

Attack on Blacks, Immigrants, Women

Defeat Racist Assault on Affirmative Action!

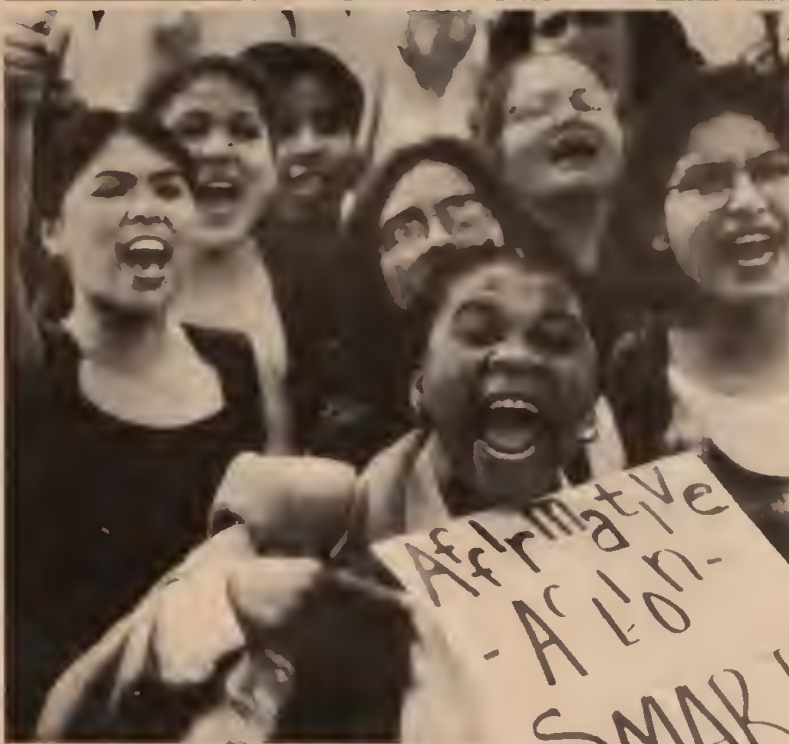
Riding high after the right-wing victory in the November elections, reactionary forces are mounting an offensive against affirmative action programs for minorities and women in jobs and education. A bill outlawing "racial preferences" in business has been introduced in Congress. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule against policies favoring companies owned by women and minorities in government contracts.

The focal point of the drive against affirmative action is California, which last fall served as a springboard for an escalating racist crusade against immigrants with the passage of Proposition 187 denying education and health care to "illegal aliens." We warned at the time that "immigrant-bashing and anti-black racism go hand in hand," denouncing sinister nativist appeals aimed at lining up the impoverished black masses, desperate for scarce jobs and social services, behind the assault on Latinos and immigrants (see "Down with Prop 187! Mobilize California Labor to Smash Anti-Immigrant Racism!" WV No. 608, 14 October 1994).

Today, the same racist forces which pushed through Prop. 187 are spearheading the drive to put women, blacks and other minorities "back in their place." After being re-elected on the wave of support for Prop. 187, California governor Pete Wilson now seeks to catapult himself into the 1996 Republican presidential nomination by becoming the standard-bearer for the attack on affirmative action. Wilson is pushing a measure, cynically called the California Civil Rights Initiative, to end preferential guidelines in education and state jobs. Competing with Wilson, fellow Republican presidential hopeful and Senate majority leader Bob Dole rants that "the race-counting game has gone too far" and that white men should not continue "paying a price" for black slavery. And the Clinton White House, seeking to shore up the Democrats' racist flank, is calling for a "review" of federal affirmative action programs.

The California initiative was drawn up by two obscure, supposedly apolitical academics, Glynn Custred and Tom Wood, who wanted, in Wood's words, to "end affirmative action as we know it." In fact, the two have a record of activism in reactionary causes. Wood heads the California branch of the National Association of Scholars, which was co-founded by Custred and is tied to right-wing groups like the Heri-

Jobs, Free Quality Education for All!



UCLA students demonstrate March 16 in defense of affirmative action against right-wing assault on women, minorities.

tage Foundation. This "scholars" outfit has made a name for itself by fighting to eliminate racial and sexual harassment codes. Custred has also been active in the chauvinist campaign against bilingual education and calls for limiting remedial programs.

Racist organizations that earlier campaigned for Prop. 187 are now rallying behind the new racist initiative, which has been dubbed "Son of 187." In addition to Ross Perot's "United We Stand America" and the Christian Coalition led by the sinister anti-Semitic bigot Pat Robertson, these include the San Fernando Valley "Voice of Citizens Together," whose president rails, "People are abusing our civil-rights laws to support an agenda of redomination and conquest by Mexican irredentists. This will help put a stop to the invasion from Mexico" (LA Weekly, 3-9 March).

A particular target of right-wing forces is "preferential admissions" programs which have allowed relatively small numbers of black and Hispanic students to overcome discriminatory barriers which have kept them out of colleges and universities. The attack on affirmative action also complements the reactionary "family values" drive against women's rights. While "right to life" terrorists murder abortion providers and womb clinics, the right wing is also going after women's advances in the workplace and managerial/professional positions. But targeting women could prove to be a two-edged sword. Clinton won the 1992 election largely on the strength of women's votes, while Bush desperately sought to distance his candidacy from the anti-abortion fanatics on the Republican right wing.

Nationwide, opposition to affirmative

action is becoming the new rallying cry for the racist drive to roll back the minimal gains that grew out of the fight for black equality in the civil rights movement. School integration through busing has long been a dead letter. Now, bandying about absurd charges of "reverse discrimination," the racist reactionaries are cynically using the language of "civil rights" to tear up even the most token measures addressing real, historic and continuing discrimination against women, blacks and Hispanics. This is part and parcel of the bipartisan war on minorities and the poor, which ranges from decimation of social welfare programs to the speedup on death row.

"Reverse discrimination" against white males is a myth, fabricated out of the whole cloth: between 1990 and 1994, only 100 of more than 3,000 discrimination cases before the courts claimed white men as victims of preferential treatment of minorities and women, and only six of those complaints were found to be valid. What is really going on here is a racist ideological offensive against minorities. Blacks in the inner cities are portrayed as indolent "welfare queens" who are costing "the hard-working middle class" a lot of tax dollars. Blacks who have made it out of the ghetto are now portrayed as unfairly getting jobs or college admissions at the expense of whites. The purpose of all this is the further impoverishment and oppression of

the entire working class—no jobs, no social programs, no nothing for no one. When they're lambasting "welfare" in the name of "balancing the budget," they're also going after Social Security. And these attacks are a bipartisan policy.

The liberal-led civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s shattered Jim Crow segregation in the South, gaining formal legal equality for blacks. But in refusing to challenge the capitalist profit system itself, it could do nothing to tackle the economic bedrock of racial oppression in jobs, education and housing. Affirmative action programs were set up as a sop to defuse social struggle and in order to create and co-opt a layer of black middle-class professionals. But these paltry, tokenistic efforts never made a dent in the deep-seated oppression of the black ghetto masses, whose condition has continued to deteriorate over the past few decades. And today the liberals cannot defend these measures which they instituted in the first place, because they have nothing to offer the working class, white or black, and besides, they can't square them with their ideology of meritocracy and abstract "democracy." The stark fact is that there is no way to overcome entrenched racial and sexual

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Protest Outrageous Slanders Against Trotskyists in Moscow!

SEE PAGE 3



Italy: Militant Protest Wins Release of Immigrant Workers

The following is excerpted from a leaflet by our comrades of the Lega Trotskista d'Italia (LTd'I) recounting a mobilization they initiated that rescued immigrant demonstrators from the clutches of the police.

We salute the 250 determined immigrants, trade-union members and young anti-racist demonstrators who militantly and defiantly protested in front of a police station in Milano on the night of February 24-25 and won the release of three immigrant comrades who were provocatively stopped and detained by the police.

Around midnight, five buses of anti-racist demonstrators organized by the Camera del Lavoro (local labor council) were set to leave for the national anti-

racist demonstration in Rome the following day when police at Stazione Garibaldi arrested three immigrant comrades among the demonstrators with the usual excuse that they "didn't have the proper documents." As soon as members of the LTd'I heard that the police had detained these comrades, we went to the organizers of the buses from the Camera del Lavoro to insist that we must organize a protest and the buses absolutely must not leave until these comrades were set free by the police. We ran up against the indifference and sabotage of various organizers who claimed that they were "too busy preparing the departure for Rome" or that this was "a police matter."

Only the intervention of our comrades, who went into all five of the buses to

Milano: 250 anti-racist militants mass outside police station February 25, demanding freedom for three arrested immigrants.



S. Magalli

motivate an action, prevented this sabotage from happening. We told everybody that we were organizing a protest and insisted that "the buses must not move until these comrades are liberated." Within ten minutes all 250 people gathered in front of the police station in Stazione Garibaldi to demand the release of the three comrades. Our chants of "Set them free!" "Let them go!" and "Out!" were immediately taken up by much of the crowd.

At this point—feeling the pressure of 250 angry, integrated demonstrators and faced with the fact that the buses weren't going to leave—Franco Grisolia, leader of the International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO) and a leader of Rifondazione Comunista (RC), who hadn't taken the initiative to organize or fight for the protest, went inside the police station to bargain with the police along with other trade-union bureaucrats.

One of the organizers came out of the police station and announced that the three would be released in ten minutes, and so "everybody should stop making such a racket and go back to the buses." A political struggle again broke out between some of the organizers and us, along with several others, who defiantly insisted that we must stay. At the end, very few people left and some who had

left returned to the protest. Sympathetic railroad workers came over to see what was going on and voiced their disapproval of the arrests.

After an hour of militant protest the police finally let the three comrades go. They were hugged by the crowd and greeted with general applause for this anti-racist victory. The crowd then marched intact to the buses yelling anti-racist slogans and left for Rome together.

The bourgeoisie is mounting a racist campaign to scapegoat immigrants for the rising unemployment and evident decay of capitalism. This campaign is a part of the bourgeoisie's overall offensive against the working class as a whole. The fight against racial oppression is a class question and an inseparable part of the class-struggle fight against capitalism. Karl Marx noted that "labor can not emancipate itself in the white skin when in the black it is branded."

Part of the fight against racial oppression must be all-out class struggle to organize the unorganized, including those who are forced to work under the watchful eye of overseers with their rifles in the fields, and those who are forced to work without contracts and "illegally." It also means a fight for full

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Permanent Revolution in Mexico and U.S. Imperialism



TROTSKY

The imposition of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the recent financial crash and savage austerity program imposed by Wall Street and Washington have stripped away the last remnants of Mexico's economic independence. Whole sections of Mexican industry, particularly in the foreign-owned maquiladora ("free trade") plants along the border, produce exclusively for the U.S. market. At the same time, immi-

grants from Mexico and Central America have become an increasingly important component of the working class within the United States. Writing from his Mexican exile, Leon Trotsky emphasized that the countries of Latin America can liberate themselves from foreign subjugation and economic backwardness only through proletarian revolution and its extension to the imperialist colossus to the north



LENIN

The theses of the Fourth International state:

"South and Central America will be able to tear themselves out of backwardness and enslavement only by uniting all their states into one powerful federation. But it is not the belated South American bourgeoisie, a thoroughly venal agency of foreign imperialism, who will be called upon to solve this task, but the young South American proletariat, the chosen leader of the oppressed masses. The slogan in the struggle against violence and intrigues of world imperialism and against the bloody work of native comprador cliques is therefore: the Soviet United States of South and Central America."

Written six years ago, these lines have now acquired a particularly burning actuality.

Only under its own revolutionary direction is the proletariat of the colonies and the semicolonies capable of achieving invincible collaboration with the proletariat of the metropolitan centers, and with the world working class as a whole. Only this collaboration can lead the oppressed peoples to complete and final emancipation, through the overthrow of imperialism the world over. A victory of the international proletariat will deliver the colonial countries from the long-drawn-out travail of capitalist development, by opening up the possibility of arriving at socialism hand in hand with the proletariat of the advanced countries.

The perspective of the permanent revolution in no case signifies that the backward countries must await the signal from the advanced ones, or that the colonial peoples should patiently wait for the proletariat of the metropolitan centers to free them. Help comes to him who helps himself. Workers must develop the revolutionary struggle in every country, colonial or imperialist, where favorable conditions have been established, and through this set an example for the workers of other countries. Only initiative and activity, resoluteness and boldness can really materialize the slogan "Workers of the world, unite!"

—Leon Trotsky, "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution" (May 1940)

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No. 620

7 April 1995

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Reviving Stalin's Smears in the Service of Impoverishing the Working People

Protest Outrageous Slanders Against Trotskyists in Moscow!

In response to the ominous slanders by Ukrainian authorities against our Trotskyist organization aired on Russian TV, the International Communist League is holding protests outside Ukrainian government offices, in New York on Wednesday, April 5; in Chicago, Berlin, London and Toronto on April 6; and in Melbourne on April 7. A protest will also be held in Paris.

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) in Moscow vigorously protests the outrageous slanders against our Trotskyist organization. On Saturday evening, April 1, a broadcast was aired on the *Vremya* news program with the lurid opening, "The overthrow of the government in the Ukraine was planned by four ideological Trotskyists representing the International Communist League." The broadcast claimed that supporters of the ICL had been banned from visiting the Ukraine. A two-year-old photograph of some of our supporters, taken at a birthday party in Moscow, was shown on the air. This photograph was somehow secured by the authorities, surreptitiously and unlawfully. Also shown was an array of our literature, openly published and distributed to working people throughout the former Soviet Union for several years now. This, then, is supposed to be the evidence of a secretive conspiracy for the overthrow of the Ukrainian government, by *four people*, no less, none of whom even resides in the Ukraine!

We are not surprised by the recourse to such revolting techniques. To get an idea of these crude methods, we urge those who have doubts to read the 1925 book by Victor Serge (Viktor Lvovich Kibalchich), *What Every Revolutionist Should Know About State Repression*. Marxists, who rely on the open and conscious mobilization of the workers and oppressed, are again accused of "conspiratorial terrorism" and "violence" by the very regimes which practice real conspiracies, terrorism and violence in the service of the gangs of new exploiters in power. In the guise of even-handed combat against all "extremism," the current authorities are in fact preparing to crack down on all working-class militancy and leftist dissent. That is the meaning

of the current vile campaign against the International Communist League.

We have for some time clearly been subjected to the most invasive surveillance and police attention. Those Russian and Ukrainian youth who have expressed interest in our literature and

investigating charges of corruption within the Russian military.

What is behind the *Vremya* broadcast? And what is behind the intricate, time-consuming and unlawful attention which the security services both in Russia and in the Ukraine, undoubtedly in collusion,



We Marxists openly proclaim our revolutionary views. Russian-language Spartacist Bulletins (left), "Leninist Party—Tribune of the People" and "What Is Trotskyism?" Last year we published for the first time in Russian Trotsky's *The Communist International After Lenin*.

political views have been subjected to harassment, interrogation and threats. Three years ago, on 9 February 1992 our beloved comrade Martha Phillips was murdered in Moscow in the prime of her life in sinister and mysterious circumstances. Despite repeated and vigorous appeals and demands by ourselves and others on various police agencies in Moscow to pursue an investigation into this heinous crime, the authorities responded with indifferent sloth and crude arrogance. We demand the reopening of the investigation into the murder of Martha Phillips, with particular emphasis on the role of the security agencies. In this regard, we recall the recent assassination of a journalist who was

devote to tiny handfuls of internationalist fighters for the cause of the working class? What is behind such spurious and outlandish smears, even as thousands of innocent people are killed and sent to their deaths in an unwanted and criminal war in Chechnya? And even as disease, hunger and poverty claim the lives of uncounted numbers of children and elderly throughout the land? Apparently, the capitalist authorities are haunted by the spectre of our Trotskyist program, which corresponds to the real interests of the overwhelming masses of dispossessed and impoverished working people. Our aim is the reconstitution of the working class as a class capable of taking power through struggle and organization

throughout the former Soviet regions.

The urgent social and political discontents of the peoples of the former Soviet Union are being falsely converted into a monumentally microscopic conspiracy. This smells of security organs that have decomposed to the point of dementia. Let us all recall that the people, unnamed and unknown, who manufacture and publicize such slanders were trained in the Stalin school of falsification. Let us all recall that a hallmark of the notorious purge "trials" of the 1930s—which led to the deaths of millions—was outlandish and utterly unfounded accusations against the closest comrades in arms of V.I. Lenin. To the day of his death, L.D. Trotsky stood for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against all imperialist powers and all the internal "fifth columns" seeking to foment counterrevolution. Yet in those dark years Trotsky, founder of the Soviet Army and a cofounder of the Soviet state, a man who was a lifelong revolutionist of international renown and proven integrity, was vilely slandered as an agent of the Japanese Mikado, the Nazi Gestapo and the French Deuxième Bureau. Let us all recall that the smears against Trotsky were a prelude to his murder at the hands of Stalin's assassins.

We have also been told that, in a similar fashion, the authorities of the capitalist Ukrainian state are today circulating allegations that ICL supporters are "CIA agents." We view these lying charges with complete contempt. If the Kiev authorities entertained the slightest belief that our comrades were CIA agents, they would have given us the keys to the city and bestowed on us all the favors at their command, in the hope of reciprocal largesse from those they look to in Washington and Wall Street. Those who only recently were Stalin's political and bureaucratic heirs presided over the collapse of the Soviet Union, and many of them now hope to be greedy capitalist exploiters in the new capitalist order. We Trotskyists, in contrast, openly called on the working class to resist Yeltsin's pro-imperialist coup in August 1991, which led to the restoration of capitalism.

We are compelled, but also eager, to reply to the slanderous and ludicrous notion that four Marxists were plotting the overthrow of the government of the Ukraine; only a fool or a madman could entertain such ridiculous fantasies. The sense of reality revealed in this report is about on a par with the UFO spotters who see a flash of light in the sky and posit a Martian invasion which will destroy the earth. It is our opinion that, unfortunately, before the downtrodden and embittered Ukrainian working masses come to power, the present Ukrainian government and likely several of its successors will have been long gone. They will disappear as a consequence of their own weaknesses and incapacities and through repercussions

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WV Photo



Spartacists Protest Against Yeltsin at Wall Street, 31 January 1992

Martha Phillips, Murdered in Moscow, 9 February 1992



From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

Beyond the Bell



There is a tendency to treat the recent controversy over *The Bell Curve* as an isolated incident, one that can be quickly forgotten in the day-to-day struggles that people wage for survival.

Students of psychology, however, can attest to the unfortunate and ugly fact that the motivating spirit behind the publication of the book has an astonishingly long pedigree in American and, indeed, European history.

Nowhere is that clearer than in the excellent book, *The Mismeasure of Man*, by acclaimed paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould (1981). Gould points out how centuries of science were tainted by the toxin of racism, in addition to sheer idiocy, if not outright chicanery.

Consider the words and thoughts of some of America's so-called "Founding Fathers":

Abe Lincoln: "There is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot

so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." (Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 1858)

Ben Franklin: "I could wish their [White immigrants to America] numbers were increased. And while we are, as I may call it, scouring our planet, by clearing America of woods, and so making this side of our globe reflect a brighter light to the eyes of inhabitants in Mars or Venus, why should we...darken its people? Why increase the Sons of Africa, by planting them in America, where we have so fair an opportunity, by excluding all blacks and tawneys, of increasing the lovely white and red?" (1751)

If they, of the so-called Enlightenment, were of those opinions, what of men of science?

Gould demonstrates convincingly how prejudices of race and/or class deeply biased, tainted and colored conclusions.

Scientists advanced theories of skull size (crani-

ology), of bumps on the head (phrenology), all fully measured, but also, all fully wrong.

As Gould states in *Mismeasure*, "What craniology was for the nineteenth century, intelligence testing has become for the twentieth, when it assumes that intelligence...is a single, innate, heritable, and measurable thing."

That was so true, and the theme of biological determinism colored life and damned life for millions of men and women, the so-called "lower classes" in Britain, and blacks in the U.S.

"Science" in the service of the Ruling Class is what *The Bell Curve* is all about.

The Mismeasure of Man shows how insidious, and how silly, the *Bell* is.

24 February 1995

©1995 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Philadelphia black journalist, is on death row at Pennsylvania's Greene state prison. Framed up because of his political views, Jamal faces death for his defiance of the racist, capitalist order. His columns appear periodically in *Workers Vanguard* and other newspapers.

To get involved in the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the death penalty, contact the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SC1 Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370.

London Rally for Jamal

Over 120 death-penalty abolitionists rallied at the Euston Friends Meeting House in London March 29, as part of the international campaign of protest for Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has been on Pennsylvania's death row since 1982. A former Black Panther leader, supporter of the MOVE organization, and award-winning black journalist known as the

"voice of the voiceless," Jamal was framed for the killing of a Philadelphia cop and sentenced to death for his political views. Newly elected Pennsylvania governor Ridge began carrying out his campaign promise to speed up executions by signing three death warrants in February, adding particular urgency to the campaign.

In Britain, 51 Members of Parliament have now called on Governor Ridge not to sign a death warrant in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Protest letters have been sent by Tony Benn and other Labour Party MPs. Recently, statements against the execution of Jamal have been received from Trades Union Council general secretary John Monks, and from Transport and General Workers Union leader Bill Morris on behalf of the General Executive Council of the 1,000,000-strong union.

Addressing the rally were representatives of trade unions and student and leftist groups. George Silcott linked Mumia's case with that of his brother Winston, one of the Tottenham Three, two black men and an immigrant framed

for the murder of a cop at the time of a multiracial upheaval in London. Jacob Ecclestone, Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists, recalled his parents' involvement in the 1950s in the fight to save the Rosenbergs, the last political prisoners executed in the U.S. He pointed to what would have happened to the Guilford Four and Birmingham Six, who were jailed for years on trumped-up charges of "IRA terrorism," had there been a death penalty in Britain.

Speaking for the Partisan Defence Committee, which organized the rally, Kate Klein denounced the racist death penalty as "legal lynching...the extension of the lynch rope of the Ku Klux Klan." The PDC emphasized that the groundswell of support in Britain is an important step in mobilizing the immense power of the international labor movement on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal and against the racist death penalty. ■



March 29 London rally drew over 120 trade unionists, students, leftists in fight to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Workers Hammer

Prepare for Emergency Demos!

THE CAMPAIGN IS AT A CRITICAL POINT—YOU CAN HELP!

At any moment, Pennsylvania's pro-death penalty governor, Tom Ridge, could sign Mumia Abu-Jamal's death warrant. Ridge has already signed warrants for five death row inmates, and the state's first execution in 30 years is set to take place this month. Jamal is in imminent danger—if a warrant is signed, emergency demonstrations will be held the next day in New York City and elsewhere. Get on the Partisan Defense Committee phone tree and help organize to make these urgent demonstrations the loudest possible outcry against the racist death penalty!

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN: take petitions; ask your friends, neighbors and co-workers to sign and get involved. Organize a showing in your union, community group, church or school of the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*. Send letters and get Jamal's powerful columns into your local newspapers, school or union newsletters; raise motions in your union or at your school to send a letter to Governor Ridge demanding "Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die!" Contact the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99,

Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, or call (212) 406-4252.

SEND PROTEST LETTERS TO: Governor Tom Ridge, Main Capitol Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

WRITE TO JAMAL to express your solidarity: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SC1 Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090.

SEND \$\$\$ FOR JAMAL LEGAL DEFENSE NOW! Funds are urgently needed to wage the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal's life. All money being raised through these rallies and forums organized by the Partisan Defense Committee goes directly to Jamal's legal defense. Since February 9, nearly \$15,000 has been collected or pledged. More is needed now! Jamal's legal team initiated the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, co-chaired by actors Ossie Davis and Mike Farrell, to help raise funds. Make out your tax-deductible contribution for the defense to: Bill of Rights Foundation, earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense," and send it to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Ave., No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001.

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Beware of Police "Support"— Cops Are Enemies of Workers, Minorities

Victory to Philly Transit Strike!

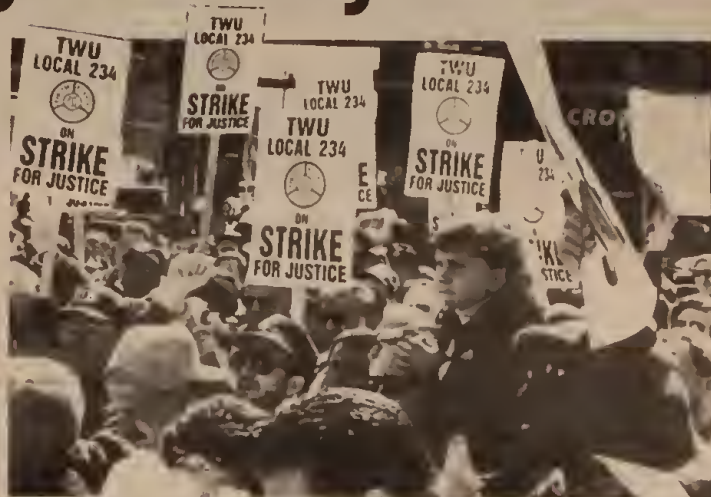
PHILADELPHIA, April 3—Some 5,200 Philly transit workers shut down subways, trolleys and buses March 28. The strike by Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 234 against the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) began after the union rejected a last-minute management offer, two weeks after the last contract expired. In this city blighted by economic decay and notorious racism, Democratic mayor Ed Rendell has been waging war on municipal unions. A victorious fight by this powerful, integrated union could strike a real blow against the capitalist rulers' war on unions and the ghetto poor. But a dangerous "alliance" forged between Local 234 president Harry Lombardo and the racist cops is chaining the union to the bosses' hired strikebreakers, who are especially hated by Philadelphia's besieged black population.

SEPTA workers are in a fighting mood, and for good reason. A TWU study last year showed that Philly bus drivers' wages ranked next to the bottom of the nation's 23 largest transit systems. Their last three-year contract contained medical insurance giveaways that saved transit bosses \$50 million, but this just whetted SEPTA's appetite. While management dropped demands for layoffs and the hiring of part-timers before the current strike deadline, their wage "offer" of 7 percent over three years would be paid out of funds stolen from pensions and through limits on workers' compensation. Even these "increases" would not start until next December. Far from holding the line against benefit cuts, Local 234 bureaucrats "were willing to accept the belt-tightening measures" in exchange for a slightly larger wage hike (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 March).

Picketers have shut down every corner of SEPTA's City Transit Division. SEPTA and government officials, however, had long been planning for a strike, setting aside 4,000 free parking spaces at the South Philadelphia sports complex and adding extra trains and buses to the suburban lines which feed into the city. On April 2, TWUers at the Red Arrow bus line hit the bricks when their contract expired. But regional rail workers, whose contract expired last July, are running trains packed with commuters from the wealthy suburbs. On the second day of the strike, SEPTA tentatively settled with the conductors' union, UTU Local 61, whose members will vote on the proposed contract in mid-April. Meanwhile the Frontier Division bus workers' contract expires April 7.



Racist Philly cops terrorize MOVE home in Powelton Village, August 1978, prelude to murderous 1985 firebombing which killed eleven.



Spread the strike! A thousand transit strikers rallied at Frankford depot in Philadelphia March 29.

From the first, *everyone* should have walked out. But the transit union bureaucrats bowed to federal anti-strike law covering the suburban railways. *Shut down all Philly area transit!*

Poisonous Liaison: Union Tops and Racist Cops

The union today is in a powerful position to beat back Mayor Rendell and Governor Tom Ridge's attacks on unions and the poor. Philadelphia has a history of combative city workers strikes, and many TWUers are veterans of several transit strikes. But Philly is also infamous for its history of racist repression. What is needed is a leadership that mobilizes labor's power together with oppressed minorities against the bosses and their state. But Lombardo and the Local 234 brass have engaged in a deadly embrace of the racist, strike-breaking Philly cops—an "alliance" that can only lead to defeat.

On the strike's first day, SEPTA got a court injunction limiting pickets after TWUers blocked white-collar workers and management from entering the downtown SEPTA headquarters and offices at a mechanical facility at 3rd and Wyoming. Lombardo called a rally for March 29 to supposedly challenge the injunction. But the *Philadelphia Daily News* reported that the night before he spoke to a packed crowd at Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) headquarters, seeking "support" for the TWU.

Plainclothes cops and TWU members alike leafletted the rally of 1,000 transit strikers and supporters with an FOP state-

ment, which Lombardo read aloud from the podium, urging cops to "show every consideration within the framework of the law to members of the Transport Workers Union." A host of "progressive" local labor leaders mouthed empty solidarity with the TWU, but not one opposed the cops' poison-pill "support."

Philly strikers must call an immediate halt to Lombardo's grotesque "solidarity" with the police. From hauling off arrested air traffic controllers in their 1981 strike, to the 1985 bombing of Philadelphia MOVE and the destruction of the Osage Avenue neighborhood, to running scabs through Teamster picket lines during the 1994 trucking strike, the cops are the sworn enemies of labor and the oppressed. Mobilizations by the cops, in whatever guise, reflect their own agenda and are sinister attempts at police bnnapartism, to slip the leash of civilian control. Cops out of the labor movement!

This lesson is especially important to understand given the FOP's frenzied campaign to silence forever the voice of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. An award-winning journalist, a supporter of MOVE and a former Black Panther leader, Jamal was framed up in 1982 for the killing of a Philly cop and sentenced to death for his political views—under then-D.A. Ed Rendell.

FOP president Richard Costello, who penned the statement of "solidarity" with the TWU, branded Jamal's supporters in 1990 as a "misfit terrorist group" and called for Jamal's immediate execution, adding, "We'll take out the electric chair, we'll make it an electric couch."

Last year, the FOP waged a successful campaign to censor Jamal's commentaries from death row from being aired on National Public Radio. Now the FOP is leading a nationwide effort to stop the publication of a book of Jamal's prison writings. With the election of Pennsylvania governor Ridge last November on a pro-death penalty platform, the cnps are on a mission to put Jamal at the front of the line for execution. They don't want anyone to read or hear what this powerful spokesman for the oppressed has to say because they know this would expose their racist injustice system.

Philly cops on the beat carry out extra-legal killings and beatings with notorious regularity. After a brutal attack by over a dozen cops last summer, a 30-year-old Hispanic man, Moises DeJesus, fell into a coma and died several days later. A whitewash investigation by Rendell's D.A., Lynne Abraham, cleared the cops without ever interviewing a single one of them.

Any move by striking transit workers to win this strike, for example by picketing out regional transit lines, is going to confront the bosses' government and their hired henchmen straight on. Furthermore, any attempt to gain support from Philly's black workers and ghetto poor is doomed as long as Local 234 is "united" with the bloody enforcers of the bosses' racist law and order.

The capitalists' frame-up system targets militant strikers and fighters for black rights alike with one aim: to terrorize workers and minorities into submitting to their system of exploitation and oppression. The FOP's threat to kill Philly's "voice of the voiceless," Mumia Abu-Jamal, is also a threat against labor. What working people need is a class-struggle leadership that mobilizes labor's power, not only to defend the unions but to champion the cause of blacks, immigrants, the poor—all the oppressed—against their common capitalist enemy. ■

Italy...

(continued from page 2)

citizenship rights for all immigrants and their families, mass worker/immigrant mobilizations to smash racist terror, and workers actions against deportations. The trade-union misleaders and RC bureaucrats have no intention of doing any of this because they instead seek to ally themselves with bourgeois parties, police, magistrates, etc. In fact, in spite of meaningless words of empty solidarity, the anti-racist march of well over 50,000 in Rome was effectively hoycotted by RC. Over half of the demonstrators were immigrants, but there was only one RC contingent of about 150 people.

The fact that the organizers of the national anti-racist demonstration and RC openly welcomed the presence of the racist SIULP police "union" dramatically shows the dead end of their politics. It also explains why they were ready to abandon immigrant comrades in police custody. *Police out of the unions!* These hired racist terrorist thugs aren't part of the workers movement,

they are class enemies.

Tens of thousands made long bus rides from all over Italy to Rome for the anti-racist demonstration and want to fight racism. But symbolic marches in Rome together with racist cops and priests as speakers cannot stop racist terror. This politics of class collaboration only subordinates the working class and oppressed to the bourgeois oppressors.

As revolutionaries we put all of our faith in the mobilization of the working class and oppressed in *class struggle* and no faith in the bourgeois state, police, magistrates, government, etc. Our Marxist class understanding of these fundamental truths enabled us to initiate this successful anti-racist action.

Racial oppression is an integral and inseparable part of capitalist society, which is based on the privileged few exploiting and oppressing the many, with immigrants concentrated at the bottom. Only successful class struggle for proletarian revolution can end brutal racist capitalist society once and for all. We of the LTd/I/International Communist League fight to forge a Bolshevik party to lead this struggle. Join us! ■

NAFTA's Mexican Sweatshops

Labor Organizing in the Maquiladoras



Ruben R. Ramirez

Militant Mexican workers strike against RCA Thomson plant in Ciudad Juárez at beginning of February. Walkout quickly shut down RCA plants in the U.S., pointing to potential for united workers action across the borders.

When Mexico devalued the "new peso" last December, sending it into a free fall from 3.4 to the dollar to 6.4 in the space of a few weeks, this not only shook foreign investors, it also touched off an inflationary spiral at home which is drastically cutting into living stand-

PART ONE OF TWO

ards. And while Wall Street got a \$50 billion bailout from Washington to cover its losses, the workers and poor people of Mexico are on their own. Nowhere is the effect of the 50 percent drop in the dollar value of the peso more dramatic

than in the *frontera*, the region along the 2,000-mile border with the United States. Base wage rates in the *maquiladora* "free trade" plants are often as low as 114 new pesos for a six-day, 54-hour workweek. Devaluation meant the dollar value of workers' wages fell from \$35 to \$19 *per week*—impossible to survive on. These are quite literally starvation wages.

On January 31, the 5,600 workers at four RCA Thomson electronics plants in Ciudad Juárez, across the river from El Paso, Texas, took action to defend themselves. Demanding a 30 percent pay increase, they struck the factories, surrounding the main plant with mass pick-

ets of hundreds of workers and blockading the main street of the Bernúdez Industrial Park. For a week the strikers, mostly young women, faced off local police and groups of thugs organized by the pro-company, pro-government bureaucrats of the corporatist "union" of the Mexican Labor Federation (CTM). With production of TV chassis stopped in Ciudad Juárez, because of the company's "just in time" production system (which keeps stocks low, relying on tight delivery schedules), by February 3, the RCA final assembly plant in Indiana also had to shut down (see "Maquiladora Workers Strike RCA Thomson," *Workers Vanguard* No. 616, 10 February).

When the strikers finally went back on February 7, they entered the plant together and staged a "*huelga de brazos caídos*" (standing at their posts but refusing to work). Later that day, RCA Thomson agreed to a 13 percent wage hike, added to the 7 percent raise already negotiated by the CTM. While this does not fully restore their losses due to devaluation-induced inflation, the strikers also won recognition of their Coalition of Workers, removal of the local CTM boss and new union elections, full pay for the week on strike and no victimizations. In the police-state conditions of the *maquiladora* plants, the RCA workers strike was truly heroic, and the outcome was rightly seen as a victory, although limited, for the workers. As we wrote in *WV* No. 617 (24 February), "This will certainly encourage further strike movements elsewhere in the *maquiladora* belt."

And indeed the RCA Thomson walkout set off a strike wave in Ciudad Juárez. While in all of 1994 only one work stoppage took place, in January and February, 14 strikes broke out,

winning wage increases of 13-20 percent. Last month, 3,000 workers at AAMSA (Autopartes y Arnéses de México), which manufactures electrical "harnesses" for Nissan and Toyota, struck on March 8-10. After seizing a key plant and extending the walkout to three others, they won a 20 percent raise in wages and benefits. And according to the Despacho Obrero, a workers legal aid office in the city, the movement is continuing. On March 13-15, 1,000 workers at the Coclisa plant, which makes car seats for Ford, struck and got a 22 percent raise. Workers at the Vestamex and Camisas de Juárez clothing plants won 19 percent, and recently 800 workers at Controles de Temperatura struck. As we go to press, workers at the Dickies clothing plant in Piedras Negras have struck for a 60 percent raise, and to restore the dollar value of wages to what it was before the peso devaluation.

Significantly, these workers actions are shaking the mechanisms of corporatist control that have long kept the workers bound hand and foot to the bourgeoisie. The CTM labor federation is a formal part of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has governed Mexico uninterruptedly for the last 65 years. And through the Federal Labor Law under Article 123 of the Mexican Constitution, an elaborate system of state controls has made it difficult to carry out the right to strike or to establish independent unions. Now the Mexico City daily *El Día* (12 March) reports of the latest Ciudad Juárez strikes, "In all cases the union leaders were bypassed by those they represent, who also obtained their removal," as at RCA. And the local Conciliation and Arbitration Board complained of "a new type of conflicts, going outside the legal framework,



Ruben R. Ramirez

Young women workers at RCA Thomson fight to break shackles of Mexican government-controlled corporate unions. Sign above strikers reads: "Sellout Union Doesn't Support Us."



Superexploited workers at GM auto plant in Matamoros live in shantytowns.

Archambault/U.S. News & World Report



Dunleavy/Maryknoll

such as seizing facilities even without strike notification."

The burgeoning workers unrest is spreading through the northern *frontera* region. In the formerly state-owned Cananea copper mine in northern Sonora, which the Mexican government has privatized, miners struck over contract violations. Cananea was the site of a historic 1906 strike, led by American revolutionary syndicalists of the IWW and Mexican anarchists of the PLM, that was a precursor to the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17. The strike was put down by the Arizona Rangers on behalf of Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz. Today, with workers anger running high decrepit (94-year-old) CTM oligarch Fidel Velázquez is so nervous about a possible labor revolt that he canceled the official May Day march in front of the presidential palace. "The ranks could bypass us, and that would lead to a grave situation," he declared, saying that the cancellation was a "favor" to President Ernesto Zedillo. No wonder the CTM kingpin is worried: his last foray was a grotesque proposal for workers to "donate" a day's wages to help pay off the foreign debt, in his words, as a way of showing "solidarity with the rich!"

With the Zedillo government imposing a brutal austerity program, inflation soaring, families unable to buy basic necessities and more than 400,000 workers thrown off their jobs in January alone, the capitalists, bourgeois politicians and their labor lieutenants on both sides of the border are worried that Mexico may "blow." The Indian peasant insurgency in the southern state of Chiapas has stirred popular discontent around the country, with hundreds of thousands of protesters repeatedly converging on the Zócalo (Plaza of the Revolution) in Mexico City in February to denounce Zedillo's dispatching of troops to hunt down the leader of the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation). Add to this the murderous infighting within the PRI—first presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio assassinated in April 1994, then party president José Francisco Ruiz Massieu gunned down six months later, with suspicions in both cases falling on rival sectors in the PRI, and now ex-president Carlos Salinas de Gortari forced into exile. There is a distinct odor of *fin de régime* in the air in Mexico.

The semi-bonapartist, single-party regime summed up in the term "PRI-government" has run into the ground. The apparatus is coming apart, its "neoliberal" economic policy of selling off the country to imperialist investors has proven disastrous. Today it sits atop a smoking volcano of mass discontent. The question is, which direction will Mexico go? The right-wing PAN (National Action Party) is in a de facto coalition with the PRI (supplying the secretary of justice). A middle-class populist movement, El Barzón, has appeared demanding debt relief for farmers and credit card holders. Leftist opposition has been diverted into the bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)

of former PRI leaders Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, which despite its vaguely nationalist airs has defused militant protests at every juncture. The EZLN, under tremendous pressure from the army, is helting on negotiations. Clearly, a reformist/populist "democratic" opposition has no answer to the economic crisis, nothing to offer the hard-hit population.

In a recent interview, Mexican liberal luminary Jorge Castañeda commented



Jose Luis Cerrato/El Paso Times

Militant El Paso, Texas garment workers strike in 1991-92 won victory, inspiring strikes against U.S.-owned maquiladoras in Matamoros.

that the Zapatistas "have no future as an armed group." He added:

"In my opinion, there is in Mexico—both in the southern areas of the country and also in the north—a very important future for an intransigent, radical left. But I don't know of what kind."

—Junge Welt (Berlin),
27 January

What is needed is a revolutionary proletarian vanguard, seeking to forge an internationalist workers party that can draw in behind it the desperate peasant masses and urban poor and ally with U.S. workers north of the Rio Grande (known as Río Bravo in Mexico).

The Grupo Espartaquista de México together with the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste of Canada, sections of the International Communist League, oppose the NAFTA "free trade" rape of Mexico with a program of workers unity in struggle. While the reformist/nationalist left, beholden to Cárdenas' PRD, is paralyzed in the face of the imperialist takeover of the Mexican economy, we Trotskyists are the only ones with a program addressing the growing interpenetration and common interests of Mexican and U.S. workers. United labor struggle on both sides of the border, particularly including strike action by U.S. unionists in solidarity with their Mexican class brothers and sisters, is both necessary and possible. This must point to a fight for socialist revolution "from the Yukon to the Yucatán."

Modern Sweatshops

Last summer, during the final phase of the Mexican election campaign, a

joint reporting team from *Espartaco* and *Workers Vanguard* visited the *maquiladora* belt along the Texas-Mexico border, from the two Laredos downriver to Matamoros on the Gulf of Mexico. In touring the region and speaking with maquiladora workers from several plants, the tremendous contradictions and explosive potential of this dramatic case of uneven and combined development were sharply highlighted.

This area has doubled in population

zation program was begun in 1965, more than 2,100 manufacturing plants have been set up under provisions that allow them to import capital and materials duty free and export to the U.S. paying tax only on the value added. In effect, these *maquiladoras* have been directly annexed to the U.S. economy. Until the debt crisis of 1982, the *maquila* plants were quite separate from the rest of Mexican industry, which was built up through "import substitution" behind high tariff walls which protected fledgling domestic manufacturers. But as a price for rescheduling the debt owed to the imperialist banks, Washington and Wall Street forced Mexico to cut its tariffs and switch to an "export-led" economy. This allowed U.S.-owned multinationals to buy up privatized state companies while American corporations set up subsidiaries in the *maquiladora* belt to engage in labor-intensive assembly operations for the U.S. market while paying one-tenth (or even less) of U.S. wages. The North American "Free Trade" Agreement was only the final act, which effectively turned all of Mexico into one giant *maquiladora*.

The result is a huge industrial belt in the northern states of Mexico. Beginning first with textiles and clothing manufacturers, it expanded to electronic components and is now home to more than two dozen auto/truck assembly, engine/transmission and parts plants, so that today the area is nicknamed "Detroit South." With almost 400,000 employed in motor vehicle manufacturing, by 1991 Mexico had as many auto workers as work for the Big Three auto companies in the U.S. In 1993, the *maquiladora* industry (including many auto parts plants) employed 540,000 workers. Partly reflecting the shifting industrial pattern, the percentage of women workers in these "free trade" plants has fallen from almost 80 percent in 1975 to around 60 percent today. While apologists for this sweatshop system claim that for the Mexican workers these poverty wages are an improvement, in fact wages in the *maquiladoras* are below those in the

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Protest Migra Raid at Newark Airport

The following protest was issued by the Partisan Defense Committee on April 2.

District Director
Immigration and Naturalization
Service
Newark, NJ

Dear Sir:

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the arrest of 112 cleaning workers at Newark International Airport on March 30 in a raid by the INS, Customs Service and Federal Aviation Administration. We understand that 59 workers remain under arrest at this time. We demand that

they be released immediately and all deportation proceedings be stopped.

The INS' targeting of these mostly Central and South American workers is part of a racist nationwide crusade against all immigrants, typified by the passage of Prop. 187 in California last year. The government's assault on immigrants feeds the attack on all working people and minorities, from slashing welfare and subsidies for school lunches to closing hospitals.

Anyone in this country has the right to stay. We demand full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers!

Yours truly,
Paul Cooperstein

Affirmative Action...

(continued from page 1)

oppression within the framework of capitalism.

Today, fully 53 percent of black men nationwide are either unemployed or earn less than the poverty level for a family of four. The relentless drive by racist politicians to push blacks back to the back of the bus, combined with massive cuts in funding for education and other social services, has led to a sharp decline as well in the prospects of the "talented tenth." Overall, black enrollment in the University of California system has gone up by all of 0.2 percent since 1980. And at UC Berkeley black enrollment has fallen by nearly a third in the past five years. Meanwhile, the racist rulers have plenty of preferential treatment for their own. *Newsweek* (13 February) refers to "affirmative action for the academically disadvantaged children of alumni (about 12 percent of all admissions at elite colleges)." How else could Dan Quayle, who can't spell "potato," have gotten into law school?

Demagogic appeals by racist politicians to "angry white men" capitalizing on the false perception that minorities and women have been given preferential advantage. From the outset, liberal affirmative action schemes were designed in such a way as to set whites against blacks and men against women in competition for a diminishing share of jobs, classroom seats and professional openings. After all, within the framework of the capitalist status quo, advancement



Construction worker contingent at 80,000-strong march in Los Angeles last October against racist anti-immigrant Prop. 187. Now the racists are pushing "Son of 187" referendum against affirmative action.

entire capitalist system, to lay the basis for wiping out the centuries-old legacy of racial and sexual oppression.

Racist Purge on Campus

At a time when minority students are under fire from budget-cutting college administrators and skinhead thugs alike, abolishing racial quotas in education has joined the bipartisan war on welfare mothers and the "anti-crime" crusade as rallying cries for white reaction. The ideological driving force behind this is the

primary and secondary schools and constantly beset by police terror. As one 14-year-old black student described, "We have a school in East St. Louis named for Dr. King. The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in the school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history" (Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, [1991]). Affirmative action is the slender thread that gives some minority youth their only shot at higher education.

Many of today's crusaders against affirmative action were inspired by the 1978 U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding the "Bakke decision." A white engineer, Alan Bakke successfully challenged the University of California at Davis medical school's preferential admissions program, which reserved 16 out of 100 openings for minorities. The stage for the Bakke decision was set by the defeat of school busing, which was abandoned by Democratic Party liberals in 1973-74 when racist mobs attacked black schoolchildren in the streets of Boston and Louisville.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs defend affirmative action in university admissions because this has brought gains, although terribly inadequate, against the race and class bias that permeates education under capitalism. But such gains are at best tokenistic and easily reversible, as the recent cutbacks in higher education show, because they accept the limits imposed by the bourgeoisie, which views education as a privilege, not a right.

Moreover, quotas are ultimately reactionary, far more likely to be used to restrict rather than advance minority admissions. The so-called *morneris clause*, restricting Jewish access to uni-

versities and the professions, was a hallmark of the anti-Semitic capitalist regimes of East Europe before World War II and of the tsarist autocracy in Russia. Today, even as Asian Americans are being cynically mobilized to oppose black "quotas," they find themselves lending off quotas restricting their place in education which are pushed by the same racist forces that are attacking affirmative action for blacks and Latinos. In San Francisco, Asian American parents filed a lawsuit against quotas which limit Asian students to 40 percent of enrollment at the city's premier high school.

We fight for free, quality integrated education for all. To provide real access to higher education, we call for nationalizing the private universities, and for open admissions and free tuition with a state-paid living stipend for students. We demand full remedial programs at the universities and an end to "tracking" in the high schools, which pushes working-class and minority youth away from courses that would prepare them for college. Meanwhile, technical secondary education to train young skilled workers has already been devastated.

While preferential admissions are a step against the racist status quo in education, government-sponsored affirmative action programs in jobs are often a very different matter. During the Nixon administration, schemes like the so-called "Philadelphia Plan," which set minority hiring quotas on federal construction projects, were explicitly used for union-busting. Such plans attacked hard-won union gains like the hiring hall and seniority. Similar schemes were pushed by elements of the reformist left. At the Fremont, California General Motors plant in the early 1970s, Maoist-supported union members launched a lawsuit which demanded "preferential seniority" for women, in effect calling on the courts to order the layoff of male workers (including many blacks) first. Unlike liberals and reformists, as Marxists we oppose on principle state intervention into the unions, which always weakens labor's ability to fight the exploiters.

To be sure, racist job-trusting practices particularly by the "labor aristocracy" in the skilled trades were aimed at keeping blacks and women out. But these despicable practices should not obscure the fundamental fact that seniority helps protect workers, black and white alike, against arbitrary victimization and firings, while union control over hiring makes possible genuinely non-discriminatory access to jobs on a "first come, first served" basis.

In their service to the capitalist ruling class, the conservative AFL-CIO bureaucracy has not only spurned the fight for equal rights for minority and women workers, but has presided over the decimation of the union movement. The wholesale closing of Detroit auto plants since the 1970s has thrown hundreds of thousands of black workers in particular



NMU

NMU hiring hall in New York City in the 1960s. Government "affirmative action" schemes initially attacked hard-won union gains like seniority and the hiring hall, which defend all workers against victimization. Labor movement must fight for jobs for all, with programs for minority recruitment.

for one sector of the population can only come at the expense of another. Yet the minimal affirmative action measures don't even come close to overcoming the racial and sexual discrimination that is built into the capitalist system. And now women and minorities are being made the scapegoats for 20 years of declining living standards for white workers and the middle class.

As part of our fight for full equality for minorities and women, the Spartacist League opposes the reactionary assault against affirmative action. However, unlike liberals and reformists who uncritically hailed these programs, we emphasized from the beginning that those who look to the American capitalist state to eliminate racial and sexual discrimination were living in a fool's paradise. Today, with the Democrats and Republicans waging full-scale war on minorities and the poor, it should be apparent that the halls of Congress are not the venue for redressing discrimination. We seek to mobilize the working class in a fight for jobs and free, quality education for all, particularly reaching out to the masses of unemployed minority youth and women with special union recruitment and training programs. It will take a socialist revolution, sweeping away the

lie of blacks' supposed genetic "inferiority," codified in the pseudoscientific tract *The Bell Curve*. Last month, over 200 protesters rallied at the University of California's Boalt Hall law school in defense of black and Latino students who had received hate mail raving, "Your failures are hereditary and can't be corrected by these liberals.... You belong at Coolidge High Law don't you forget!" In New Jersey, Rutgers students mounted two weeks of protests against racist comments by "liberal" president Francis Lawrence about "disadvantaged" black people who lack the "genetic, hereditary background" to pass university admissions tests.

Black and Hispanic students are under siege because the capitalist rulers have decided not to spend resources educating people they will likely never employ. Attacking affirmative action is just one weapon in their arsenal. Across the country, galloping tuition increases at state schools are driving minority youth out in droves. The threatened hikes of up to 75 percent in New York's state and city university system amount to nothing less than a racist purge.

For the vast majority of ghetto youth, college is an unattainable dream, as they remain trapped in crumbling, prison-like

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NYPD Guns Down Asian Youth

On March 24, the day after hundreds of Mayor Giuliani's thugs in blue attacked student demonstrators protesting the vicious education cuts, 16-year-old Yong Xin Huang was executed by cops on a driveway in Brooklyn. The youngest child of immigrant garment workers, Yong was a talented ninth-grader who hoped to attend a good high school like Stuyvesant or the Bronx High School of Science. Instead he became yet another victim of the trigger-happy NYPD, joining a growing number of minority youth cut down in cold blood in recent months.

A rare morning of playing hooky, plinking trees with a pellet gun with two friends, ended in horror after a neighbor called the cops to report "four male Asians...armed with a gun." Within minutes, five laughing cops were tearing through the neighborhood with guns drawn, looking for prey. After lining up the three terrified boys against a wall, Officer Steven Mizrahi smashed Yong—who was 5'6" weighing only 100 pounds, and looked like a nine-year-old—into a glass door, shat-

tering it, then killed him with a shot to the back of the head.

First the cops claimed Huang was "engaged in a struggle" to get Mizrahi's gun when it went off "accidentally." Then they reverted to the tried-and-true "toy guns look realistic" line: this was used to justify the execution of black 13-year-old Nicholas Heyward and the near-fatal shooting of 16-year-old Jamiel Johnson last September. But Huang's friends who witnessed the atrocity decried the police story, saying that Yong had dropped the air gun right away, before the killer cop pinned him. This wanton killing has the unmistakable stench of anti-immigrant racism, particularly in the xenophobic climate whipped up around the passage of California's Prop. 187. On March 30, Immigration cops arrested 112 workers at Newark Airport claiming they were "illegal aliens."

In the past three years, scores of Hispanic, and many black, youth have been executed by the police and not one cop has been convicted for his crimes. Throughout New York's working-class

neighborhoods, ghettos and barrios, minority youth know the NYPD is out to get them. On March 30, some 450 demonstrators organized by the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights rallied at Police Plaza to protest racist police brutality. Among the youthful, mostly black and Hispanic crowd were families and friends of some of the NYPD's recent victims: Anthony Baez, choked to death in December after his football hit a police cruiser; Anibal Carrasquillo, shot in the back in January; Hilton Vega and Anthony Rosario, gunned down on February 12; and others.

A member of the Baez family sang a moving Spanish version of the anti-slavery *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The mother of Hilton Vega, killed alongside his cousin Anthony Rosario, told the crowd, "I don't want to die before I see justice.... I will not rest until I see the two cops in jail." Vega and Rosario were shot a total of 22 times by a cop who reportedly was on Giuliani's bodyguard squad. The NYPD has been on a killing spree with



Manin/NY Times

Yong Xin Huang

their man Giuliani in office, but under Republican and Democratic mayors alike, they terrorize the poor, minorities and workers. The power of labor must be mobilized, along with the masses of blacks, Hispanics and Asians and all opponents of police terror, in defense against the cop-murders before they leave any more bloodstained chalk outlines on the mean streets of New York.

out of relatively well-paying union jobs. The union tops have rightly earned the scorn of much of their membership, to say nothing of the dispossessed ghetto youth. What is required is a struggle within the unions to oust the bureaucratic misleaders and replace them with a class-struggle leadership committed to mobilizing labor's social power on behalf of all the oppressed. As we wrote in 1978, as part of a fight for jobs for all:

"A class-struggle leadership in the unions would not only institute training programs for minority workers paid for at the expense of the corporations and the government, but would undertake massive recruitment drives to insure that blacks can compete with white job seekers on an equal basis."

—Young Spartacus No. 63
(April 1978)

Particularly given the sharp decline in union organization and membership over recent years, such demands today would necessarily be linked to the fight to organize the unorganized through a massive union recruitment drive.

For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Racial Oppression

The racist campaign against affirmative action has been joined by conservative black academics like Shelby Steele and Thomas Sowell, long a darling of the Republican right. In January, black UC regent Ward Connerly called for scrapping racial and sexual preferences at the university. Steele slams affirmative action because "white women have benefited from it far more than any other group." White women have, in fact, fared better than black men or women in breaking into professions and corporate boardrooms in the last 30 years, but the changes have been minimal and are quite reversible. The recent report of the federal government's "Glass Ceiling Commission" shows that while white males constitute only 43 percent of the workforce, they hold 95 percent of senior management positions. By pitting women against blacks, Steele helps fan the flames of the reactionary assault on all of the oppressed.

In a 5 March commentary, black *New York Times* editorial writer Brent Staples got the measure of these apologists for the racist backlash, writing that in the "Reaganaut 80's, many African-Americans...became converts to the gospel of Horatio Alger." They represent the right wing of the black middle class that benefited materially from the struggle for black equality in the 1950s and '60s, while the masses of blacks slipped deeper into poverty. Expanding govern-



WV Photo

Spartacist contingent marches in 1978 Washington, D.C. protest against the racist Bakke decision, which rolled back minority access to higher education.

ment programs and tokenistic corporate hiring policies generated a narrow layer of petty-bourgeois blacks increasingly separated from the ghettos. Between 1967 and 1991, the proportion of black households earning at least \$50,000 a year rose from 5.2 to 12.1 percent, while the proportion earning over \$100,000 more than doubled.

But this tenuous hold on middle-class status is slipping every day, from the withering of preferential programs in business to the massive cutbacks and layoffs in government. In fact, the wage gap between white and black college graduates more than quadrupled between 1973 and 1989. Overall, earnings of blacks compared to whites continue to be around 62 percent, while black unemployment is more than double that of whites. Among teenagers, black unemployment was 36.2 percent in 1991 compared to 14.9 percent among white youth. And that is according to official statistics, which significantly understate the reality. This massive racial disparity applies across the board, from college admissions to infant mortality.

It has always taken massive social struggle to gain any improvement in the lives of workers and oppressed minorities in this society, from minimal special admissions programs to the open admissions program at the City University of New York, which was won in the late 1960s. Today, with the capitalist econ-

omy in decline, the profit-hungry ruling class wants to dispense with the overhead of these reforms and inflame racial and sexual divisions in the working class.

The liberals and reformists have no answer to deal with this racist offensive, tied as they are by a thousand strings to the racist yuppie in the White House. Clinton's recent announcement of a "review" of federal affirmative action guidelines was immediately supported by key black Democrats like Kweisi Mfume, the former head of the Congressional Black Caucus. Liberals like Jesse Jackson say the attack on affirmative action should be "resisted" through registering to vote Democrat, while the bourgeois-feminist National Organization for Women says capitalist politicians should be held "accountable" if they fail to defend quotas.

Tailing behind the liberals is the reformist "left." Thus, at UC Berkeley, an "Affirmative Action Coalition," which is dominated by the ex-Stalinist Committees of Correspondence and includes the Revolutionary Workers League, the International Socialist Organization and Labor Militant, offers militant students nothing more than limp appeals to the UC regents, president and administration. These reformists do not even pay lip service to militant action based on mobilizing the social power of labor to fight the attacks on minorities, immigrants and women.

At a March 27 speakout at Cal State Hayward, a Spartacus Youth Club speaker indicted the capitalist ruling class for the current assault on minority rights:

"The attacks against affirmative action are part of the whole racist rallying cry of the rulers of this country. They are cut of the same cloth as the attacks on desperate welfare mothers, on immigrants and their families. Small wonder that California state governor Pete Wilson, the architect of Proposition 187 (and, by the way, the president of the UC Board of Regents) is now leading the charge against affirmative action. For it is all cut of the same cloth, that of a system of the exploitation of the many by the few.

"Jesse Jackson tells us to 'resist' by registering to vote for the very Democratic Party that spat on him during the last elections. They spat on him as a way of spitting on their entire black constituency, because they were appealing to the white racist vote.

"Don't let them condemn you to no education, no jobs, no future! Fight to have free college education, decent housing, medical care. To fight racist reaction, we need a revolution, a socialist America that will put the wealth of this country into the hands of those who produced it."

The drive against minorities, immigrants, women and labor can only be defeated by militant class struggle in defense of all the oppressed against both parties of American capitalism and its state. What is needed is a multiracial revolutionary workers party, to give communist leadership to the struggles of labor and the oppressed. We fight for workers rule, where everyone's labor and talents will be needed to build a world of abundance and equality, and where education for all will be a natural part of this collective labor. ■

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Strikes Sweep France...

(continued from page 12)

social reforms. Instead, the Socialist-dominated governments of the 1980s presided over the highest levels of unemployment in postwar France, while seeking to divert working-class anger by racist demagoguery against the North African and black African communities.

Like the strike last fall at the GEC heavy machinery factory in Alstom, the Flins strike exploded spontaneously, and the trade-union leaders quickly jumped on board in order to maintain control. The strike wave has swept aside the unwritten rule of the Gaullist Fifth Republic that mandates class "peace" in pre-election periods. However, the critical lack of a leadership capable of leading the wave of strikes—to say nothing of the necessary struggle for workers power—has been cruelly obvious, despite the workers' militancy.

Auto workers occupied the Choisy plant and stormed a delivery barge, dumping the cargo in the Seine. At Chausson, 700 angry auto workers ripped apart the local tax office and dumped the computers out the window. As in the Air France strike in the fall of 1993, striking airline workers on March 30 stormed onto the runways and fought a running battle with CRS riot police. At the same time, the trade-union bureaucrats have generally kept the strikes isolated from each other, often calling them on different days or keeping the workers in the dark about other strikes.

Throughout Europe, under the whip of interimperialist economic rivalries sharpened by the victory of capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the former Soviet Union, the bourgeoisie is determined to drive down labor costs. They have thrown up racist barriers around "fortress Europe" while attacking workers' salaries and what remains of the "welfare state"—unemployment benefits, retirement funds, public health insurance, etc.—which was put in place to counter the "communist threat" after World War II.

While the West European bourgeoisie

trumpets the supposed "death of communism," from Italy to Germany and France workers and youth have been standing up to the capitalist offensive and have won some defensive victories on the economic plane. French Renault strikers pointed to the example of the German metal workers, whose militant strike last month won a wage increase and reduction in the workweek (see "German Metal Workers Stand Off Bosses' Offensive," *WV* No. 618, 10 March).

However, to break the all-sided international capitalist offensive, "ordinary" trade-union struggle—however militant—is not enough. The bourgeoisie will necessarily seek to take back with the right hand any concessions which it is forced to grant with the left. The working class must consciously carry out its class battles under the banner of the struggle for power.

When he capitulated before the Air France strike in 1993, Prime Minister Balladur raised the spectre of May '68. And last week, a banner in front of the auto plant at Choisy proclaimed: "1968-1995, Renault on Strike!" The general strike, plant occupations and mass student revolt of May-June 1968 brought France to the brink of revolution. But only to the brink. The Stalinist Communist Party, then the dominant force in the workers movement, succeeded in keeping this explosion of working-class power within the confines of economic demands. The strikers eventually went back to work in exchange for a hefty wage increase, which, moreover, was quickly eaten up by inflation.

The real lesson of May '68 is not that it can happen again but that this time it must go all the way to socialist revolution and a workers government to expropriate the bourgeoisie. To lead such a fight, it is necessary to forge a multi-ethnic and international revolutionary workers party like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. The Ligue trotskyste de France (LTF), section of the International Communist League, is fighting to forge the nucleus of such a party.

Integrated Class Struggle Against Racist Bosses

Immigrant workers have repeatedly been in the forefront of class struggle against the Mitterrand popular front,

notably in a number of auto strikes between 1982 and 1984. At that time, the Socialist government gave the green light for a nationwide campaign of racist terror when it branded the Flins strikers as "manipulated by the ayatollahs." But this time the bosses failed miserably in their attempt to divide the workers with racism, such as labeling Flins as "a strike by Arabs and Africans." Along with a large number of youth, many foreign-born workers came to the fore in last month's auto strikes as local strike leaders, including a significant number who have been in France long enough to have participated in the May '68 general strike.

The strike at Flins started on March 8 after management offered the unions a measly pay increase of 1 percent, pleading poverty. This was shown to be a gross provocation when a few weeks later management revealed that Renault had tripled its profits last year. The trade-union bureaucrats wanted to keep the lid on until a national "day of action" on March 14. But the workers saw things differently and walked off the job, shutting down the plant. The central demand of the strikers was for a 1500 Franc (\$300) monthly raise for everyone.

The union misleaders worked overtime to defuse the fight. They actually encouraged temporary workers (who constitute 10 percent of the workforce) to go to work, rather than organizing strike pickets to rally these undecided and young workers, who were only waiting for such a call in order to join the strike. No attempt was made to spread the strike by sending militant delegations to other plants, even though the vital need to do so was widely understood by the strikers and strikes were flaring up throughout the auto industry. The PCF tried to divert the militant strike action into electoralism, specifically the presidential campaign of party leader Robert Hue, who is seeking to pressure the Socialists to the left.

The March 14 "day of action" was a powerful demonstration of proletarian power with 25,000 Renault workers on strike, but the trade-union bureaucrats carefully broke down the mobilization into isolated local actions. It is a graphic indication of the Flins workers' combativity that despite such a no-win leadership, the strike retained overwhelming

support and virtually no cars left the plant. By granting a pay increase of 2.5 percent, the bosses were finally able last week to restart the assembly lines at Flins. However, walkouts continue to flare up throughout the industry.

The powerful integrated class struggle in auto underscores the need to mobilize the power of the working class to fight the campaign of racist terror. As the LTF has repeatedly pointed out, immigrant workers are a key component of the French proletariat where they have enormous social power. But the PCF and the CGT union federation have further fueled the racist climate with their protectionist slogan "Produce French," which blames foreign workers for unemployment in France. They did not lift a finger to protest the racist deportations of "illegal immigrants," the Bayrou circular expelling girls who wear the Islamic headscarf from public schools, or the murder in February of a dark-skinned African in Marseille by fascist thugs of Le Pen's National Front.

Not surprisingly, strikers at Flins were quite receptive to the idea of an elected strike committee to consolidate and extend the strike. But the real key to victory is a revolutionary party, based on a program of transitional demands which, starting from the workers' immediate needs, leads to socialist revolution. Strikers were often familiar with the demand for a sliding scale of wages and hours to distribute the available work with no loss in pay. But they questioned how an equitable sharing of work is possible in this society. In fact, capitalism can no more satisfy this demand than it can do away with any of the injustice and oppression which is inherent in it. The defense of the workers' interests ultimately requires the liquidation of this system of exploitation and the setting up of a revolutionary workers government.

As our comrades of the LTF declared in a leaflet distributed to striking workers at Flins and elsewhere:

"Whether capitalism is managed by the right or the 'left,' it cannot satisfy the most elementary needs of the workers. That is why its regime of exploitation must be overthrown. And this fight is international. For a May '68 which goes all the way! For a Workers Government! For a Socialist United States of Europe!" ■

Moscow...

(continued from page 3)

of their disastrous capitalist policies and demented nationalist arrogance in numerous vital fields. In fact, the historical probability is that in a revolutionary situation there may well be little government to "overthrow"—we recall the way the Kerensky government fell to pieces. The assumption that the current government of the Ukraine will still be in existence at that future time seems to us to be the flimsiest speculation. We are Marxists, not putschists; we rely on the forces of the working class and we will fight against these malicious and provocative attempts to distort and defame our politics.

This harassment and intimidation is intended to prevent workers and others from joining with our presently small number of supporters in the lands of the former Soviet Union. But the agents of the Ukrainian and Russian governments have no need to spy on us or people interested in our ideas in order to find out what we really stand for politically. We are exactly what we say we are and all of it can be found in the published and publicly disseminated issues of our *Bulleten Spartakovtsev*. Four issues of the *Bulleten* and eleven supplements have been published and widely distributed in the former Soviet Union since autumn 1990. In November 1993, we also published for the first time in Rus-

sian the book, *The Communist International After Lenin*, Trotsky's critique of the 1928 draft Program at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, which presents further information on the political views and aims which we openly espouse.

The broadcast made much of the "approximately 50 kilograms of propagandistic literature" allegedly seized by the authorities. A set of the Collected Works of Marx and Engels weighs some 47 kilos depending on language and binding. A set of the Collected Works of V.I. Lenin weighs 32 kilos. One does not usually think this way but it gives some insight into the minds of the security organs.

Far from hiding our views, we have sought to disseminate them widely. Thus, in July 1992, our comrade Victor Granovsky was interviewed on the half-hour television program *MisteriComrade*. This program was broadcast repeatedly to a mass audience throughout the former Soviet Union. Our comrade stated clearly what we stand for: "We're for full workers democracy, for a multi-party system within the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat." That is in the tradition of Lenin's Bolsheviks, who fought to forge a hard vanguard party united on a programmatic basis, in counterposition to the conception of a "party of the whole class" advanced by the Mensheviks, who ultimately ended up supporting counter-revolution. Our comrade explained: "All

genuine communists, that is, Trotskyists, around the world have always felt a sense of duty toward the Soviet working class, toward the heroes of the October Revolution, of the Civil War and the war against German fascism."

Throughout our propagandistic work in the former Soviet Union, we have openly proclaimed the need for the working people of Russia and the near abroad to return to the path of Lenin and Trotsky. We have emphasized the need for all the working people to join together in struggle against capitalist exploitation and all manifestations of oppression and tyranny, against national subjugation and anti-Semitism and against the

oppression of women and homosexuals. In short, we have sought to act, in Lenin's words, as a "tribune of the people." Today, in our quest for the democratic rights of the working people and all nationalities to be asserted and defended, we believe that a plebiscite on national affiliation is in order in the Crimea and Chechnya.

We demand full access to the television news programs to respond to the absurd and sinister accusations which have been made against us.

—International Communist League
(Fourth Internationalist)
Moscow, 3 April 1995

Transcript of Vremya News Program, 1 April 1995

"...Dealing with the Crimea, [the Ukrainian government] was obliged at the same time to defend their own supreme power.

"The overthrow of the government in the Ukraine was planned by four ideological Trotskyists representing the International Communist League.

"They passed themselves off as scholars wishing to study archives. At one of the apartments of the visitors in Kiev, the Struggle Against Terrorism Division of the Ukrainian Security Service seized approximately 50 kilograms of propagandistic literature of the revolutionary Trotskyists.

"According to operatives' informa-

tion, four foreign citizens—two from Germany, one from France and one from America, attempted to organize in Ukraine a section of the International Communist League whose headquarters are located in New York, and whose closest affiliate is in Moscow.

"Furthermore, they openly called for the overthrow of the constitutional order in the Ukraine and the seizure of power, as was confirmed by our fellow countrymen, who the Trotskyists tried to recruit.

"As a result, travel into the Ukraine for the four revolutionary leaders from abroad is officially closed." ■

Pakistan: Workers Protest Murder of Labor Leader

Workers around Pakistan took to the streets to protest the January 19 murder by bosses' thugs of Syed Arif Hussain Shah, president of the Punjab Labour Federation. Only a week before, two steel union leaders were attacked and beaten by hired thugs after organizing an independent union at Lahore's Ittelaq Foundry, which is owned by former right-wing prime minister Nawaz Sharif. *Socialist Appeal* (February 1995), newspaper of the left-Labourite British group led by Ted Grant, has published an appeal for worldwide protest against the murder of Arif Shah, who was a leader of the leftist "Struggle" grouping (supported by Grant) inside the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

A statement by the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, initiated by the Punjab Labour Federation in the wake of Shah's murder, reported: "After taking action to block the main Lahore-Karachi highway, the next day 20,000 workers attended Arif Shah's funeral." On February 15, some 8,000 workers from dozens of trade unions converged on Lahore for another demonstration, blocking a main road to the parliament building for three hours. When police tried to break up the protest and manhandle the demonstrators, women workers pushed the police back.

The outpouring of workers protest shows the capacity for serious class struggle that could cut through the murderous communalism which plagues the country and ignite the social tinder on which the bourgeoisie's shaky edifice rests. A staggering 10 million people are unemployed, child labor and indentured servitude are widespread, and poverty and malnutrition are endemic. Armed gangs of Islamic fundamentalist cutthroats, sponsored by the Pakistani secret service as part of the CIA-financed "holy war" against the Soviet army in Afghanistan in the 1980s, have helped turn the country into a world center of the heroin trade. Karachi, the commercial capital, is all but paralyzed by warfare between the locally politically dominant Urdu-speaking Mohajirs and the Sindi-dominated provincial authorities, which has also involved bloody feuding between the majority Sunni and minority Shiite Muslims.

What is needed is the independent mobilization of the proletariat under the leadership of a multinational Bolshevik party in struggle against its exploiters and oppressors. Yet the "Struggle" group, which claims to be Marxist, instead seeks to be a "left" pressure group on the ruling capitalist party of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in which it is deeply buried. While complaining that Bhutto has "succumbed to the pressures of the IMF and World Bank," *Socialist Appeal* upholds instead "the ideas that Benazir's father stood for." Former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a wealthy landed aristocrat who imposed martial law in 1977 and paved the way for the current fundamentalist reign of terror with his "Islamic socialism."

Pakistan, created as a Muslim state out of the bloody 1947 partition of India, is a prisonhouse of myriad peoples that is coming apart at the seams. To sweep away the bloody rule of the landlord-capitalists, the military butchers and the religious oligarchy, Pakistan's proletariat must join with the powerful working class of India, at the head of the peasant masses and all the oppressed, in a struggle for socialist revolution throughout the subcontinent.

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Syed Arif Hussain Shah

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Mexico...

(continued from page 7)

same industry producing for the Mexican market, and well below those of industrial-exporting Asian countries.

In the debate over NAFTA, much was made in the U.S. about industrial pollution in the border zone. In fact, the whole area is a huge toxic dumping ground, with raw industrial waste being pumped in by the *maquiladoras*. Tests in irrigation ditches around industrial parks in Matamoros show contamination levels of harmful chemicals such as xylene running at 52,000 times U.S. safety standards. The GM Deltronics parts plant discharged 215,000 times the EPA standard for cancer-causing methylene chloride. In the electronics and plastics plants respiratory illness is rampant due to noxious fumes. Frequently, workers are given no face masks, or only one a week; gloves and eye protection are often not available. Workers at W.R. Grace's Erika plant in Reynosa say a coworker was killed and another suffered a stroke from contact with toxic chemicals, chiefly the solvent cyclohexanone. Such conditions are particularly harmful to women workers, and recently dozens of babies have been born in the Matamoros/Brownsville, Texas area with open skulls and no brain (*San Francisco Examiner*, 24 April 1992).

The woman question is in fact central to the *maquiladoras*. The initial overwhelmingly female workforce was recruited not only for "nimble fingers" to do stitching and minute assembly operations, but also because it was expected that young women were more pliable and could be easily intimidated. Sexual harassment is rampant. The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM) Newsletter (Winter 1994) published a photo of a sign in an automobile steering wheel manufacturing plant in Monterrey proclaiming: "It's Company Policy. Either work hard or look good in a tight sweater." In another case at a Tijuana *maquiladora*, when the company president came down from the U.S. to visit, women workers were required to put on a bikini show so that he could videotape them.

But most intrusive are the pervasive pregnancy checks. Women applying for jobs have to provide urine samples, and if they test positive they are not hired. During the three-month probationary period, it is standard practice for companies to demand that women produce bloody sanitary napkins to prove they



Mexico City: Situm university workers union contingent in January 12 march protesting government repression of peasant-based Zapatista rebels in Chiapas.

are menstruating. In some cases, a company nurse accompanies the woman into the bathroom to make sure the napkin she turns in is hers! We reported these barbaric practices in our article "Mexican Women Workers Arise: Class Struggle in the 'Global Sweatshop'" (*Women and Revolution* No. 34, Spring 1988). But they continue to this day. The CJM reports that in February 1994, all women workers in Zenith's Plant 12 in Reynosa were given pregnancy exams, and several were fired as a result.

Because Mexican law requires paid maternity leave for several weeks before and after giving birth, it is not uncommon for *maquiladoras* to simply fire pregnant women, or at most give time off without pay. In general, Mexico's labor legislation is simply ignored in the northern border region. Thus while the Federal Labor Law requires that employees be given a contract after 30 days employment, in these plants a three-month "probationary" period (during which workers have no rights) is not only standard but even written into "union" contracts. Workers are often fired just before the 90 days are up, and then "rehired" soon after. (Often this happens around Christmas time, to avoid paying the annual *aguinaldo* bonus.) The Arbitration and Conciliation Boards listen only to the employers, the government and CTM bosses—who usually present a solid front against the workers.

The one area in the *frontera* that wages have been moderately raised is in Matamoros, where *maquiladora* workers in 1993 were typically taking home between 150 and 240 new pesos (\$50-80) for a 40-hour week, compared to half that for a six-day workweek in Reynosa. The reason is the action of the Day Laborers and Industrial Workers Union (SJOI) which has organized most of the *maquila* plants. Although part of the CTM, the SJOI was headed by a maverick leader,

Agapito González Cavazos. In February 1992, just before a strike deadline, the Salinas government arrested 75-year-old González Cavazos on trumped-up charges of "tax evasion." The arrest was sanctioned by CTM boss Fidel Velázquez. The Matamoros union was plenty bureaucratic, but the CTM's claims to represent the workers are laughable. In Reynosa, *maquiladora* workers told us the only time in recent memory the union had called them to a meeting was to greet the PRI congressional candidate, Eliazar García, who is a professional clown known as "Chelelo!"

The CTM acts more like a labor contractor than a labor union, as it supplies a "disciplined" workforce to North American investors. Indeed, CTM bosses finger potential militants and run them out of the plants, as well as organizing goon squads to put down any protests. They are literally labor cops for the bosses. But as the RCA Thomson strike in Ciudad Juárez showed, their grip can be broken. In order to make lasting gains it is necessary to confront the whole edifice of state regimentation of labor in Mexico, through a conscious fight for workers organizations independent of the bourgeoisie. This can come about by forming workers committees or through a revolt within CTM "unions." But it must be part of a broader fight for a revolutionary workers party, which will seek to mobilize all the oppressed. Today, this focuses on cohering a nucleus of committed cadres, who by assimilating the lessons of past struggles will prepare for the struggles to come.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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Brazil: (Revolver con el frente popular)... pág. 20

WORKERS VANGUARD

On Eve of Elections

Strikes Sweep Across France

PARIS—Combative French workers have launched a major class-struggle offensive over the past month with industrial actions in over 20 different regions of the country. Strikes have repeatedly hit the auto industry, airlines, electrical service, public transportation and other sectors. Striking postal workers have halted mail service in several regions of the country, while a strike by public administration workers paralyzed the island of Corsica for more than a month.

Every day last week, central Paris was effectively taken over by demonstrators marching on the prime minister's office. And the entire country was virtually brought to a standstill on March 30 (the bourgeois press hysterically called it "Black Thursday") by a one-day strike of the nationalized railroad and domestic airline as well as the Paris subways and buses. The previous day, several hundred striking auto workers sent Prime Minister Edouard Balladur packing after they broke into the Paris stadium where he was having an electoral rally.

The backbone of the strike wave has been in the government-owned Renault auto factories, especially the largest plant of the group at Flins, just outside Paris, which workers shut down for almost three weeks. So fearful was the bourgeoisie of the Flins strike spread-

Workers at government-owned Renault auto plants have spearheaded recent surge of militant labor struggle in France.



ing that the capitalist media virtually blacked out all news coverage. In particular, the bosses were horrified by the fact that it was led by "immigrants," workers of African or North African origin. For this government of "cohabitation" between Socialist president François Mitterrand and Gaullist conservatives—the hallmark of which has been

racist attacks, expulsions and segregation—the exemplary class solidarity in this strike wave between French and foreign-born workers represents a powerful threat.

The reformist leaders of the working class have barely been able to maintain control of the rising strike wave, for these class traitors are deeply discredited

by 14 years of savage austerity and racist attacks. In 1981, Socialist Party leader Mitterrand was elected president of France under the banner of the Union of the Left—a popular-front coalition between the Socialists, Communist Party (PCF) and bourgeois Left Radicals—promising prosperity and sweeping

continued on page 10

Drop the Charges Against Student Protesters!

New York City

On March 23, thousands of college and high school students demonstrated outside New York's City Hall to protest the vicious cuts proposed by Governor George Pataki and Mayor Rudolf Giuliani, which would gut the City University system and purge tens of thousands of working-class and minority youth from higher education. Giuliani's response was a massive police show of force and attacks on demonstrators aimed at intimidating opposition. The Partisan Defense Committee immediately issued the following protest against the police-state mobilization.

25 March 1995

District Attorney Robert Morgenthau
New York, NY
Mr. Morgenthau:

Thousands of New York City high school and college students rallied on Thursday to protest the draconian budget cuts which constitute a virtual death sentence for public education in this city. The First Amendment rights of the students to protest these cuts, which will relegate a whole generation of working-class and minority youth to second-class citizenship, were snatched by an ugly,



Mass arrests and ominous display of cop force against CUNY protesters at City Hall Park, March 23.

massive and threatening police presence.

The ominous police mobilization, with riot gear and mounted squads, was reminiscent of cop mobilizations in the South when protesters took to the streets to demand basic civil rights. The 54 misdemeanor and six felony arrests of students demonstrating for their right to a decent education are a clear result of police provocation. The police, itching

for action, attacked youth who were crossing a street to leave the demonstration in a calculated attempt to give themselves an excuse to go on a rampage. This is despicable.

The demonstration of high school and college students was totally orderly and within the bounds of the legitimate exercise of the students' First Amendment rights, until city cops attacked the pro-

testers. Not even elementary school children were safe from this vicious police assault.

We demand you drop the charges against the 60 protesters.

Sincerely,
Paul Cooperstein

cc: Mayor Giuliani
New York Times