesale assault on jobs, working conditions and social spending. In short order there has been mass slaughter at the Zeebrugge ferry disaster, King's Cross tube fire and the North Sea, not to mention the effects of starving the National Health Service of funds. Thatcher's cronies like P&O scabherder Sir Jeffrey Sterling are routinely permitted to operate ferries designed to sink immediately after they take any water. Public transport in London operates without any fire prevention system. And now, after months and months of phoney "investigations" of King's Cross, what is the result? The bosses are slated to chop the jobs of another 2,000 workers, when everyone knows they don't have the manpower to do even the most elementary maintenance!

In this moribund capitalist society, there's no margin for spending on safety and health, or providing decent jobs for all. It will literally take a proletarian revolution and a couple of ambitious five-year plans to turn things around. Britain desperately needs workers revolution: not Labourite "nationalisations," but the revolutionary expropriation of the parasitic capitalist class. ■



Reuters

Survivor rushed to hospital in Aberdeen. Death toll to date is 166.



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The Piper Alpha, commissioned 12 years ago, had a history of safety problems. Occidental's former loss prevention manager in the North Sea, Jack Donaldson, termed it "the most highly dangerous platform in the North Sea" (*Observer*, 10 July). Veteran divers point out that it was common knowledge that it had been slipping into the seabed for a long time. Six years ago three workers died when a gangway collapsed. Then in March 1984 there was a gas explosion, and the oil platform had to be evacuated. The subsequent inquiry and report was suppressed by the company and government! Protesting the company's refusal to take safety matters seriously, the union pulled its representatives off the "safety" committee at Piper Alpha. One survivor of the earlier gas explosion put it bluntly: "Every time I went on that rig I had a feeling that something was going to happen. It was a timebomb just waiting to go

off" (*Daily Mirror*, 8 July).

Of course, there are safety measures that can be taken: adequate separation of the living area from production facilities or even better, quartering the crew on an entirely separate platform ("floatels"). In the Norwegian sector of the North Sea oilfields, they are introducing flame-proof evacuation chutes and escape capsules as a backup to the lifeboats. But safety costs money, and as long as the oilfields are subject to capitalist exploitation, the industrial murder will continue. Already 500 people have died directly in North Sea oil disasters, while another 100 have perished on the hazardous helicopter transport system. Not much has changed since 1977, when the Texas oil troubleshooter "Red" Adair warned that "...there'll be a disaster in the North Sea, sooner or later. There are no proper facilities for coping with it" (*New Yorker*, 27 January 1986).

If you are highly skilled and land a permanent job, you can make relatively good money on an offshore oil rig. In exchange for that, oil workers labour on platforms hattered by 100 mph winds and 60-foot waves on 12-hour shifts, two weeks at a stretch—doing a job nine times more dangerous than even coal mining. Then there's the prison-like regime—no alcohol and no women. But the majority, employed by contractors, don't even get the pay and benefits, and have to pay for essentials like emergency evacuation training out of their own pockets. Angry workers, interviewed on BBC television, bitterly displayed pay stubs showing earnings of under £4 an hour. And now, as the bosses cut costs to compensate for lower oil prices, wage cuts of up to £5,000 a year and elimination of holiday pay are commonplace. On top of that, safety has been one of the first things thrown out the window. Is there anyone foolish enough to believe that it's a coincidence that the rate of serious accidents on oil rigs has shot up 80 per cent over the last three years!

As we wrote when 45 oil workers were killed in November 1986 aboard a defective Chinook helicopter operated by Robert Maxwell, newspaper tycoon and high-time Kinnock supporter: "For the capitalist bloodsuckers, the bottom line—literally—is their profit statement at the end of the fiscal year; and to that end, human life is expendable. In particular, the English-centred bour-

geoisie has routinely treated Scottish working people as expendable, be it as cannon fodder in the Scottish regiments or as workers on North Sea oil rigs" (*Workers Hammer* No. 84, December 1986/January 1987).

Some 115 oil workers employed at three British Petroleum gas platforms in Humberside angrily walked off their jobs a day after the Piper Alpha disaster, demanding better health and safety conditions. The entire industry should be shut down in protest! Workers must demand that effective independent union safety committees be established with the power to shut down unsafe operations on the spot! Hit the bosses where it counts—in their pocket-books! North Sea oil adds something like £2 million per hour to the coffers of the oil magnates—every pence leached out of the blood of the workforce.

Thatcher has predictably called for another whitewash public inquiry. This is a sick joke: the same government just gave Piper Alpha a clean bill of health ten days before it blew up! The capitalist state's assault on safety standards goes hand in hand with union-busting. After the powerful miners strike was defeated, the bosses unleashed a wholesale assault on jobs, working conditions and social spending. In short order there has been mass slaughter at the Zeebrugge ferry disaster, King's Cross tube fire and the North Sea, not to mention the effects of starving the National Health Service of funds. Thatcher's cronies like P&O scabherd Sir Jeffrey Sterling are routinely permitted to operate ferries designed to sink immediately after they take any water. Public transport in London operates without any fire prevention system. And now, after months and months of phoney "investigations" of King's Cross, what is the result? The bosses are slated to chop the jobs of another 2,000 workers, when everyone knows they don't have the manpower to do even the most elementary maintenance!

In this moribund capitalist society, there's no margin for spending on safety and health, or providing decent jobs for all. It will literally take a proletarian revolution and a couple of ambitious five-year plans to turn things around. Britain desperately needs workers revolution: not Labourite "nationalisations," but the revolutionary expropriation of the parasitic capitalist class. ■

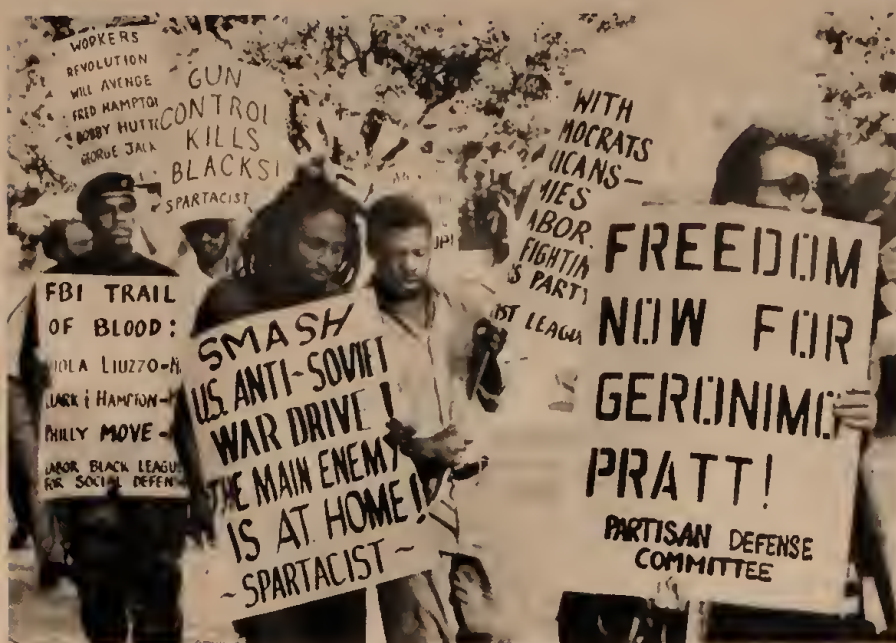


Reuters

Survivor rushed to hospital in Aberdeen. Death toll to date is 166.



# Reaganite Court Throws Out Pratt Appeal



Militant protest in front of San Francisco Federal Building, June 29. Former Black Panther leader Geronimo Pratt (right) has been behind bars for 18 years in notorious racist frame-up. WV Photos

## S.F. Demo: "Free Geronimo!"

SAN FRANCISCO—Some 150 unionists, blacks, students and socialists rallied June 29 outside the SF Federal Building to demand "Freedom Now for Geronimo Pratt!" and "Down with the Meese/FBI COINTELPRO Frame-Up!" Pratt, a decorated Vietnam vet and former Black Panther Party leader, has been in jail for 18 years for a crime he did not and could not have committed.

The demonstrators were infuriated to learn that earlier that day a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals threw out Pratt's appeal on an insignificant legal technicality that the appeal was filed ten days late. Eighteen months after a federal district court accepted the late filing; after the Court of Appeals scheduled the case for submission of briefs and accepted and read the written briefs; after hearing oral argument exposing the government conspiracy that has stolen 18 years of Pratt's life—now the three-judge panel of Nixon and Reagan appointees rules that "judicial integrity" requires that this innocent man be condemned to spend the rest of his life in a prison hell-hole, in order to keep the dirty crimes of COINTELPRO concealed.

So these haughty keepers of the keys, who sit in judgment on whether those who stand before them will go free or languish behind bars, hold, as Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney put it in sending fugitive slave Dred Scott back to slavery in 1857, that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." The court has inherent power to waive any procedural defect "in the interests of justice." But to those given their lofty positions by the same men who put Pratt where he is today—Nixon, Reagan and Meese—finally setting free America's foremost class-war prisoner is not in the interests of American capitalism's racist "justice."

Among those who addressed the rally organized by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense were Willie Lee Bell, Legislative Chair of Machinists Union Local 739; Lee Halterman, District Counsel for Congressman Ron Dellums; columnist Warren Hinckle; and Don Alexander of the Spartacist League. The rally heard

taped messages from Pratt and Mumia Abu-Jamal, a black journalist, MOVE supporter and former Panther currently on death row in Pennsylvania. Mumia has been sentenced to death for his political beliefs and activities. Messages of support for Pratt from San Francisco Supervisors Harry Britt and

Nancy Walker were read to the crowd.

"This filthy, racist outrage today comes as no surprise and is a continuation of the state's racist vindictiveness against Geronimo Pratt, America's foremost class-war prisoner," said Don Alexander of the Spartacist League. Stuart Hanlon, Pratt's attorney, told the

rally that Pratt remains "in prison for no reason other than his political beliefs." Halterman described House Resolution 413 introduced by Congressman Dellums "to call for the release of Pratt [and] to press the Congress to investigate the circumstances that have resulted in the erroneous and long-term incarceration of this person."

Speaking for the Partisan Defense Committee, Staff Counsel Valerie West outlined the FBI's campaign under the notorious Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to "neutralize" the Black Panthers through bloody state terror and repression. Pratt was framed up for the murder of a Santa Monica schoolteacher; FBI wiretaps proving Pratt was 400 miles away at the time have been suppressed. Former FBI agent Wesley Swearingen testified that Pratt was "set up." The June 29 decision shows that COINTELPRO "also comfortably resides in the less than august chambers of the federal bench," West said.

Calling for "outrage, real outrage" in response to the "classic '60s frame-up" of Pratt, Warren Hinckle said: "the cops know, the courts know...even the warden in San Quentin knows... [Pratt] is in jail on a phony charge." Hinckle followed up his appearance at the demonstration with a column in the 3 July *San Francisco Examiner* titled, "Law an ass." He said, "The case of Geronimo Pratt outrages the decent opinion of mankind," and observed that Pratt "was just another notch in J. Edgar Hoover's belt, another black trouble maker put away for life."

A dispatch by the Soviet news agency TASS reported on the protest and the federal circuit court's outrageous dismissal of Pratt's appeal. Citing Don Alexander, the dispatch noted: "The FBI hid from the judges and lawyers recordings, made with the help of listening devices, of a 'Black Panther' meeting in Oakland which Pratt was attending at the moment of the crime ascribed to him. But even though this fact has been established, and also that the 'witnesses' who gave evidence against Pratt at the trial turned out to be paid police [Okhrana] agents, the rulers stubbornly refuse to review the trial."



Unionists who spoke at rally: (from left) Ben Visnick of Oakland teachers, Willie Lee Bell of Machinists Local 739 and Malcolm Samuels of Hotel and Restaurant Workers. WV Photo



Spartacist spokesman Don Alexander (left), *San Francisco Examiner* columnist Warren Hinckle. WV Photos





# Mumia Abu-Jamal Speaks from Death Row

## "Free Pratt from Net of Naked State Terror!"

On June 13, from the depths of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania state prison's death row, Mumia Abu-Jamal recorded the following message of solidarity with Geronimo Pratt. Jamal, himself a former Black Panther and renowned journalist, was sentenced to die by the racist Philadelphia courts because of his background as a Panther and his outspoken support of the Philadelphia MOVE organization (see "Save Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Death Penalty!" Workers Vanguard No. 454, 20 May 1988). A transcript of that recording follows:

Years before the Reagan scourge lashed across America, blacks, browns, yellows and white poor folk of California felt the first stirrings of this rabid refugee from Death Valley. California's Black Panthers fell prey to a dual plague. One, the slimy, sinister intrigues of J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO, or FBI Counter-Intelligence Program; and two, the brutal repression of local police.

Caught up in this net of naked state terror was a well-known and well-respected Panther Party militant: Geronimo Pratt. The Panthers, reeling under police executions of over a score of young party members, faced the then-unknown, but far greater threat—that of an unsuspected core of police agents, FBI informers, and utter traitors. One such snitch, Julio Butler, was instructed to bring down Geronimo, and he did so by lying against him in a trial for murder which he knew Geronimo didn't and couldn't commit. And also lying about whether he was an informer for the state. Such lies have to date cost Geronimo over 18 years of his life engaged in

California's cruel dungeons. For five years he was held in solitary, hut to no avail, for Geronimo could be betrayed as the Negro traitor Butler has shown, but he remained unbroken.

As a young Panther assigned to the national headquarters in Berkeley, I remember Geronimo's visits north with warmth. In a time when we Panthers tried to outdo each other in seeming seriousness, Geronimo's constant smile and light laughing voice was a relief. Never aloof nor ever stodgy, Geronimo treated Panthers like brothers and sisters in the struggle. His style wasn't "Deputy Minister of Defense," but "Panther." And he was loved by brothers and sisters across this country for his dedication and his easygoing nature.

L.A. has its place in the struggle of Africans in America for independence. 1969 marked the vicious raid on L.A.'s Central Avenue headquarters where police unleashed an assault designed to liquidate party members, among them Geronimo. Hundreds of rounds whistled through the Southern California air, targeted at Panthers. Out of this conflict emerged the political prisoners known as the "L.A. 13," and in the aftermath a plan to "neutralize" chapter leadership—none other than Elmer Geronimo Pratt, L.A.'s Deputy Defense Minister.

Reagan had been governor of California for three years and the plans were hatched to have Geronimo off the streets before the end of his term. By 1970, by a criminal convergence of state and federal officials, Geronimo's frame was complete. Geronimo was imprisoned. By 1970 Reagan was re-elected to a second term as California's governor.

Think about this: today, nearly two

decades later, this same Reagan can prance around the Soviet city of Moscow and utter hypocritical inanities about human rights. What about Geronimo's human right to be free from frame-up? What about Ramona Africa's human right to be free? What about



Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1980.

the rights of the Africans, imprisoned and engaged in hellholes across Pennsylvania for the crime of being MOVE members? What about Leonard Peltier? What about the many political prisoners in dungeons across this modern-day

Babylon who hear about Reagan lecturing Gorbachev about human rights in Russia? What human rights are being observed by Geronimo in San Quentin? Dhoruba [one of the NY "Panther 21"] in Folsom? Ramona in Muncy? Chuckie Africa in Dallas? Reagan says dissidents in the Soviet Union get Siberia and the Gulag. What he doesn't say is dissidents in the U.S. get bombed in their homes and thrown into dungeons.

It's time to resist this madness and one way to begin is to demand freedom for Geronimo and all political prisoners. Congressman Ron Dellums of California has authored a resolution, No. 413, which calls for a Congressional investigation into COINTELPRO and the set-up of Geronimo. It also calls for his immediate release. Get your local Congressman to co-sponsor this bill. Also you can write direct to Congressman Peter Rodino, Jr., the chair of the Committee on the Judiciary at 2137 Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C. 20515.

It's a beginning, but it's a beginning a long time coming. It's long past time for us all to stand up and resist this system of destruction. It's long past time for us all to demand and work for freedom for political prisoners and prisoners of war. To quote MOVE founder John Africa, "It is insane not to resist something that gives nothing but sickness to you, your mothers, your fathers, your babies, your family."

This sickness can be seen in the drugs eating our community's life—drugs flown in by contra supply planes who dump death one way, only to return to the U.S. laden with another form of death to deaden the godly instinct of resistance. That sickness that breeds corruption and engages militants who dare to speak out against it. Fight back and resist by fighting for and working for the freedom of Geronimo and all political prisoners now.

This is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The Partisan Defense Committee is campaigning to prevent the legal murder of Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the racist death penalty. To obtain petitions to save Jamal or to donate to the work of the PDC, write to the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, New York 10013, or call (212) 732-7861. ■

Among the trade-union officials who spoke, Willie Lee Bell denounced the "terroristic tactics used by our state judicial system" against Pratt. Also addressing the rally were Tony Gonzalez of the American Indian Movement (recently returned from Moscow where he met with Soviet leaders on behalf of

imprisoned militant Leonard Peltier and Pratt); Randy Johnese of Service Employees International Union Local 535; Malcolm Samuels of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 28; Hursey Bush for the Labor Black League for Social Defense; and Ben Visnick of the Oakland Educa-

tional Association, who spoke of the recent resolution passed by the 230,000-member California Teachers Association supporting the Dellums resolution.

Among those who turned out for the rally were phone workers, government maintenance workers from the Presidio, Muni bus drivers, machinists from Oakland, ILWU warehousemen, and students from UC Berkeley, Laney College and SF State. Also present were members of the Committee to Free Geronimo Pratt, supported by the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee; a couple of supporters of the Workers Socialist League; and shamelessly, supporters of the wretched Bolshevik Tendency, whose spokesman this time whined about "sectarianism" to a united-front demonstration. Statements were read to the rally from JoNina Abron, former editor of the Black Panther; San Francisco State University professor Nathan Hare; Chicago Labor Black Struggle League; and Gilles Cazin, French auto worker and candidate of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France in the recent French parliamentary elections.

As Don Alexander of the Spartacist League told the rally:

"[Pratt] is in jail for the same reason that the bosses put PATCO leaders in leg irons, the same reason why Kentucky miners are in prison for defending their union against the bosses and scabs: to regiment the working class and oppressed for their racist, union-busting, anti-Soviet war drive."

Taking up the demonstrators' chant "For Mass Labor Action to Free Geronimo Pratt!" Alexander said: "To free Pratt and all class-war prisoners like Ramona Africa, the Kentucky miners, to save Mumia Abu-Jamal, to get rid of the whole blood-soaked apparatus of the capitalist state and its secret political police... means hard class struggle, the building of an integrated revolutionary party and the establishment of a socialist society which is the only way to put this horror without end called capitalism... behind us. Freedom now for Geronimo Pratt! Down with Meese/FBI COINTELPRO frame-up!" ■



Spartacists at June 29 S.F. rally recall victims of U.S. government's murderous vendetta against Black Panthers.

### Spartacist League Public Offices

—MARXIST LITERATURE—

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Thurs. 5:30-8:00 p.m., Sat. 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
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#### Chicago

Tues. 5:00-9:00 p.m. Sat. 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
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Chicago, Illinois Phone (312) 663-0715

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Tues. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Sat. 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
41 Warren St. (one block below  
Chambers St. near Church St.)  
New York, N.Y. Phone (212) 267-1025



# Persian Gulf...

(continued from page 1)

F-14 jet fighter. Just in time for the TV evening news and next day's newspaper headlines, the administration got its story together and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William J. Crowe, held a press briefing to present the "mistaken identity" line. According to Crowe, it all started early that Sunday morning when, in the midst of fighting off attacking Iranian gunships, the *Vincennes* spotted a plane flying outside commercial air corridors, emitting electronic signals of an F-14 fighter jet and speeding toward it on a "threatening flight profile." Since the plane supposedly refused to identify itself, he said, Captain Will Rogers III fired off two Standard surface-to-air missiles to defend his ship against attack.

One by one, practically hour by hour, the lies dissolved. Flight 655 was one of five regularly scheduled flights each week over that route. It never once left its air corridor (whose width expanded from one day to the next in newspaper maps). But the *Vincennes* happened to be sitting smack in the middle of that corridor. Then the 5 July *Washington Post* revealed that both air traffic control at Bandar Abbas and another U.S. Navy ship, the *USS Sides*, confirmed that the Airbus was *not* flying in a "threatening" rapid descent toward the *Vincennes* but was climbing. The last transmission from Flight 655 to Bandar Abbas control tower was its routine request for permission to climb to 14,000 feet. And the only signals the *Sides* radar picked up from the Airbus transponder, which automatically emits the plane's characteristics, were on a civilian channel.

In any case, an enemy jet moving in for a sneak attack would hardly announce itself on a military transponder channel to its intended target! Even the story about the initial engagement turned out to be a pack of lies. The *Vincennes* provoked a battle with the Iranian boats—in reality modified yachts—by sending out a helicopter to buzz them after having horned in to

"defend" a Norwegian freighter which had conspicuously *not* asked for any assistance. The only response from the boats was gunfire, but that was enough excuse for the *Vincennes* and a nearby frigate to blast them out of the water.

The half-billion-dollar Aegis electronic surveillance and firing system—which couldn't tell the difference between a wide-bodied Airbus and an F-14 one-third its size and with a completely different configuration—has such an abysmal track record for accuracy that its very use in the heavily trafficked Gulf region is an invitation to the sort of disaster that happened. *Boston Globe* (4 July) correspondent Fred Kaplan pointedly asked: "If the most sophisticated tracking radar in the US fleet cannot distinguish a commercial airliner from an F-14 fighter jet, how can it distinguish an F-14 from, say, a Soviet MiG-25?" Two years ago, the Aegis-equipped *Yorktown* off Libya fired missiles at what turned out to be a low-hanging cloud.

But, even if Washington's story were true, the *Vincennes* knew it was not facing an imminent threat. If the plane had been an attack fighter moving in for the kill, it would have been flying consider-

ably lower and faster at that point and it would have *locked* on its attack radar, making its hostile intent unambiguously clear. But in fact, an F-14 was incapable of attacking the *Vincennes* from that distance *because it is not designed to carry air-to-surface missiles!* The F-14 is an American-made air defense fighter equipped only for air-to-air missiles. A veteran Navy pilot told the *Washington Post* (6 July): "An F14 nine miles away at 9,000 feet just isn't a threat to a big ship." Besides, Iran hasn't launched an aerial attack on shipping in the Gulf for nearly two years.

After the *USS Stark* was hit by an Exocet missile fired from an Iraqi Mirage jet in May 1987, the rules of engagement for American warships in the Gulf were changed from firing only after positive identification of hostile intent to opening up on anything which has not been positively identified as "friendly." Was the captain of the *Vincennes* worried that he'd be bounced out in disgrace like the captain of the *Stark*, or did he see that blip on his radar screen as a heaven-sent opportunity to notch up another "kill"?

The Americans' justification for going into the Persian Gulf in the first place was to protect freedom of shipping on the high seas. In fact, as a Senate committee report recently admitted, commercial shipping in the Gulf is now more dangerous than ever before, while the air lanes have been turned into a shooting gallery. Alone among naval forces in the region, the Americans refuse to monitor civilian control tower frequencies, unilaterally countermanding air traffic controllers' instructions and bullying pilots. Last October the *Washington Post* quoted an exchange between the Navy and one air traffic controller in Dubai so exasperated by a series of reckless actions that he finally demanded: "'U.S. warship, you are posing a hazard to civilian aviation. Are you going to be doing this for the rest of the day?' 'That's affirmative, sir,' the Navy replied."

On June 8, a Navy warship almost forced two 747 jumbo jets to collide, when it ordered the pilot of one of the planes, on its final descent into Dubai, to veer left. Had the pilot followed Navy orders, he would have flown right into the flight path of a second 747 just taking off from nearby Sharjah airport, a major international transit point for flights between Europe and the Orient. A *New York Times* (5 July) editorial baldly claimed that not only the seas but the skies as well belong to the U.S. Sixth Fleet, saying that "the onus for avoiding such accidents in the future rests on civilian aircraft: avoid combat zones, fly high, acknowledge warnings"—or be shot down like the 290 people aboard Iran Air 655!

## KAL 007—Anti-Soviet War Provocation

The shooting down of the Iranian airliner immediately raised comparisons with Korean Air Lines Flight 007, shot

down over Soviet territory in 1983. Reagan angrily denied any comparison, again claiming the Russians *knew* they were shooting down a civilian plane even though his own intelligence agencies now admit this is not true. Admiral Crowe argued at his press conference that "the fundamental differences are, of course, that it was not a war zone... and, secondly, the KAL 007 was not warned in any way, form, or fashion." *Bullshit!*

On one point Reagan and Crowe are right: there is no comparison. While Iran Air 655 was shot down over Iranian airspace, KAL 007 flew more than 350 miles off course deep into Soviet territory. It passed directly over some of the most sensitive Soviet military installations in the Far East. For an hour and a half after scrambling, Soviet jets tried to get KAL 007 to identify itself without success and issued *repeated warnings*, even firing tracer shells past its cockpit four times. Not only did the Korean airliner ignore all the warnings, but it had all its navigation lights turned off. When the Soviet pilot finally shot it down, he thought he was shooting down a U.S. RC-135 espionage-reconnaissance plane, with a profile similar to the 747, whose flight path had deliberately intersected that of KAL 007 as it entered Soviet airspace.

KAL 007 was an *anti-Soviet war provocation*, with over 200 civilian hostages on board. All the while it was over Soviet territory it was being tracked by American and Japanese electronic stations, which at no time notified the Russians of any problem. Its purpose was to trigger Soviet defensive radar responses and its flight was timed to coincide with an overpass by a U.S. intelligence-gathering satellite. If there is any connection between the two incidents, it is that in both cases, as we headlined over KAL 007, *Reagan's story stinks!*

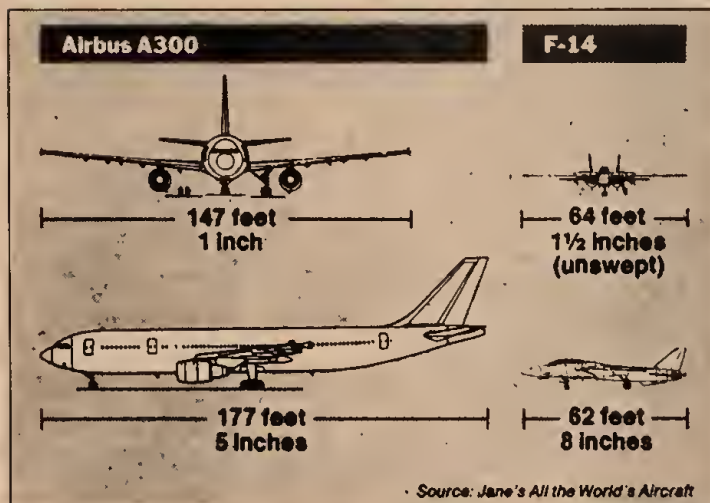
## Workers Revolution—The Only Road to Peace!

As we said at the time of Democrat Carter's failed "Desert One" helicopter raid, "In a military confrontation between Iran, even under the leadership of the reactionary mullahs, and U.S. imperialism, workers must demand: Hands Off Iran!" (*WV* No. 255, 2 May 1980). But the American presence in the Gulf has not transformed the Iran-Iraq war into an imperialist war against Iran. Until two years ago, when the Iran/contras affair exploded, the U.S. was shipping arms to Iran by the plane-load. Now it engages in repeated murderous provocations against the Iranians. Yet it turns out the Iranians have made repeated initiatives to normalize relations with Washington, while backing away from their earlier insistence on the overthrow of the Iraqi Ba'athist regime as a condition for ending the war. On the American side, Shultz is pushing for "compensation" to the victims of Flight 655, using blood money to accomplish what a kosher cake, Bible, pearl-handled revolvers and TOW missiles didn't: open up a dialogue with Teheran.

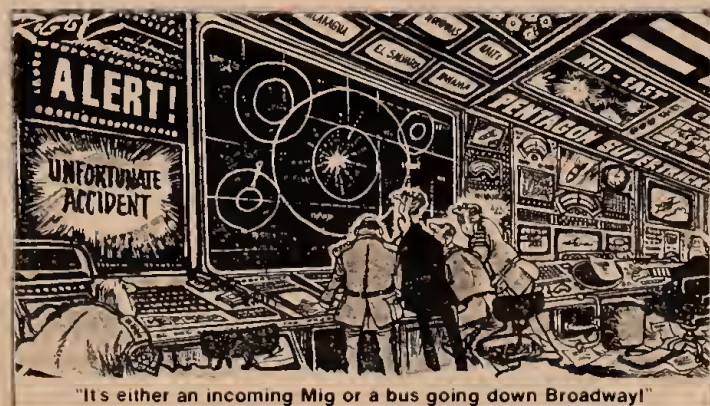
The Iran-Iraq war is a continuing squalid slaughter which has already consumed the lives of over a million Iraqi and Iranian toilers. Both regimes are vicious enemies, first and foremost, of their "own" workers and peasants; both are murderous oppressors of national minorities within their borders, particularly Kurds. Eight years of fratricidal slaughter with no end in sight has fueled growing war-weariness and popular opposition, but pacifist appeals will not put an end to this bloodbath. Marxists understand that war breeds revolution, and it will take revolutionary class struggle by the workers and oppressed in each country against their main enemy—the Iranian mullahs and the Iraqi colonels—to stop this horror.

Yet at a New York protest against the Persian Gulf shootdown on July 7, the Marcyite Workers World Party simultaneously apologized for the Iranian mullahocracy while pushing the social-

Spartacist contingent in New York protest of U.S. Persian Gulf atrocity, July 7.



Pentagon propaganda claimed warship mistook Airbus (left) for F-14 fighter one-third its size.



Rigby/NY Daily News





KAL 007 and Iran Air 655 incidents have one thing in common—Reagan's story stinks! Soviet Marshal Ogarkov (left) shows Korean airliner deep over militarily sensitive Soviet territory. Admiral Crowe's map shows "attacking" Iranian civilian plane in its own airspace.

pacifist call to "Bring Peace to Iran!" by supporting UN Resolution 598. In contrast, Spartacist contingents at this and another protest in New York that day denounced the U.S. massacre while advancing the perspective of revolutionary defeatism in the war between the Iranian mullahs and the Iraqi colonels. Our comrades carried signs reading, "For a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan!" "Down with the Mullahs and Colonels! For Workers Revolution in Iran and Iraq!" and "Down with CIA's Afghan Cutthroats—Soviet Withdrawal Poses Bloodbath!"

Continuing the policy of cringing conciliation to U.S. imperialism exemplified by its unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Gorbachev regime has handled this gruesome massacre with kid gloves. While early on, Radio Moscow called the Iran Air massacre "deliberate cruel murder," a few hours later Soviet spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov borrowed the language of the Reagan administration in treating the U.S.' terrorist act as a "tragic accident," while appealing for the U.S. to withdraw the Sixth Fleet in favor of a United Nations "peacekeeping" force.

Given the U.S.' stated intention for going in "to head off further involvement in the Gulf by the Soviet Union," this is absurdly, willfully blind. The Near East already has one UN "peacekeeping" force—which acts as border guards for the Zionist terrorists. Should a UN force replace the Sixth Fleet it would simply provide a United Nations cover for imperialist policing of the region, just as the U.S. imperialist war against North Korea and Red China was waged under the guise of a UN "peacekeeping force."

The cynical arrogance with which U.S. rulers justify blowing 290 innocent people out of the air underscores the dangerous idiocy of the Stalinist bureaucracy's quest for "peaceful coexistence." We have noted in the past that Ayatollah Khomeini and his seventh-century theocratic outlook come off rational compared to the madmen in the White House. With their reckless disregard for anything that stands in their way, the war-crazed American rulers could easily trigger a nuclear war with their haywire high-tech schemes. There is only one way to achieve peace on this planet and avenge the heinous crimes of the barbaric criminals in Washington: proletarian revolution by the oppressed and working masses of this country. ■

## Electric Boat...

(continued from page 3)

regimentation and "Big Brother"-type surveillance, dangerous working conditions and rotten wages. Now they are supposed to take the givebacks, while the sleazy "defense" contractors line their pockets (and those of Congressmen and Pentagon consultants) with profits. But the union tops derail labor struggle into racist protectionist schemes pitting U.S. workers against their class brothers in Japan and Korea, demanding enforcement of Jones Act provisions against ships built in other countries.

When you hear the union bureaucrats talk about the "partnership" of American labor and capital, hold onto your wallet. This is nothing but surrender to the vicious offensive of the bosses and their government, whether it's Bush or Dukakis in the White House. They're hustling unions and terrorizing minorities to keep a lid on social unrest and loot the Pentagon's bills. Democrat Truman seized the steel mills during the Korean War in order to hold down steel workers' wages—all in the name of "national defense." A militant strike at Groton could be the first shot in a long-awaited counteroffensive of workers and minorities—to hell with more givebacks to finance Reagan's and the Democrats' war plans.

Workers at Electric Boat have seen the pathetic "hockades" of the yard by pacifist protesters demanding the yard be converted to "peaceable" uses. We in the Spartacist League know that the capitalist class will never voluntarily disarm. It will take a socialist revolution for the skills of workers such as those at Electric Boat to be put to the use of humanity, rather than building the instruments of nuclear holocaust.

At one protest during the commissioning of the Trident USS *Henry M. Jackson* in 1984, the KKK showed up to terrorize the pacifist protesters. The unions at EB should have met these racist terrorists with a mobilization of labor power to drive them back in their holes. In small Connecticut towns such as Meriden and Vernon, the lynch mob terror of these racist scum has become all too familiar. If allowed to grow, these fascists will be the bourgeoisie's shock troops against the unions—the Klan must be crushed in the egg with labor/black power! The MTC must fight for

## Urgent Appeal to Free the Sharpeville Six!

**FLASH**—As we go to press, it was announced July 12 that the Sharpeville Six have won another stay of execution. Their lawyer, Prakash Diar, said he was "overjoyed" as almost all legal avenues to save their lives had been exhausted.

The Sharpeville Six, on death row in South Africa, were facing the hangman's noose July 19. These five black men and one black woman were condemned to death for simply being in the area on 3 September 1984 when an enraged crowd of black rent strikers stoned to death a collaborator of the apartheid regime. As a result of worldwide protest, they won a stay of execution in March, but their lawyers' application for a new trial was rejected in June.

On July 6, attorneys for the Sharpeville Six filed a desperate last appeal to

the Pretoria Supreme Court to reopen the case, based on the evidence that the main prosecution witness had lied on the stand. "Torture and police pressure forced me not to tell the court my truth," said the witness in a passionate letter urging "please save the Six," published in the black-edited *Citrus Press* July 1.

An international outcry must immediately be raised to save the Sharpeville Six from the gallows! A protest letter to the South African ambassador in Washington, D.C. sent by the Partisan Defense Committee on June 20 said:

"The Sharpeville Six have been condemned to die for one reason—they 'shared a common purpose' with the millions of black South Africans, and hundreds of millions around the world, who detest your racist apartheid regime. The Partisan Defense Committee joins with them in de-



Spartacist protesters at Soweto Day rally in Cleveland, June 18.

manding the Sharpeville Six be immediately released."

Only continued vigilance and international protest can win freedom for the Sharpeville Six.

jobs for the large black and Hispanic minority population of New London, across the river from Groton, with a union-run recruitment and training program.

The "Reagan years" began with Democrats Carter and Mondale, who invoked Taft-Hartley against the miners union and laid out the plans which Reagan used to bust PATCO. The labor fakers who sit atop the unions in this country enforced labor discipline for the bourgeoisie, as union contracts were torn to shreds and givebacks forced on millions of workers. But with the wind out of the sails of the Reaganite offensive, now is the time for hard class struggle. As we said in "Labor's Gotta Play Hardball":

"Every major workers' struggle becomes a political fight requiring class-struggle leadership. Labor militants must therefore link the fight to oust the die-on-your-knees union bureaucrats to building a revolutionary workers party. Such a workers party would fight for a workers government to expropriate capitalism to end once and for all the hideous social system that turns the enormous industrial wealth squeezed out of the lifeblood of the working class into misery, poverty and the spectre of nuclear holocaust." ■

## Guardian Angels...

(continued from page 4)

immigrant in Perth Amboy, New Jersey last month. Sliwa's thugs in red berets were invited by the racist police to help patrol the Hispanic and black neighborhoods.

During the last year the Guardian Angels started patrolling in the East Village and Chelsea, both heavily minority, working-class neighborhoods now rapidly being gentrified. Sliwa's arrival in the West 40s coincides with the announcement of a massive redevelopment project in Times Square, the beginning of "the most massive urban renewal plan ever launched in the country" (*New York Times*, 22 June). The president of the 42nd Street Development Project says "the days of blight and crime on 42nd Street are numbered." Sliwa's "war on drugs" coincides exactly with the plans of Koch and Trump. The winners will be the real-estate developers. The losers will be those minorities and poor who can still

afford to live in the Clinton district (formerly Hell's Kitchen).

The Guardian Angels vigilantes won't stop crime any more than the drug-dealing, kill-crazy cops do. Their purpose is to whip up a racist backlash that means stepped-up repression against the ghettos and barrios. This is no less true of outfits like Sonny Carson's "Black Men's Movement Against Crack" or the anti-drug vigilante squads set up by Al Sharpton, a black FBI flunk posing as a militant. Rampant lumper crime is the result of enforced poverty and brutal oppression in a decaying, racist society. For the ruling class riding around in their limos with bodyguards licensed to carry, the answer to crime is to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the state while keeping the population defenseless. We Marxists hold that people have the right to armed self-defense against the thugs bred by capitalism's decay—against mobs of hat-swinging killers in Howard Beach or swaggering "crimestoppers" in the subway. And when the working class takes power genuine justice will be meted out to all those responsible for the nightmare of racist "law and order" in this criminal system. ■



# Cárdenas...

(continued from page 12)

opportunity to change the relationship of forces," he can only say: "This is a hard thing to argue with, because there is a real basis for this idea." And while remaining "independent" at a purely formal level, in reality the PRT/UP campaign is in a political bloc "against electoral fraud" encompassing both the right and left opposition to the PRI.

The PRF is part of the Democratic Assembly for Effective Suffrage, which released a joint statement by Cárdenas, Ibarra and Manuel Clouthier, the candidate of the rightist National Action Party (PAN), calling to "back up the people in the legal and active defense of their vote" and declaring, "Together let us win freedom" (*La Jornada*, 1 July). That this is not just a matter of certifying the vote count is now being demonstrated as the opposition takes to the streets. As PRTer Rodriguez explained, "in every rally, in every meeting, we explain the meaning of election fraud, and we are preparing people for the big struggle that will take place in Mexico after July 6." And in that struggle, rather than fighting on a program for workers democracy through socialist revolution, the PRT is joining hands with the clerical-reactionary PAN and the bourgeois-nationalist Cárdenas coalition.

## Morenoite Tail of the Popular Front

The "Cárdenas phenomenon" has put the PRT's junior partners in its Unidad Popular lash-up, the Partido de los Trabajadores Zapatistas (PTZ—Zapatista Workers Party), in a bind. This is the Mexican affiliate of the tendency led by the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno. The PTZ endorsed the UP's sub-reformist program, but they try to dress it up with more leftist rhetoric (like a campaign sticker saying "Unidad Popular" and "Socialism"). The PTZ's *El Socialista* ran articles on the corporatist history of Cardenism and characterized the Cárdenas alliance as a popular front. But don't expect a proletarian opposition to class collaboration and bourgeois nationalism from the Morenoites, whose deceased Argentine *caudillo* published the newspaper *Palabra Obrera* in the 1950s as an "organ of revolutionary workers Peronism under the discipline of General Peron and the Peronist High Command".

So when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas began attracting tens of thousands to his rallies, the pull was too strong for the Morenoites to resist. A PTZ "Open Letter" greeted Cárdenas' May 25 visit

to the National University. After a tip of the sombrero to Rosario Ibarra and the UP because it "represents the possibility of establishing a workers, peasants and people's government" (through bourgeois elections, especially this farce?), they get down to brass tacks: Would Cárdenas and his National Democratic Front please "come out for unity in action" to "democratize" the university, to win a "budgetary increase" for education, and join in "defense of the vote"? Not a word about the political independence of the workers movement. The PTZ reprinted this groveling letter in the June *El Socialista*—but in accord with the Moreno school of falsification, they altered the text, adding a lengthy explanation of why they were addressing Cárdenas and cutting out the words "unity in action".

The Morenoites are no opponents of bourgeois nationalism. In fact, at the time of the 1986 soccer World Cup in Mexico, when mass demonstrations of the poor chanted "We don't want goals, we want beans" (*No queremos goles*,

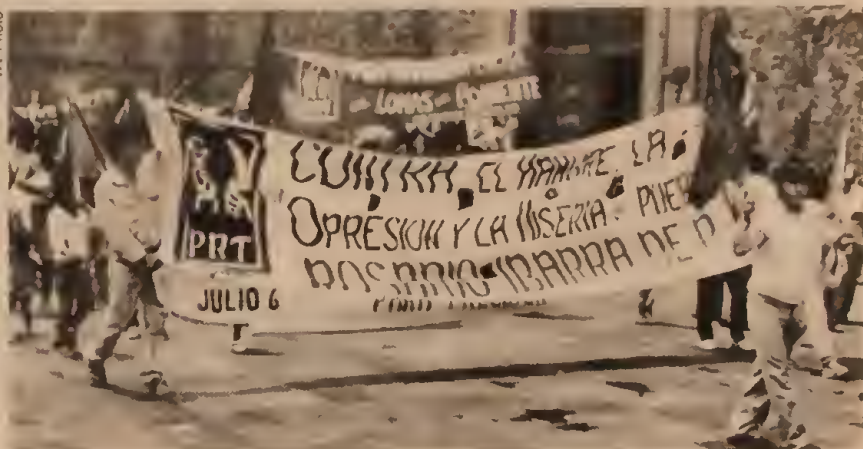
the Mandelites called themselves the "fourth component" of Mitterrand's Union of the Left, while Moreno hailed "the great socialist victory of Mitterrand" (*Opción*, May 1981). Today the Morenoites sell their Menshevism with talk of a "democratic revolution" from Argentina to South Korea and the Philippines where new pro-yanqui regimes try to dress up IMF austerity with "democracy."

The Mandelites and Morenoites are also united by visceral anti-Sovietism, expressed most graphically in opposing Soviet intervention against CIA-backed Islamic holy warriors in Afghanistan, and in their "solidarity with Solidarność," the Polish company union funded by the White House and Vatican. These impostors would never recognize their politics in Trotsky's Fourth International, which fought tooth and nail against popular-frontism and those who "peddle their wares in the shadow of the People's Front"; which stood firmly for defense of the Soviet Union against the petty-bourgeois hue

The Mexican crisis also has tremendous impact to the north. "Social stability south of the border" has long been a keystone of the American empire. When the last Mexican Revolution broke out, U.S. imperialism invaded once again, sending General Pershing to chase after Pancho Villa in the north and the Marines to occupy Veracruz. Today as the Latin American debt bomb ticks ever closer to financial and social detonation, as the class war in Central America rages on despite bourgeois "peace" plans brokered by the Democratic Party, as American companies build more and more plants in Mexico while a "human bridge" of Mexican workers goes back and forth across the Rio Grande and through Zapata Canyon, Mexican workers are more than ever linked to their class brothers and sisters in the United States.

For more than half a century, Mexico has been ruled by the timeworn formula of bourgeois-nationalist demagoguery plus honapartist repression. Today the working class is straining against the

Election banner says "Against Hunger, Oppression and Poverty," yet PRT platform doesn't go beyond classless "democracy."



*queremos frijoles*) the Morenoites headlined, "Yes we want goals!" (*El Socialista*, June 1986). For both the PTZ and PRT, their fig leaf of "independence" is just a cover for impotence. Their problem is that right now nobody wants to buy their services as a left cover for the popular front.

## Forge a Trotskyist Party!

Capitulation to popular-frontism is a hallmark of both Mandelite and Morenoite brands of pseudo-Trotskyism. In Chile the United Secretariat's local guru, Luis Vitale, hailed the election of Allende's Unidad Popular as "the political-electoral triumph of the masses," while the Morenoites denied that the UP was a popular front, instead labeling it a "broad democratic and anti-imperialist movement." In France,

and ery over "poor little Finland" on the eve of World War II. Instead of the reformist lool's gold of "democratic revolution," authentic Trotskyists fight for permanent revolution against capitalism; against capitulation to bourgeois nationalism, they champion proletarian internationalism.

For the crisis in Mexico is not just national. To the south, Central America is racked by civil war in El Salvador, contra war in Nicaragua, army terror in Guatemala, death squad terror in Honduras and the rest of Washington's puppet regimes. Instead of fighting for the victory of the workers and peasants, the Mandelite PRI pushes empty "solidarity" campaigns ("a flower for Nicaragua and peace in Central America") and avidly supports efforts by the bourgeois governments of the region, including and especially the Mexican government, to use diplomatic means to stop the spread of revolution. Last fall, the PRT sang the praises of the Esquipulas "peace" accord, which "expresses... the common need (of all classes and tendencies involved) to avoid the catastrophe of a general conflagration" (*Bandera Socialista*, 23 November 1987).

These reformists' calls for a "peaceful solution" in Central America are undisguised political support to their own ruling class. The liberal Mexican daily *La Jornada* (4 June) reported that in an election rally in Baja California, PRT leader Edgard Sánchez read a declaration "emphasizing that during the government of Miguel de la Madrid there has been a consistent and growing abandonment of the liberal political principles represented for decades by the foreign policy of our country." In appealing to the traditional pseudo-nationalist foreign policy of the "PRI-government," the PRT emphasizes that it is a party for class collaboration, not class struggle. And the Morenoite PTZ, which claims to oppose the Esquipulas and Sapó accords as counterrevolutionary, nevertheless forms an election coalition with their most avid proponents in Mexico.

letters of capitalist rule—and the popular front seeks to fasten them tight with a "new" version of the PRI. As we wrote in "Mexico Atop the Volcano" (*WT* No. 429, 29 May 1987), the subordination to bourgeois politics of the Mexican "left," with the Stalinists in the lead and the fake-Trotskyists hringing up the rear, has meant that "from 1915 on, the economically powerful Mexican proletariat has been politically impotent, a sleeping giant drugged by nationalism dressed in 'revolutionary' colors." The Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas campaign is an attempt to restore the corporatist control over the masses established by his father. But unlike "Tata" (Papa) Cárdenas, with his nationalizations and land reform, Cárdenas junior has nothing to sell but empty "democratic" rhetoric.

In January 1939, on the eve of another Mexican election, to select the successor to General Lázaro Cárdenas, Leon Trotsky wrote in an editorial explaining why *Clave*, the Spanish-language magazine of the Fourth International, did not support any candidate:

"Naturally, this is not due to an anarchist prejudice against participation in politics. More than once we have seen where this prejudice leads—in France, in Spain, and in Mexico itself. No. We are for the fullest participation of the workers in politics. But we are for independent participation. At the present time in Mexico there is no workers' party, no trade union that is in the process of developing independent class politics and that is able to launch an independent candidate. Under these conditions, our only possible course of action is to limit ourselves to Marxist propaganda and to the preparation of a future independent party of the Mexican proletariat."

The international Spartacist tendency fights to reforge the world party of socialist revolution on the proletarian-revolutionary program of genuine Trotskyism, the program of intransigent, internationalist class struggle. The key to breaking the chains of bourgeois nationalism in Mexico is forging a genuine Trotskyist party, section of a reborn Fourth International. ■

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# Mexico Erupts...

(continued from page 12)

and party bureaucracy, receiving secret internal government reports on the vote count. Furthermore, Cárdenas has appealed to the top military officials, and Defense Minister General Juan Arévalo Gardoqui announced that the armed forces were "100 percent apolitical" in the contest.

The White House, Wall Street and spokesmen for U.S. imperialism generally have been caught flatfooted by the Mexican elections and are now extremely nervous. The semihonapartist regime in Mexico, now in full decay, is the product of the frustration of a peasant revolution which failed because it lacked the proletarian leadership necessary to overthrow capitalist rule. It was finally squelched after seven years through a combination of nationalist-populist demagoguery (the Constitution of 1917) and brutal repression (the assassination of Zapata and Villa and thousands of their fighters). Mexico's capitalist rulers have needed a "firm hand" because this heritage is still alive among the Mexican masses. Even more so today, in the midst of economic crisis, to counterpose bourgeois "democracy" to this "strong state" is illusory. The only way democracy will be won for the working masses is through proletarian revolution.

## For Mexican Trotskyism!

A joint declaration by Cárdenas of the FDN and two other presidential candidates, Manuel Clouthier of the PAN and Rosario Ibarra of the pseudo-Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), warned that in the case of tampering with the election results "we will proceed to defend the rights of the Mexican people with all the arms that the constitution grants us" (*El Sol de México*, 7 July). Around the country, there were meetings of the left and right opposition, including the PRT and the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS), to plan joint actions against the government. Vigilance over vote counting is one thing, but this *political rotten bloc* ties the fake-lefts to arch-defenders of Yankee imperialism such as Clouthier and



Mexican army patrols streets during July 6 elections.

Fernando Lopez Romero

his rightist mafia. For the Mexican working people, this spells disaster.

During Cárdenas' triumphal march through his native state of Michoacán, where he was the PRI governor in the '70s, tens of thousands came out to greet him, chanting, "Ya llegó, ya está aquí, él que va a chingar al PRI" (He's arrived, he's here, the man who's going to fuck the PRI). Yet Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is not out to screw the PRI, but to refurbish its image and recompose its base. The co-leader of Cárdenas' "Democratic Current," Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, is a former president of the government party, infamous for stealing elections such as in the state of Nayarit in 1975. The Cardenista popular front offers the same old bourgeois-nationalist demagoguery with a new set of initials.

The FDN campaign rests on an appeal to the Cárdenas myth. Coming to power at the end of a succession of military *caudillos* (strongmen)—generals Obregón, Calles and their successors—Papa ("Tata") Cárdenas managed to "institutionalize" the Mexican Revolution by skillfully derailing worker and peasant militancy with his land reform, nationalizations and class-collaborationist schemes for "workers administration" of state capitalist industry. The result was the corporatist, gangster-buttressed CTM union bureaucracy which to this day enforces

PRI control of the labor and peasant movements. At the same time, Cárdenas enhanced his reputation as a man of courage by being the only bourgeois ruler to offer refuge to the exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky.

Mexican workers are not disinterested in the outcome of the present squabble among their rulers; the solution, however, is not to get sucked into the wake of the Cárdenas popular front but to *mobilize their own class forces*. Today the free-marketeers around Harvard-trained economist Salinas want to undo Mexico's state capitalist economic structure. In April this meant the mass firing of 13,000 Aeroméxico workers. Now miners at the Cananea copper complex find their jobs on the auction block. The answer is not voting for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, but to *seize the plants and hold them hostage*. When the government claims that state enterprises are not competitive, as at Mexicana airlines, labor struggle must impose *workers control to open the books* and put an end to bureaucratic corruption. To defend workers' living standards against inflation, union action is required to impose a massive pay hike and a *sliding scale of wages*.

If Cárdenas was elected president, Marxists defend his democratic right to take office. But we do not join forces with a bourgeois Cardenista political

bloc; rather we defend the workers' democratic rights by proletarian means. What's going on right now in Mexico is bargaining over the outcome of the election. The limited mobilizations called by Cárdenas—and eagerly joined by pseudo-leftists like the PRT, which declares, "We must reaffirm in the streets the victory won over the PRI" and "All of us who voted against the PRI are ready to go into action" (*La Jornada*, 10 July)—are pressure tactics to arrange a deal with the Federal Election Commission. But if negotiations break down, opening a period of political chaos, the question will be posed, particularly in the workers' *colonias* and vast plebeian cities surrounding the capital, of forming *workers soviets and workers militias*.

The drastic slashing of the masses' living standards by more than half since the beginning of the economic crisis in 1982 will not be restored by Cárdenas' program of a "suspension" of payments on the debt to the New York bankers in order to work out new terms. To *repudiate the imperialist debt* requires a fight for *workers revolution*, extending to the United States as well, for an isolated Mexican workers state would still be subject to imperialist blackmail. And while the reformist parliamentarist left joins the PRI and regional bourgeois regimes in support of the Esquipulas "peace" accords which put the arm on Sandinista Nicaragua and put Salvadoran leftist guerrillas up against the wall, authentic Trotskyists must fight for *workers revolution throughout Central America*.

In the Philippines the mobilization of "people's power" in the streets in tandem with "democratic" movements in the army installed the regime of Cory Aquino. But it has not brought land to the peasants, workers strikes are still violently broken, and death squads are on the rise. In Mexico today, no less than in Spain in the 1930s or Chile in the '70s, popular fronts and bonapartist repression are the last resorts of capitalist rule. The crisis of a half century of corporatist rule under the PRI has created a historic opportunity for Mexican workers to fight for power in their own right. But such a struggle demands that they break with nationalist-populism, now spearheaded by Cárdenas, and forge a party modeled on the Russian Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

# Boston Housing...

(continued from page 2)

integration debacle" (*Bay State Banner*, 22 January). F.A.T.E. leaders hope to refile their scheme to carve out a bantustan-like "city" incorporating the present ghetto boundaries of Roxbury, Mattapan and Columbia Point in time for the November elections.

The fight for affordable integrated housing is indeed crucial in this city where the cost of buying a house or renting has gone up 50 percent in the last three years, and an average house now costs \$180,000. The 14,000-long waiting list to get into the often decaying projects is itself testimony to the need for massive construction of low-rent housing. Democratic Party presidential nominee Michael Dukakis ballyhoos a "Massachusetts miracle" which has led to a mini-boom for the non-union high-tech defense contractors along the Route 128 and 495 beltways and for commercial and office buildings downtown. The gentrification of "the Hub" proceeds apace as Beacon Hill Brahmins, well-heeled insurance company executives, pinstriped bankers and liberal professionals from the ivy-covered campuses vie for space. Meanwhile, heavy industry has gone into a precipitous decline, the poor are driven to the wall and working people cannot

Mass protest drives racist terrorist KKK off the streets of Boston, October 1982.



find a decent place to live.

A struggle to integrate every aspect of social life in this city is especially urgent as the school board begins dismantling court-ordered busing, talking again about "neighborhood," i.e., segregated, schools. And the continuing threat of racist violence was dramatically shown in the recent attempted murder by arson of a Laotian family in Lynn.

Boston is not a uniform mass of racist reaction. Thousands of white working people can be mobilized to stop racist mobs. In 1982, hundreds effectively stopped a clot of Ku Klux Klansmen when they tried to assemble a lynch mob

at Government Center. In the mid-'70s battle over busing the Spartacist League uniquely called for labor/black mobilization and defense guards to defend the limited busing program and make integration of education real by extending it to the suburbs. We also posed the need for labor/black defense guards to protect black residents of the Columbia Point project bordering South Boston from attacks by marauding racist vigilantes.

"Furthermore," we pointed out at the time, "we call for the construction throughout the city of low-rent, high-quality, racially integrated public hous-

ing. Such measures would significantly undercut the racist fears of South Boston whites, who see busing as an "invasion" of the crime-ridden ghetto, first into "their" schools and next into "their" neighborhoods" ("Stop Racist Terror in Boston!" *Young Spartacus* No. 26, November 1974). Once again the need is posed for integrated working-class defense to protect minority families from racist violence. Integrate South Boston, Charlestown and all area housing now! For labor/black defense guards to smash racist terror! For massive area-wide construction of low-rent, high-quality housing for all! ■



# WORKERS VANGUARD

## For Workers Revolution, Not Populist Nationalism! Mexico Erupts Over Elections

JULY 12—Bringing to an end more than half a century of one-party rule in Mexico, the July 6 elections have opened up a period of sharp struggles which not only threaten the domination of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) but could shake Mexican capitalism to its roots. The six-year economic crisis has become a regime crisis, and with the PRI machine torn by infighting it could quickly escalate. The unexpectedly large vote for presidential challenger Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his National Democratic Front (FDN) reflects in a distorted fashion the seething anger over IMF-dictated austerity and poverty, and the masses' search for some way—any way—to fight back. The Cárdenas popular front seeks to channel the massive discontent into the framework of bourgeois politics. Its aim is to restore credibility for pro-imperialist capitalist rule in Mexico.

Throughout the last period there have been militant workers' struggles: plant occupations by VW strikers, wildcats by garment workers in the *maquiladoras* (free trade zones), tens of thousands taking to the streets of the capital. But these struggles, challenging the straitjacket of PRI bureaucratic control, cannot succeed without posing a *political* mobilization of the proletariat for power. The Cárdenas coalition, by tying the workers to a sector of the bosses, is a roadblock to class struggle. Like Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular in Chile, it has awakened great hopes, but in power it would only dash them, preparing a bloodbath by the forces of reaction. What's desperately needed now in Mexico is a break from all vari-



As Cárdenas claims victory, supporters protest government delay in releasing election results.

ants of bourgeois nationalist-populism. This requires above all a struggle to forge a revolutionary proletarian vanguard, a Trotskyist party, to lead the masses' struggles forward to a workers and peasants government to expropriate the exploiters and break the imperialist chains.

Seven days after the vote, still no results have been released, as the government seems paralyzed. PRI nom-

inee Carlos Salinas de Gortari had promised "transparency" (the Spanish translation of *glasnost*) in the elections. As an expression of "modern politics," high-powered computers were brought in so that unofficial results would be forthcoming the very night of the balloting, instead of the usual week's delay to accommodate vote rigging. But as the returns began coming in showing a heavy vote for Cárdenas, the com-

puters mysteriously broke down. First, Interior Minister Manuel Bartlett brazenly ascribed the breakdown to "atmospheric conditions," and then to a "heart attack" in the phone system! When it became clear that the PRI had lost Mexico City and the surrounding states of Morelos, México and Michoacán, the government started yelling fraud and demanding a recount.

Both Salinas and Cárdenas have claimed victory. Cárdenas called for "popular mobilization" to prevent the government from stealing the election. The Interior Ministry and election board offices around the country were besieged by opposition party supporters. In the north, supporters of the rightist National Action Party (PAN) seized international bridges leading from Ciudad Juárez to El Paso until the government recognized their local victories. Already before the July 6 vote, PRI assassins were at work, gunning down two of Cárdenas' top aides, Francisco Xavier Ovando and Román Gil Heraldez. If the impasse continues, the blood could start flowing with the question of who shall be the master of Mexico being fought out in the streets.

The ruling party is reportedly split between old-style political bosses ("dinosaurs") around Bartlett, who want to keep the system of an electoral sweep (known as the *carro completo*, or full carload) through systematic fraud, and technocrats around Salinas who want more plausible results to avoid alienating the middle class. Meanwhile, Cárdenas, a top leader of the PRI until he split last year, has a lot of support in the state

*continued on page 11*

## Starvation Elections in Mexico Left Peddles "Unity" with Cárdenas Popular Front

Part One of this article was published in WV No. 456, 1 July.

### PART TWO

In the midst of Mexico's worst economic crisis of this century, with the authoritarian regime of the "Institutional Revolutionary" PRI facing the first serious challenge in its history, now more than ever the only way out for the worker and peasant masses is a revolutionary struggle for proletarian power. Yet the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT—Revolutionary Workers Party), Mexican supporters of Ernest Mandel's misnamed United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), offers an electoral platform under the classless watchword of

"democracy," with the proclaimed goal of "constructing a free, independent and democratic country." The PRT standard-bearer Rosario Ibarra is presented as a symbol of the "fight for democracy in Mexico."

Far from representing a "socialist option," the PRT's "Unidad Popular" coalition is intended as a bridge to the popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. In an interview in the USec journal *International Viewpoint* (30 May), PRT spokesman Sergio Rodríguez says of the Cardenista movement that "the dynamic is totally positive." Of the former PRTers who split to form the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) because they see "neo-Cardenism as offering a great

*continued on page 10*

Fake-Trotskyist  
PRT's candidate  
Rosario Ibarra  
(center) in bloc  
with bourgeois-  
nationalist  
Cárdenas and  
rightist PAN  
candidate  
Clouthier.

