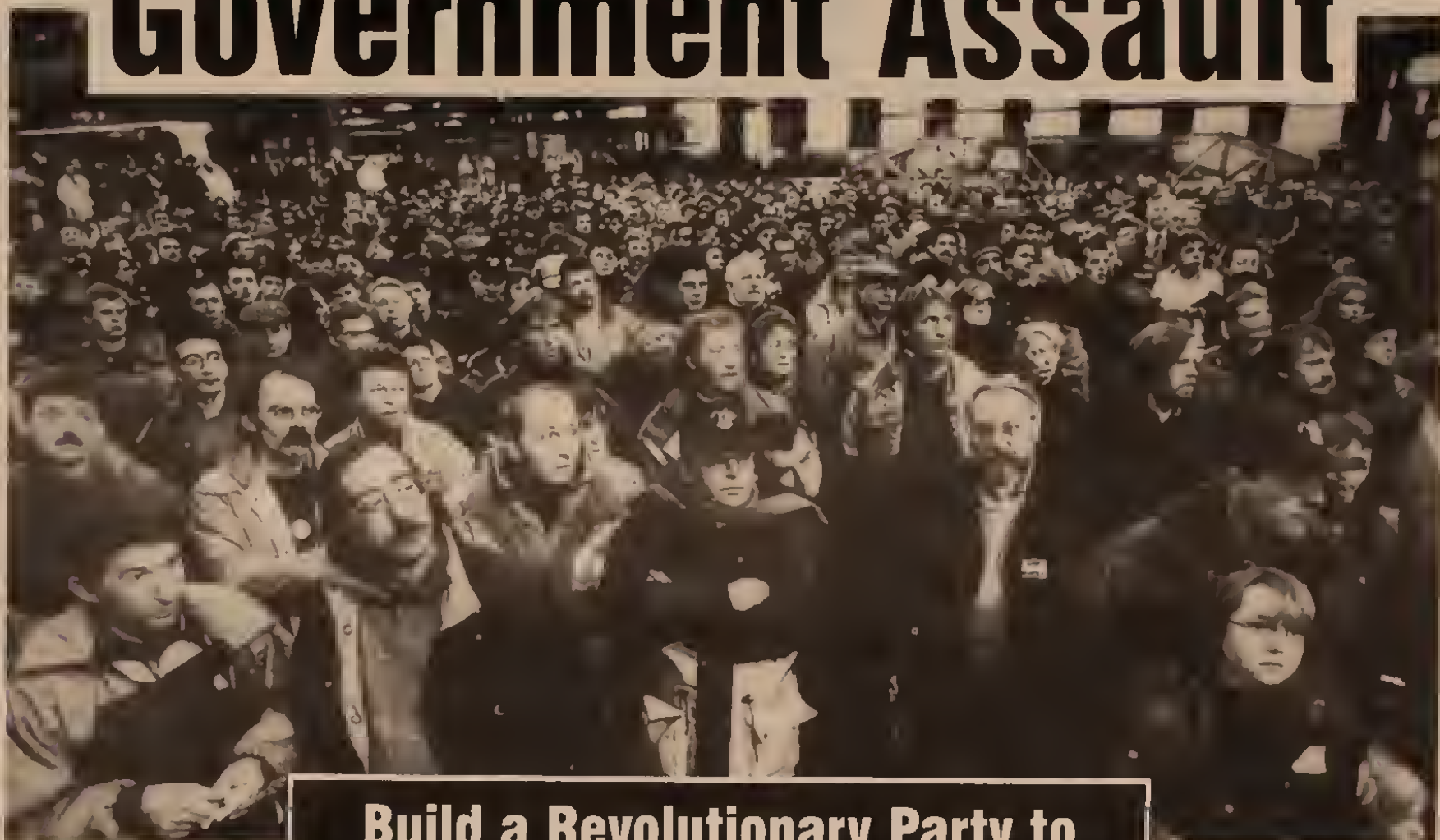


## Union Misleaders Derail Strike Wave

# French Workers Fight Off Government Assault



Eric Levilly

### Build a Revolutionary Party to Fight for a Workers Government!

Transport workers were backbone of recent strikes against French capitalists' assault on trade unions and social services. Above: general assembly of striking rail workers in Sotteville.

JANUARY 1—French public service workers returned to work after a massive strike wave against a government assault on the country's social security system. The strikes electrified militant workers throughout Europe and the world. For three weeks, the country slowed to a crawl, as striking railwaymen were joined by workers in mass transit, the postal system, public utilities, schools and hospitals. Paris and other large cities were paralyzed. Contrary to the government's expectations, the labor actions were widely and even enthusiastically supported by the bulk of the population, who saw their basic social security net threatened by Prime Minister Alain Juppé's "reforms."

Juppé was able to hardline it for weeks as the strike wave remained limited to public sector workers without spreading to heavy industry. However, a series of half a dozen one-day general strikes by public workers saw steadily growing mass mobilizations, culminating on December 12 when more than two million protesters flooded the streets. The mass anti-government mobilizations, which had been centered on Paris, took off virtually throughout the country. It was just at this point that the reformist leaders of the working class stepped in to put out the fires of class struggle.

Seeking to stop a dangerous escalation, the government tried "salami tactics," offering to piece off the railway workers, the hard core of the strike movement. At the same time, Juppé vowed to maintain the centerpiece of his anti-working-class "reforms": plans to gut public health care. With events escalating toward a frontal clash, posing an all-out workers mobilization which could easily have escaped their control, the union tops signed on to the bourgeoisie's policy of "divide and rule." In

exchange for the government dropping its planned cuts of pensions and jobs of rail workers, the strikes would be brought to an end.

Echoing the famous statement by French Stalinist leader Maurice Thorez in the 1936 general strike, the CGC managers "union" declared, "It's necessary to know how to end a strike." The reformists certainly know how. Both

*L'Humanité*, daily paper of the French

Communist Party (PCF), and the social-democratic *Libération* ran front-page photos showing jubilant railway workers waving red flags on the train taking them back to work. Louis Viannet, head of the PCF-led CGT union federation, cynically

hailed the "rail workers' victory in imposing their sectoral demands." Nicole Notat, leader of the social-democratic CFDT federation, who had opposed the strikes from the start, declared that the workers "have fought and won." The Saturday, December 16 "day of action" was intended to declare victory...and send the strikers home. Yet no sooner had the workers started returning to work than parliament approved legislation empowering Juppé to impose new taxes by decree, so that his 0.5 percent income tax hike could take effect January 1.

The strike movement was so powerful that there are still pockets of determined strikers: Marseilles remains paralyzed by a shutdown of railway and public transportation, now in its fifth week, while isolated walkouts continue to occur in the public sector. Last week, the government sent one hundred CRS riot cops against workers occupying the postal sorting center in Caen. The strikers were not defeated; there is widespread bitterness among militant workers, who talk of going back on strike against the government's attacks. While giving in to the rail unions made it possible to split the strike movement, it also highlighted the government's weakness and could embolden other sectors. A wage freeze for all 5.5 million public workers scheduled to take effect in January could provoke a new outbreak of protest. But

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### Workers Vanguard Interview

## Mumia Abu-Jamal Speaks from Death Row

See Page Six



WV Photo





### PDC Holiday Appeal a Success

The Partisan Defense Committee is wrapping up our tenth annual Holiday Appeal for class-war prisoners: the 17 imprisoned victims of capitalist and racist state repression who are in the PDC's regular stipend program. With contributions still coming in, we've raised about \$10,000 thus far. Every cent raised is used to provide monthly stipends for the prisoners and holiday gifts for them and their families.

The Holiday Appeal centered around fund-raising benefits in New York, Chicago and the Bay Area. Smaller gatherings were also held in Boston and Los Angeles. The noteworthy feature of the benefits this year was the participation of trade unions and unionists, an

outgrowth of the PDC-initiated labor-centered mobilizations for Mumia Abu-Jamal during the summer. In New York, where some 360 tickets were sold and over 175 people turned out for the benefit, blocks of tickets were bought by SSEU Local 371, the local chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and Teamsters Local 808.

The December 10 Bay Area benefit was held at the ILWU Local 6 hall in Oakland. Some 400 tickets were sold, 100 more than last year, and over 100 attended. Five unions bought blocks of tickets, and over \$4,000 has been raised. An article in the Chinese-language *Sing Tao Daily* (11 December) reported on the PDC's activities, highlighting our de-



WV Photo

December 10 PDC benefit held at ILWU Local 6 hall in Oakland.

fense of immigrants' rights and protest of government mistreatment of Chinese immigrants, ten of whom just ended a 50-day hunger strike in a Bakersfield prison, as well as the campaign for Mumia.

The Chicago benefit, held at the United Electrical Workers hall, drew nearly 100 people. Over one-quarter of the 275 tickets sold were bought by members of the city's transit unions, which were instrumental in building PDC mobilizations to free Mumia and to stop the KKK.

The benefits focused on our work on behalf of class-war prisoners, most prominently the PDC's efforts in the campaign to free Jamal. This year's benefits featured statements from many of the prisoners expressing the importance to them of such solidarity. The MOVE women at Pennsylvania's Cambridge Springs state prison wrote: "A very special thanks to the Partisan Defense Committee for all of the hard work and dedication you have shown to all of us Political Prisoners, class war prisoners and prisoners of war, over the years with the holiday fundraising drives, benefits, demonstrations, supplying us with letters, cards, donations and your *Workers Vanguard* which is very informative and keeps us up to date on a lot of things."

We print below remarks by Jane Clancy on behalf of the Spartacist League at the Bay Area benefit.

A comrade up from Los Angeles told me a story. A black woman comedian from L.A. just got back from France and said, "I was in L.A. in 1992 and I was

in Paris in 1995 and let me tell you, honey, those white people sure know how to riot." It's not simply that it's humorous, it's insightful because it offers a ray of hope, an understanding of struggle across national boundaries, an insight into the importance of the battles being waged so fiercely by the French working class, and an indication that in those kinds of struggles one can break down the barriers of race, of ethnicity, of nation that are imposed by the capitalist rulers in order to keep those at the bottom divided and pitted against each other.

The multiracial upheaval in Los Angeles in 1992 lit up the sky with the anger of many—blacks, Latinos, white working people and youth—who have been increasingly ground down to feed the profits of the filthy rich few at the top. Those who have looted the wealth of this society, destroyed industry, ripped off millions in various scams from junk bonds to bilking savings and loans, screamed over the "looting." We argued that the point was not to seize the articles of consumption but to seize the means of production.

There is only one force capable of doing that, the multiracial working class, whose labor created the wealth in this society and which has the power to reclaim this wealth and make it belong to all. You can see that power today in France, where railway workers have shut down the trains, airport workers have repeatedly shut down the airports, electrical workers let the population have power at half price, miners are

*continued on page 10*

#### France: Syndicalism or Bolshevism

The recent explosive strikes in France demonstrated both the proletariat's readiness to struggle and the union misleaders' determination to betray. Particularly since the collapse of Stalinism under the weight of its own bankruptcy, growing numbers of radical-minded youth and workers in West Europe have turned to the "anti-party" traditions of anarchism and syndicalism as an alternative to the open class-



TROTSKY

collaborationism of the reformist parties. In a 1929 article, Leon Trotsky addressed the contradictory aspects of the mass revolutionary syndicalist current which existed before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

The Communist Party is the fundamental weapon of revolutionary action of the proletariat, the combat organization of its vanguard that must raise itself to the role of leader of the working class in all the spheres of its struggle without exception, and consequently, in the trade union field....

The theory of the active minority was, in essence, an uncompleted theory of a proletarian party. In all its practice, revolutionary syndicalism was an embryo of a revolutionary party as against opportunism, that is, it was a remarkable draft outline of revolutionary Communism.

The weakness of anarcho-syndicalism, even in its classic period, was the absence of a correct theoretical foundation, and, as a result, a wrong understanding of the nature of the state and its role in the class struggle; an incomplete, not fully developed and, consequently, a wrong conception of the role of the revolutionary minority, that is, the party. Thence the mistakes in tactics, such as the fetishism of the general strike, the ignoring of the connection between the uprising and the seizure of power, etc.

After the war, French syndicalism found not only its refutation but also its development and its completion in Communism. Attempts to revive revolutionary syndicalism now would be to try and turn back history. For the labor movement, such attempts can have only reactionary significance.

The epigones of syndicalism transform (in words) the independence of the trade union organization from the bourgeoisie and the reformist socialists into independence in general, into absolute independence from all parties, the Communist included....

Independence from the influence of the bourgeoisie cannot be a passive state. It can express itself only by political acts, that is, by the struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle must be inspired by a distinct program which requires organization and tactics for its application. It is the union of program, organization, and tactics that constitutes the party. In this way, the real independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois government cannot be realized unless the proletariat conducts its struggle under the leadership of a revolutionary and not an opportunist party.

—Leon Trotsky, "Communism and Syndicalism" (October 1929)



LENIN

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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## Letter

### Imperialist Sanctions Kill 500,000 Iraqi Children

Brooklyn, New York  
22 December 1995

To the Editors:

Living in this age of capitalist cruelty I have become somewhat numb to human suffering. But this little item from page A9 of *The New York Times* (1 December 1995) made my blood stop cold:

Under the headline "Iraq Sanctions Kill Children, U.N. Reports," we read:

"As many as 576,000 Iraqi children may have died since the end of the Persian Gulf war because of economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, according to two scientists who surveyed the country for the Food and Agriculture Organization."

500,000? Children? Starved to death?! (And how many Iraqi adults, who don't even rate a mention in this article?)

(Cruel as they are, I can't imagine what real—as opposed to stated—imperialists' objective is being achieved by this; unless it's to show the world that

there is no limit to their cruelty. But I thought they had demonstrated this rather well already.)

May we please scream about this from the rooftops as we do at every opportunity for Mumia?

May we please excoriate those "leftists," Black and union "leaders," who would have us vote for mass murderer Clinton (leader and organizer of the sanctions) in '96 as a "lesser evil"?

May we please vilify these same gentile persons for their silence on this matter when they cry crocodile tears ON CUE (e.g., for "poor little Bosnia," when the U.S. wants to invade it)?

May we please rip the faces off the sanctimonious concerned-for-all-mankind-yet-sober-and-realistic publishers of the *Times* for burying this info on page 9 as they hurried their knowledge of the Holocaust in the '30s?

Fraternally,  
Jack L.



# Walesa Ousted in Polish Elections

WARSAW—Lech Walesa, the godfather of Solidarność counterrevolution, finally got his comeuppance from Poland's working people. On December 23, former Stalinist Aleksander Kwasniewski took over as president, after defeating Walesa's bid for a second term in the November 19 ballot. Despite a frenzied anti-Communist campaign by rightist forces and the powerful Catholic church hierarchy, Kwasniewski's Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) garnered 51.7 percent of the vote in a record turnout, consolidating its sweeping victory in parliamentary elections two years ago. The SLD won three out of five votes among the unemployed, as well as sizable majorities in small towns and rural areas which have been particularly hard hit by capitalist "shock therapy."

Walesa's defeat marks the final humiliation for the once-powerful Solidarność movement, which was groomed and financed by NATO imperialism and the Vatican in the early '80s as the spearhead for capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe. The Spartacist tendency opposed this company "union" for the CIA and Western bankers while calling for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the bankrupt Stalinist bureaucracy which had driven Polish workers into the arms of clerical reaction. In contrast, much of the reformist and centrist left marched in lockstep behind Cold War social democrats like the German SPD and France's Mitterrand, cheering in "solidarity with Solidarity" and whitewashing its counterrevolutionary agenda.

But with its ascent to power on the basis of the 1989 "Round Table" agreement with the Stalinists, Solidarność immediately began implementing

## Bankers Back Ex-Stalinist



Rutkiewicz/Studio X



Chamberlin/Black Star

All-purpose bigot Lech Walesa (right) replaced by social democrat Aleksander Kwasniewski, who promises more "free market" misery.

partners of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), has amply demonstrated its reliability on this score in the past two years.

To their working-class base, these reformists offer "capitalism with a human face." Yet as we wrote last year in "East Europe: Five Years of Counterrevolution" (WV No. 614, 13 January 1995): "Any government—whether pro-Western neoliberal, Christian nationalist or ex-Stalinist—which accepts the framework of capitalist restoration will oversee the further impoverishment of these societies." In a televised debate with Walesa, Kwasniewski promised to deal "with the problems of unemployment, of the poor and with the situation of Polish women." But speaking to the German bankers in an interview with *Der Spiegel* (27 November 1995), he underlined his real priorities: dismantling the remnants of the social security and pension system left over from the deformed workers state and "integrating" Poland into NATO and the Deutschmark-dominated European Union.

Immediately after his election, Kwasniewski resigned from the Polish Social Democracy (SdRP), the mainstay of the Democratic Left Alliance, embracing Walesa's project of making the presidency a bonapartist institution "above parties."

Where the SLD's earlier parliamentary triumph provoked anxiety and consternation among NATO leaders, two years later the 41-year-old Kwasniewski, a yuppie "pragmatist" who portrays himself as a Polish version of JFK, had become the imperialists' favored candidate. A recent U.S. Commerce Department report, trumpeted by the SLD mouthpiece *Trybuna* (3 November 1995), approvingly noted that "the pace of privatization has gathered momentum" since the SLD's Jozef Oleksy became prime minister earlier this year. A spokesman for a Wall Street brokerage firm praised Kwasniewski for knowing "how to handle himself with the unions." The London *Financial Times* complained that the imperious Walesa had "frustrated foreign investors" and "was himself to blame for his electoral failure."

In Poland, barely six months ago, Walesa was so despised and discredited that he ranked lower in opinion polls than General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who imposed martial law in December 1981 to spike Solidarność' initial bid for power. So the church—viewing the staid SLD as a latter-day Bolshevik Anti-christ—moved to rally the faithful behind Walesa against the traditional obsession of Polish reaction, the "Zydokomuna"—"Jew-Communism." In June Walesa's

personal priest, Father Henryk Jankowski, took the pulpit in his patron's presence to decry the Star of David as a "symbol that combined the swastika and the hammer and sickle." Cardinal Glemp proclaimed the election a choice between "Christian" and "neo-pagan" values and ordered special masses for Walesa's re-election. Kwasniewski was even refused entry into the Jasna Gora shrine, Poland's equivalent of Mecca, as the head of the monastery inveighed against those who come "under the sign of the hammer and sickle."

The Solidarność trade-union federation, which is shot through with fascists and anti-Semites, threw its support behind Walesa, as did the fascistic Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) of Leszek Moczulski. After the first round of voting in early November, the other bourgeois parties also endorsed Walesa, including erstwhile leftist idol Jacek Kuron of the Freedom Union, the largest party issuing out of the fragmentation of the Solidarność movement. Yet distaste for Walesa ran so deep that the party split, with a grouping led by pro-abortion liberal Barbara Labuda supporting Kwasniewski.

The Spartakusowska Grupa Polski (SGP), section of the International Communist League, insisted that there was no choice for working people in this contest between the social-democratic enforcer of IMF austerity and the would-be successor to interwar fascist dictator Jozef Pilsudski. The economic policies pushed by the two candidates differed only in tone, not in content. Where Walesa raved that it "will be necessary to shoot" striking workers for "the good of the fatherland," Kwasniewski argued

more discreetly that "unpopular decisions" would be needed "to maintain economic growth." Enforcing these "unpopular decisions" is the ex-Stalinist OPZZ trade-union federation, which is itself a component of the SLD. These union misleaders, who preach that the "mission" of trade unions is not "initiating fires but preventing them," have ensured a decline in strike activity by the combative workers movement since the SLD came to office.

The one significant difference between the two candidates was over Kwasniewski's more liberal stance toward abortion and the suffocating domination of the Catholic church. Even this involves more posture than substance. The Social Democrats are well aware that the church is a bulwark of capitalist rule in Poland and they will do nothing to challenge its power. Kwasniewski criticizes members of his own party for making "anti-church interventions" and supports a concordat with the Vatican which will enshrine the church's privileged position. Meanwhile, the SLD-led coalition government has dutifully enforced the abortion ban, using Walesa's veto power as an excuse not to overturn it. It has also enthusiastically implemented German demands that Poland put a stop to emigration by persecuted Roma (Gypsy) refugees, bulldozing Roma settlements and deporting the inhabitants to Romania.

None of this, however, prevented various fake-Trotskyist groups from backing Kwasniewski in the name of lesser evilism. Polish supporters of the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat called to "stop the right" "...by voting for the 'left' front man for the IMF and Wall Street bankers (*Dalej!* November-December 1995). Likewise, the Polish affiliate of Britain's reformist Labour Militant, Ofensywa, coyly called for a vote to any candidate "who opposes the anti-abortion law," while in the same issue of its paper saying there was no choice for the working class in the elections.

Only a few years back, these outfits were among the staunchest boosters of Walesa and the right. Now with Polish workers, women and youth chafing under the impact of capitalist restoration, Cold War Stalinophobes like Militant seek to hurry their past support to Solidarność counterrevolution. At the same time, they capitulate to pervasive Polish chauvinism. At a united-front protest in Warsaw for U.S. death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal last June, only days after Jankowski's vile Jew-baiting tirade, Ofensywa explicitly refused to join other demonstrators when the SGP led a chant of "Down with racism and anti-Semitism!"

Meanwhile, the Polish associates of Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party (and the International Socialist Organization in the U.S.) have remained

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Polish Trotskyists call for building a revolutionary workers party to fight capitalist austerity and champion rights of women and minorities.

its program of capitalist restoration, dismantling the planned economy, shredding workers' livelihoods, driving women out of the workforce, imposing a ban on abortion and subjecting youth to regimentation by the church. Today, many workers at the Gdansk shipyard, where Walesa first catapulted himself to prominence, voted for Kwasniewski.

The SLD victory continues a trend seen throughout the former deformed workers states of East Europe over the past three years, as the political heirs of the now-defunct Stalinist bureaucracies have ridden into office on a groundswell of discontent over the ravages of capitalist counterrevolution. But like his fellow born-again social democrats in Lithuania, Hungary and elsewhere, Kwasniewski promises more of the same "free market" impoverishment as he slavishly implements the dictates of the imperialists' International Monetary Fund (IMF). The governing SLD coalition, in league with its bourgeois bloc

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# Racist War on Immigrants in Italy

MILANO—In recent months, Italy's rulers have ruthlessly escalated their racist war on immigrants. There has been a steady drumbeat in the newspapers and on television clamoring for action against "criminals," "drug pushers" and "prostitutes." Immigrant quarters in Torino, Naples and other cities have been turned into occupied areas, as hordes of cops sweep through making indiscriminate mass arrests. On November 19, the government of Prime Minister Lamberto Dini announced an "emergency" decree targeting anyone who is not a citizen of a European Union country for deportation without trial on the most spurious grounds, from "disturbing the peace" to "living beyond their means." This has already led to thousands of immigrants being fired from their jobs.

Scandalously, Dini's decree was supported not only by the fascist National Alliance (AN) and the racist populists of the Northern League, but also by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), social-democratic successor to the Italian Communist Party. Fashioning its own version of the notorious "red"-brown coalition in Russia, the reformist PDS is now marching literally shoulder to shoulder with outright fascists in the anti-immigrant crusade. On October 6, many PDS leaders participated in a racist mobilization for "cleanliness, order and more police" in Torino called by the fascists and the Northern League (*Il Manifesto*, 8 October 1995). A week later, the head of the PDS fraction in the city council marched with the fascists in a demonstration against Nigerian "prostitutes." This was followed by a joint sit-in of PDSers and fascists targeting immigrants.

The racist offensive has provoked a vigorous response by workers and radical youth. On November 19, the same day Dini's decree was announced, 30,000 people—a third of them immigrants—marched in an anti-racist protest in Torino. The PDS head of the CGIL trade-union federation, Sergio Cofferati, was loudly booed by protesters yelling "clown," "sellout," "racist," "dirty pig," when he ranted from the platform that "delinquents" and "dishonest" immigrants must be deported. More than 450 pieces of literature of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) were sold at this march. And in Milano and other cities around Italy, thousands of incensed protesters have demonstrated against the racist decree.

Despite its posture as a "left" alternative to the PDS, the reformist Rifondazione Comunista (RC), another leftover from the old CP, also wallows in this disgusting racist crusade. The RC's mayoral candidate in Torino was a participant in the October 6 demonstration, while in Florence, the RC/PDS-dominated city council called for and collected petitions to kick the Rom (Gypsies) out of the city. At the November 19 Torino protest, RC distributed a lengthy statement which grotesquely echoed the racist right, expressing "disgust" at "the criminal phenomenon that disturbs civilized co-existence" and calling on the "authorities to effectively repress criminality of every type, applying the Italian laws with the most modern investigative techniques against drug-pushers and the prostitution racket."

The reformist left has long pushed an "opening to the right." Walter Veltroni, editor of the PDS' *L'Unità*, declared over



Fascists and "leftists" have joined in unholy alliance calling for government repression of immigrants.

a year ago that his party would be willing to join a coalition government with the fascist AN of Gianfranco Fini. RC currently governs together with Umberto Bossi's Northern League in numerous city councils and proclaims its readiness to do so nationally. Northern League leaders Formentini and Roberto Maroni were invited to the RC's national *festa* in July to spew their racist filth, which includes the call for apartheid-style identity cards with toeprints (claiming that immigrants burn their hands to avoid fingerprint identification!). The Northern League racists also demand that police be armed with rubber bullets for use against immigrants and are pushing for the creation of fascist-like "civil guard" militias. Lynch mobs have begun to appear, as in Torino on the night of October 10, when some 60 racists armed with clubs, hammers, monkey wrenches and knives went on a hunt for immigrants.

The Lega Trotskista d'Italia, section of the International Communist League, has denounced the racist front embraced by the PDS and RC and fights for a strategy centered on mobilizing the whole of the workers movement in defense of immigrants. Uniquely on the Italian left, the LTD'I raises the demand for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. Last February, when cops arrested three immigrants in Milano while busloads of protesters were preparing to depart for a large anti-racist rally in Rome, LTD'I supporters successfully organized a demonstration on the spot which secured their release. And in early December, addressing 2,000 protesters at an anti-racist protest in Milano, an LTD'I supporter underscored the need for a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party that acts as tribune of all the oppressed and openly fights for proletarian power to smash racist capitalism.

## Fake Trotskyists Support Banca d'Italia Government

The racist offensive is part and parcel of an austerity assault against the living standards of all workers. By scapegoating immigrants for growing poverty and unemployment, the capitalist rulers hope to divide the combative Italian proletariat, which time and again in the last couple of years has taken to the streets against attempts to dismantle the social security system. The right-wing government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi

was finally brought down after repeated workers mobilizations against pension cuts in the fall of 1994, including a four-hour nationwide protest strike that October which brought more than three million people out in demonstrations in 97 cities.

The reformist misleaders used these explosive workers' struggles as extraparlimentary pressure to push for a popular-front government of the "progressives." When Berlusconi resigned and was replaced by former Bank of Italy governor Dini—who as finance minister drew up the pension-cutting plan—the reformists cried victory. The PDS openly supported Dini's new austerity program, while RC withdrew its slew of parliamentary amendments aimed at stalling the legislation. The Dini government has been carrying out the austerity cuts the Berlusconi government failed to implement, now supported by the PDS and with the "consent" of RC and the trade unions.

It is not only the ex-Stalinists who engage in these class-collaborationist politics of betrayal. The "left opposition" within RC consists of supporters of the International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO—represented in the U.S. by the Trotskyist League), which has posed as the left wing of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec). Yet the ITO is no less politically liquidationist than the USec: its honchos Franco Grisolia and Marco Ferrando are buried deep within the reformist RC and sit on its leading body. And here they show their true colors. As reported in *Carriere della Sera* (24 October 1995), at an October 22 RC leadership meeting which debated whether to support a parliamentary vote of no confidence in the Dini government, *Grisolia and Ferrando argued against bringing down the Bank of Italy austerity regime*.

In calling for abstention on the no-confidence motion, these "Trotskyist" poseurs stood to the right of the reformist RC majority. Three days later, capitulating to the pressure of the popular front, the rest of the RC leadership adopted the ITO's line, ensuring that their 24 parliamentary deputies would not participate in the anti-government vote. As a result, Dini was allowed to remain in office by a slim majority of 310 to 291. Thus, *ITO leaders Ferrando and Grisolia played a*

*key role in propping up the Dini regime on the eve of its racist anti-immigrant decree.*

This blatant betrayal—justified by the fact that the no-confidence vote was initiated by the right-wing parties—is fully in keeping with the ITO's popular-frontist position that "the struggle against the Berlusconi right is and remains the main task of communists" (*Proposta*, May 1995). *Proposta* (January 1995) has even called for a vote to the pro-Vatican, Cold War Christian Democrats (now called the Popular Party) "in particular situations where it is necessary to defeat a fascist or reactionary candidate."

The "anti-fascist" popular front serves only to *demobilize* struggle against the fascists and racist cops. While the LTD'I was leading 250 angry demonstrators last February in a fight against the arrest of the three immigrants, Grisolia and a few other trade-union bureaucrats were inside the police station bargaining with the cops, and one of them told the protesters to "go back to the buses" ("Italy: Militant Protest Wins Release of Immigrant Workers," *WV* No. 620, 7 April 1995).

## Smash the Racist Offensive!

As a matter of elementary self-defense, the entire workers movement must fight anti-immigrant racism and combat all forms of discrimination in employment, wages, education and housing. The reformists' racist appeals for intensified state repression against immigrants encourage fascist terror on the streets, which targets the entire left and labor movement. Moreover, PDS and RC members would do well to recall that, until recently, Italy was a nation of emigrants. As vividly depicted in the film *Bread and Chocolate*, Italian immigrants working in northern Europe faced the same horrendous racist discrimination now being pushed by the PDS and RC leaders against Africans and others in Italy.

The Lega Trotskista calls on the workers movement to take up the demand for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and to organize workers actions to stop deportations and smash the racist decree. For free, safe abortion on demand, including for immigrants and minors! To fight unemployment, we demand a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to provide jobs for all. To smash racist terror and unionize all immigrant workers, including those who are forced to work in the Southern agricultural fields under the rifles of Camorra and Mafia thugs, it is necessary to organize workers defense guards.

The possibility of proletarian-centered struggle drawing in immigrants, student youth and women against the government's racist decree and its austerity measures is very real. The Italian proletariat has watched the recent class confrontation in France with great interest. One-day local general strikes and transport strikes briefly paralyzing bus, air and train services have been erupting all over Italy, as well as a massive wave of student high school occupations. On December 12, one and a half million workers, pensioners and students marched on the capital in another protest against pension cuts. In Italy as in France, what is key is forging an internationalist revolutionary party to lead the working class and all the oppressed forward to a socialist revolution that eliminates racist capitalism. ■



# Italy: Fascist Cop Attack on Milano Youth Center



Ansa



La Repubblica

**Masked police stormtroopers destroyed Leoncavallo social center, December 19, brutalizing and jailing young militants. Workers movement must mobilize against ominous police-state attacks.**

Less than one week before Christmas and two weeks before the resignation of the government of Lamberto Dini, the financial capital of Italy, Milano, was shaken by a dramatic police provocation. On December 19, an army of cops, many masked and in black uniforms, stormed the Leoncavallo youth center, smashing everything in sight as they laid waste to this center for semi-anarchist "autonomi." The next day, police in Rome brutally beat up Sardinian miners demonstrating outside parliament.

The ominous escalation of state repression was clearly intended as a warning to the entire left and workers movement. The authorities—from the Milano quaestor (chief of police) and mayor to the heads of the national Judicial Police and Carabinieri paramilitary police—claimed to know nothing. But Interior Minister Giovanni Coronas justified the cops wearing ski masks, saying that "they used them during the years of lead."

This was a sinister reference to the period in the late 1960s and '70s when fascists and various secret police forces worked hand in glove terrorizing Italy, with multiple attempted coups d'état and bloody massacres. Significantly, on December 2 a hundred thousand fascists of the National Alliance (AN) staged a march in Rome. At the same time, however, the Italian workers movement has been watching the French strikes with intense interest, and a one-day national strike has been threatened for early January.

Responding to the fascist police assault on Leoncavallo, our comrades of the Lega Trotskista d'Italia and the Comitato di Difesa Sociale e Proletaria (CODISPRO) immediately protested the atrocity. A translation of a leaflet issued by the CODISPRO is printed below. We also brought the attack to the attention of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, whose cause has been supported by Leoncavallo. A protest held in Milano on December 23 drew 20,000, mainly *autonomi* youth from around Italy, as well as workers from COBAS (Rank and File Committees) in area factories and supporters of Rifondazione Comunista.

As the demonstrators reached San Vittore prison, where the youth arrested in the Leoncavallo raid are being held, many firecrackers and smoke bombs

were thrown over the high walls of the fortress-like jail and loud explosions could be heard from the inside. The crowd shouted, "Free the comrades" and "Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!" They cheered as burning paper and sheets were thrust out of prison cell windows in solidarity.

During the final rally, a comrade gave greetings from CODISPRO and the Partisan Defense Committee in the U.S. and read a message of support from Mumia Abu-Jamal, who denounced the cop attack as a "monstrosity," sending his "support to all five who were arrested, incarcerated, entombed, and also to the Leoncavallo center and hope that they can rebuild." Jamal compared this to the raids by the Philadelphia police on the Black Panther Party in the 1960s, noting that "they just didn't destroy the files, they stole the files" and used them in their war on the Panthers.

**Stop the Witchhunt!  
Defend Leoncavallo!  
Free the Leoncavallo Five!  
Drop the Charges!  
An Injury to One  
Is an Injury to All!**

MILANO, 19 December 1995: In a dawn raid recalling a Gestapo attack, some 200 police, including special forces from the Carabinieri and the Digos political police, destroyed the Leoncavallo social center. Using the judicial pretext of a search for "drugs" as a cover for political violence and repression, this army of cops sealed off via Watteau with dozens of armored cars and drug-sniffing dogs while a special squad of some 50 commandos, dressed in black shirts and ski masks, scaled the walls of Leoncavallo. Beaten with iron clubs and chains, 18



De Bellis/Il Giorno

**Milano, December 23: Some 20,000 protesters march against police attack on Leoncavallo.**

people were rounded up in the courtyard and ordered, "Stomachs on the ground, hards!," as their mouths were gagged shut and their hands cuffed behind their backs. Five youth, including two North Africans, were arrested: A. Begnamini (25), S. Fhadli (27), E. Caizzi (20) were seized on site. E. Daniele (24), and E.M. Nefati (23) were rounded up simultaneously at their own homes. *CODISPRO demands: Drop the charges! Release the Leoncavallo Five! No deportations!*

After weeks of fascist provocations against Leoncavallo by the Northern League *squadristi* in the "Greco neighborhood committee," the *squadristi di stato* [state-organized terror squads] moved in to destroy the social center. The notorious overlap between the fascists and the Carabinieri and special forces was confirmed in this *blitzkrieg* attack. *Il Manifesto* (20 December) reports that the walls of Leoncavallo were defaced with swastikas. The center's library was destroyed by police who urinated on the books, destroyed videocassettes, smashed computers. A Star of David was painted over a mural of an Indian woman—the message seems to be that leftists and immigrants in Italy are promised the same deadly terror the Nazis used against the Jews.

The brutal attack on Leoncavallo is an ominous development recalling the government's "strategy of tension" of the '70s, when state-sanctioned and sponsored fascist activity, like the Bologna train bombing, became the pretext for a violent witchhunt against the left. In targeting Leoncavallo, the state thinks they've picked an isolated and vulnerable population that no one will defend. If today they come for Leoncavallo, who will they come for tomorrow? As in the '20s, the ultimate target of this terror and repression is the combative Italian working class, as is demonstrated by the brutal beating of the Sulcis miners which the police carried out on 20 December in front of parliament in Rome. It is imperative that the powerful union movement and workers organizations be mobilized in defense of Leoncavallo and all victims of racist capitalist repression.

The backdrop to the attack on Leoncavallo is the government's war on immigrants (also conducted behind the smokescreen of a "war on drugs") and rising fascist attacks. Moreover, this attack comes on the heels of the militant strike wave in France which found a strong echo in Italy, and frightened the capitalist rulers across Europe. Increasingly, the bourgeoisie is moving to establish a "strong state" to shore up their unjust system of capitalist exploitation, and ram through the attacks on the working class, women, youth and oppressed minorities.

CODISPRO, a non-sectarian legal and social defense organization in accordance with the political views of the Lega Trotskista d'Italia, calls on all working-class organizations, the left, and all defenders of democratic rights to mobilize in defense of Leoncavallo. In the weeks preceding the attack on Leoncavallo, we urged a united-front defense of the center against the Northern League and fascist AN gangs.

This summer CODISPRO and Leoncavallo jointly sponsored a united-front protest in Milano in defense of the eloquent black journalist, former Black Panther and MOVE supporter, Mumia Abu-Jamal, who sits on death row and faces execution in America for the "crime" of his political views as a spokesman for the oppressed. Just as Mumia Abu-Jamal is a name and a cause that has stirred millions around the world, so too must the name Leoncavallo now rouse vigorous protest and exposure of capitalist state terror and political repression.

An injury to one is an injury to all! All out on Saturday, December 23 to defend Leoncavallo!

Comitato di Difesa  
Sociale e Proletaria  
20 December 1995



# Mumia Abu-Jamal Speaks from Death Row

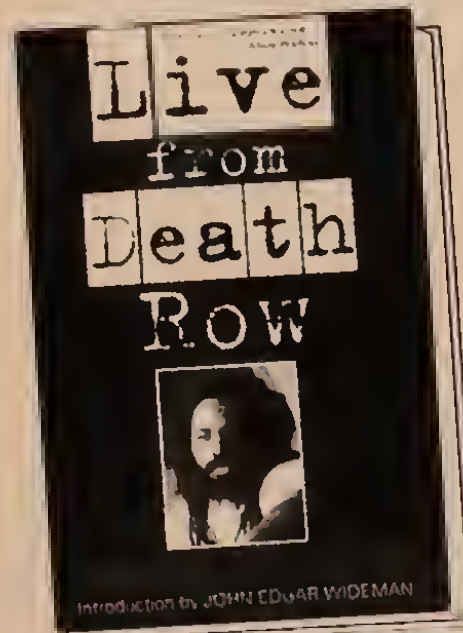
*Workers Vanguard* is pleased to print below the first part of an interview with death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, conducted at the SCI Greene maximum security prison in western Pennsylvania on 21 December 1995. A former Black Panther, supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE group and award-winning journalist known for his powerful commentaries on racism and police brutality, Jamal was framed and sentenced to death for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia policeman.

A powerful crescendo of protest this past summer made Jamal's struggle front-page news around the world. Due to the

## PART ONE OF TWO

intense scrutiny resulting from the international protest movement, Jamal was granted a stay of execution on August 7. However, his petition for reversal of the death sentence and for a new trial was turned down by Court of Common Pleas judge Albert Sabo, who presided over Jamal's 1982 frame-up "trial" and sentencing and has sent more people to death row—32, all but two of whom are minorities—than any other judge in the United States. Jamal's attorneys are due to file papers on February 9 in an appeal to the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court.

In October, Jamal testified in Pittsburgh in a civil action challenging the punishment he received after plans for publication of his book, *Live from Death Row*, became known early last year. On June 9, eight days after Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge had signed Jamal's death warrant, Mumia was declared guilty of misconduct for "engaging in a business or profession" for his exposés of life in "prison hell." At a time when he had only two months to live, Jamal was barred from speaking with the media, had visits from paralegal assistants drastically restricted, was allowed only one family visit—and was even forbidden to make phone calls to his family! Jamal is currently awaiting the results of his civil suit.



Publication of Jamal's book of prison writings helped bring world attention to the fight to save him from execution and win his freedom.

**Workers Vanguard:** I've heard you're working overtime to try to get your degree here. Why don't you tell us about it?

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** Well, hopefully, I'm done. I don't know I'm done until I hear from my adviser, because I mailed it out Monday. The other side of the coin, of course, is that when you're involved in any study, and you've read ten or eleven books, and you're really into the subject, you feel as if you're not done. So, in my own mind I've got a whole chapter that I haven't written, that I want to write. But I must exercise patience and wait for my adviser to get back with me. It's a very difficult week.

**WV:** What is your degree going to be in?

**Mumia:** Well, it could be a general liberal arts degree, but my concentration has been black psychology. It's been on the work of some of the leading black psychologists in the United States, Na'im Akbar, Wade Nobles, Joseph Baldwin, Amos Wilson. I've read their stuff, imbibed their stuff, slept their stuff, and really lived their thoughts for the last few weeks. And if ever there was a labor of love, I think it was this because in a lot of ways it's given me a way of surviving mentally in an environment that is designed to destroy one mentally. So this is too serious a topic to be called a diversion, but in a way it is a diversion from the other stuff that I have to deal with, a pleasant one.

**WV:** You also got your GED in prison?

**Mumia:** Well, not here, not in this jail. While I was in Huntingdon, yes. That was several years ago. In fact, Rachel [Wolkenstein] was part of the battle. I remember when I first applied, it was, "No, no, no, it's a security risk." It was literally a "security risk" for me to study. We just took it up on appeal, questioned the rank absurdity of the claim that it was a security risk for someone to study. And we were successful. Of course, it was nothing to the state, you know. It wasn't like they were going to let me out of the cell, and send me up to the school buildings in Huntingdon. I did all of my studying where I do all of my studying, right here in that cell. I never

left the cell. And in fact I only left the cell for the tests, which is the same way I've gone through this college course.

It is an interesting example of how the state uses the rubric of security, and I guess from their perspective, yes, it is security, because they're very secure when inmates are stupid, when they are uninformed, when they don't challenge or question their environs. The more you really learn in terms of real information about how this society is structured, then the more you must question this, and this is an important part of that society. That's what they don't want. They want their inmates stupid, silent, or at their very worst, fighting each other.

**WV:** It also hearkens back to slavery, when the education of chattel slaves was a serious crime.

**Mumia:** I think that that's not a bad analogy, because when you consider slavery, especially in Georgia and in the South, literacy was literally a crime, whether one was a white who taught a black or a black who was found to know how to read or write. They would skin you alive. And that same spirit continues to percolate in America's jails. I mean,

that sounds perhaps drastic to someone who doesn't know it, but there are many people who don't know, for instance, that the recent Crime Bill that was passed by President Clinton had an element where Pell grants [federal student aid program] were eliminated for all prisoners. There was handwriting on the wall, because about five years ago, it was eliminated for all death row prisoners. Three years thereafter, it was eliminated for all lifers, and in the Crime Bill of 1994 it was eliminated for every prisoner in the United States of America, whether you're serving six months or 60 years. A death knell for the life of the mind in a system that now has over one million men and women entombed in these man-made hellholes.

There's not one penologist, not one criminologist, not one person who has studied this prison-industrial complex, who can say that education is a demerit. For the most part, when I was talking about it being a pleasant, although enlightening, diversion, it is that for all prisoners, you see. Even though there are not a lot of prisoners who *do* engage in studies, even when the Pell grant was active. For those prisoners who did do



Jamal has been the voice of the voiceless, exposing the "prison hell" into which huge numbers of minority youth have been cast.



that, they weren't involved in knifing other people, they weren't involved in raping other people, they weren't involved in all the petty intrigues that are common in prison, because their minds were someplace else. Well, that's precisely the problem to the prisonrats. They wanted your mind right here on this hell. They want to make you easily cageable.

**WV:** I'd like to talk about the hearing that was recently concluded in Pittsburgh over your challenge to the prison system for punishing you for your writings. Now, it's perfectly clear to anybody who follows your case that there's been a concerted campaign by the prison system, by the Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.), by the state as a whole against your book, *Live from Death Row*. And of course last year they banned you from the air waves by putting pressure on, by the F.O.P. campaign against National Public Radio (NPR) to cancel your radio broadcasts. Could you comment on this effort to keep your voice from being heard?

**Mumia:** Well, the best word to describe their activity can be the word "conspiracy." And I mean that in all the implications that radiate from that word. Because what came out in that civil trial in Pittsburgh was how an official who was assigned to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections named David Horwitz was in fact from the Office of General Counsel, who read legal mail, read legal mail from my hired attorney, Leonard Weinglass, read legal mail from my associate defense counsel, Rachel Wolkenstein, and other mail from paralegals. Read it, copied it and transmitted it to the Office of General Counsel and other counsel outside the Department of Corrections, and—we know, because he admitted it all—to the Governor's office in Harrisburg.

This was because it was part of a continuing investigation that was sparked, so it is claimed, by the NPR controversy. These were memos, documents, witness statements, lists of support staff on our defense team, confidential in the extreme. We're told that, well, I remember Horwitz was testifying in the hearing: Well, I didn't read it, I just skimmed it. Right now, it is my guess that the exact contents, a xeroxed copy thereof, is sitting in the district attorney's office, the office of the F.O.P., perhaps in Washington, who knows.

The pretext was so silly it is bordering on the ridiculous. But that's all they needed, you see, because what we're dealing with is the arrogance of the state in a concerted conspiracy to not only silence me but to kill me. If I were guilty of everything that they said I was guilty of in terms of the investigation—that is, operating a business as a journalist, without their clearance—then the most I could have gotten was a write-up, a misconduct. The rules actually specify the maximum is 30 days. However, they used that as a pretext to invade my so-called right to counsel, to read, copy and distribute my correspondence from me to my lawyer, from my lawyer to me, to find out if I was writing a book, involved in the "business" of journalism. I mean, it just goes beyond the bounds of reason.

**WV:** In a lot of ways, their efforts have failed. I understand it's been published or is being published in German, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and maybe more. That accounts for a good part of the world right there.

**Mumia:** I might be wrong, but I thought one was Japanese, we'll see.

**WV:** Even better.

**Mumia:** What that represents also is how the efforts of the government have for all intents and purposes backfired. Were it not for the efforts of the censors and the silencers of the F.O.P. and the government around NPR, then there would have been no *Live from Death Row*. I had absolutely no intention of writing a book, even though some people had asked. It didn't interest me. It really did not interest me. But after NPR broke, I started getting communications from publishers around the country. I'm

Following signing of Jamal's death warrant, a wave of international protests over the summer of 1995 stayed the executioner's hand. Right: Trade unionists join Partisan Defense Committee contingent at August 12 demonstration in Philadelphia.



told that 50,000 people at last count bought it.

**WV:** When we talk to youth who have been involved in the campaign, fighting in your defense, we find that the book, your writings, have been a real eye-opener for them. It's opened up the brutal prison world and also the issue of the death penalty in this country.

**Mumia:** I would agree from my perspective, in terms of getting letters from kids who are 15, 16, junior high and high school, who express that precise sentiment. I think Jonathan Kozol makes it real clear in his work *Amazing Grace*—even though he talks about the South Bronx, that same point could be made about Hunter's Point in San Francisco, South Philly, any large city, or inner city, in America—that children feel that they are under siege. And that the promise of their youth is a very grim one. They're not given a perspective that if you go to school, if you get a high school degree, go get a job, or there's a possibility of college. Their options are far more limited than ours were in the '60s!

And that shows the economic constrictions. Some of it is post-NAFTA, some of it of course is just capitalist expansion, to wherever you make any money, which isn't here. They can go right across the Rio Grande, they can go to Taiwan, they can go to Indonesia. They won't have to worry about unions, won't have to worry about EPA, won't have to worry about OSHA, they won't have to worry about any of this. They won't have to worry about a minimum wage! Only have to worry about their paper amount of profits. And if it's a choice between helping the poor to live a decent life or giving youth a decent vision for the future, they then choose the bottom line. Well, the bottom line is money, the yen, the mark, the American dollar.

Kids are fed through major media a kind of poisoned picture of prison that was subverted by what they read in *Live from Death Row*, by what they saw in terms of popular organizing around the middle of the year. They're given a perspective at this point in history that is in touch with their lives, and they know the truth. And it rings a bell in their lives. I feel it, and I hear it, around this country, sometimes with their letters, sometimes my friends and supporters who are organizing what's going on around the country will comment on that. And it's very, very rewarding to hear.

I know, because when I was a young teenager I had the joy, the pleasure, the honor to be active in organizing through the agency of the Black Panther Party. And I know that in a lot of ways, it opened up my perception, it opened up my life, not just for that period, but from then on. Once you see the truth in terms of what this system is really about, you can't go home, you can't shut them out and act like you don't see it anymore. You can try, and some have, but it's hard

and extremely difficult. It's easy, far easier, to see it and recognize that you can try to organize against it.

**WV:** I want to get back to that in a bit. But first, on the death penalty. There is the recent case of Rolando Cruz in Illinois. After spending years on death row, he won a reversal of his conviction when it came out that the police cooked up a phony, so-called confession, and that they coerced witnesses to buttress the cops' story. You've taken an interest in this, I know.

**Mumia:** It rang some real big bells in my head when I heard about it. More when I read about it and got all the details of the case. It shows, first of all, how easy it is for the state to send someone to death row, which should be the most difficult destination in the so-called criminal justice system. But it was easy because they used jailhouse snitches and lying-ass cops. While they could have used one or the other, they used both. They had six or seven jailhouse snitches standing by, to be ready at that moment to testify to so-called confessions that the snitches and the attorney general created. What made the case fall apart was this police lieutenant who got on and said, look, me and the fellows got together and we lied. And the fact that it was impossible for the cop to have heard the confession that it was sworn in court he had heard, because he was on vacation.

So it shows the power of the state, the attorney general's office, the district attorney's office. And also the power of the court that twice, I'm told, sent this young man to death row for almost 12 years. I watched one of these shows which did a few moments on him. What's clear, watching this man, is his life is going to be hell. It's clear that in many ways he is still a prisoner in his mind.

The real question now is what happens to those people who perjured him. You never hear. You got cops who swore up and down on a stack of bibles that this man made a confession, knew they were lying, lied twice in two trials, sent this man to death row. Well, what happens? The real answer: nothing happens, of course. Nothing at all. And that's because the system is designed not for justice, but to protect the status quo, to protect the interests of those who have power.

**WV:** Well, then you have the tip of the iceberg being revealed in Philadelphia over the last six months or so with the 39th District cops there, five or six maybe losing their jobs, whatever. And of course this has been going on for decades. After your membership in the Black Panther Party when you became a reporter, obviously you covered that and know a lot about that.

**Mumia:** I've heard, because Philadelphia has probably the longest documented history of police corruption in any of the big cities in America. Any historian can tell you that the headlines that we

see today, if you could look at a newspaper and change the nine in 1995 to 1895, you would see the same thing. You make it 1865, you see the same thing, because the function of the police has not changed over time. It's just become more overtly corrupt, rawer, because the economic climate is rawer, nastier in a sense. But their function as corrupters, as perverters of justice, as bald-faced liars in blue, has not changed.

The elite in Philadelphia, New York, Detroit, Chicago, whatever, will attempt to make a little stink about cops who are corrupt, cops who will lie on the stand, and even recant, once it's nine years later. But you don't hear any remarks about cops who kill. It's as if it is worse for a cop to steal than it is for him to kill. We know we have thousands of people who have been killed over the years in city after city by cops. And, essentially, they're untouchable. Recently, in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* they reported that quite a few cops who had beaten people, who had robbed people, who had stolen, broken people's doors down, and so forth, shot people, taken drugs, whatever, and then were removed—95 percent of all those cops four or five years later were back on the force, and were paid for the time they were off. So they had in essence a paid vacation, you see.

Consider what happened in L.A., especially after the L.A. so-called riot: the mayor of one of the largest cities in America could not fire the police commissioner. It was structurally integrated into the system to make him immune from the highest politician in the city. And it shows that, you know, there is no force to police them—they are a force unto themselves. And that's why they can rape, rob, terrorize, kill, year after year after year, decade after decade after decade. Of course there will be an occasional bad editorial, an article to make some of them feel bad, but essentially there is no force in the political system that is designed and enabled to stop police terror.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

## Spartacist League Public Offices

—MARXIST LITERATURE—

### Bay Area

Thurs. 5:30-8:00 p.m., Sat. 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor (near 17th Street)  
Oakland, California Phone (510) 839-0851

### Chicago

Tues. 5:00-9:00 p.m., Sat. 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
161 W. Harrison St., 10th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois Phone (312) 663-0715

### New York City

Tues. 6:30-9:00 p.m., Sat. 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
41 Warren St. (one block below  
Chambers St. near Church St.)  
New York, NY Phone (212) 267-1025



# To Defend and Extend the Strike: Elect Recallable Strike Committees!

**Down With Vigipirate!  
Auto Must Go on Strike!**

**For a New,  
Revolutionary Party!  
The Working Class Must  
Fight for Power!**

On December 14, as the fate of the French strike wave hung in the balance, our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France issued the following leaflet.

December 12 saw a mobilization which was unequalled since strikes exploded throughout the country. However, that same evening [Prime Minister] Juppé announced that he would not hodge on his reforms. This shows the government's fierce determination not to give in. The union leaderships are preparing to break the strike because they know that if the strikes continue the question of power will be posed and they don't want to have anything to do with that. The strikers' general assemblies reflect the growing division between the hase, determined but suspicious, and the union leaderships who are maneuvering to break the strike. It is still possible to prevent this: to extend the strike, the strikers' general assemblies must elect strike committees, recallable at any time—committees where trade-union organizations and anyone else can put themselves forward on the basis of their program.

During the December 12 demonstration in Paris, a contingent chanted "Juppé out, we have the power." In Bordeaux, the demonstrators chanted "No hesitation, revolution." Yes, we have the power, but the power needs to be generalized and organized and to have a revolutionary leadership. But from the beginning of this social crisis, what has been sorely lacking is a multiethnic revolutionary party which rallies all the oppressed in common struggle against this rotten system.

Chirac-Juppé have been able to hang on because the strike has been limited to the public sector and not extended to the bastions of heavy industry, particularly in the private sector. Today it is urgently necessary for strike committees to extend the strike to these sectors. For some time now, the situation has been moving toward a total general strike, which would pose the question of who will be the master in this country. So the question is: Who will this be? No to a second Juppé; no to the Socialist Party

## Ligue Trotskyiste Leaflet

(PS), which can pride itself on having carried out a policy of social decline during its 14 years in power, thanks to the good graces of the Communist Party (PCF). What is posed in this historic strike is workers rule of society. What is posed is the struggle for a workers government, for the overthrow of the capitalist system which is destined to perish and not to be reformed.

Juppé and his government want to divide and rule, proposing mediators for public transportation, the railways and

ers' refusal to fight against racist terror is an obstacle to the necessary extension of the struggle to the private and mainly industrial sector, with its strong, combative component of workers from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. *Full citizenship rights for all those who are here! Down with Vigipirate!*

Public sector workers have been heavily mobilized since November 24. They must be in the front ranks of the fight against racist segregation. They must demand the abolition of Article 1 of the



Strikers continued to shut down subways and buses in Marseilles after trade-union tops scuttled walkouts elsewhere in France.

the post office. The strikers in their general assemblies are refusing any thought of negotiation because they know that the government wants to break their strike. But what are the union leaderships doing? Far from pursuing a determined struggle, they equivocate, preparing to break the movement.

Elected and recallable strike committees would make it possible to rally all unionized and non-unionized workers and to make the link with other embattled sectors. They must organize mass pickets in front of every plant because *picket lines mean don't cross*. The class line is drawn between strikers and non-strikers. Strike committees could engender factory committees and take the initiative to become a rallying point for representatives of women, youth, the North African community and others. Workers could begin to organize a new society based on their own state power.

As we can see, the working-class lead-

public service [regulations] which bans any person who is not of French nationality from working in the public service. *Down with apartheid in the public service! To fight unemployment, we demand that available work be divided among all workers, with no loss in pay!* If the gigantic demonstrations of recent days had had central slogans and banners against racist terror and against Vigipirate, the government would have thought twice before continuing to terrorize our brothers of "immigrant" origin. *French troops: Get your bloody hands off the suburbs, the colonies and the Balkans!* We need a campaign to unionize the private sector. We need the unity of all the workers from one workplace in one trade union with full internal democracy, in order to overcome the political divisions which serve as a pretext for one union to break the strike of another.

The government sends its cops against strikers; it sends its cops and its army

against the population of the ex-colonies as part of the Vigipirate plan. This same government, on December 14 in Paris, met with the other general staffs in order to organize a new imperialist blood-bath in the Balkans. *The main enemy is at home!* The Jeunesse Spartaciste and the Ligue Trotskyiste have initiated united-front rallies against the coming massacres.

Trade-union struggle is not enough; the struggle for reforms is not enough. The most conscious strikers know that these same unions acted like doormats during the Mitterrand era.

As for the "far left"—whether it's the LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire), LO (Lutte Ouvrière), PT (Parti des Travailleurs), or the GR-JCR (Gauche Révolutionnaire/Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires)—they all confine themselves, at most, to calling for an unlimited general strike to get rid of Juppé, which at best amounts to calling for a ministerial reshuffle or a new popular-front government. Last year in Italy general strikes drove out Berlusconi, ending up with Dini who imposed the same "reforms." The group Pouvoir Ouvrier put forward as a model the "union" of the CIA and the Pope, Solidarność. The latter came to power with the capitalist counterrevolution in Poland which brought poverty to the workers and, among other things, the banning of abortion. By supporting Solidarność at the beginning of the 1980s, the entire "far left" signed on to the imperialists' campaign against the degenerated workers state in the Soviet Union, whose destruction permitted the bourgeoisies to brutally attack the social gains of the working class.

If Juppé doesn't want to change anything, it is because the stakes go beyond the borders of France. In fact, the European bourgeoisies have their eyes glued to France as they fear for their own power. If the strikes continue, construction of their Europe is put in question. If in France we have a hard right wing, this must be put in the international context of the "New World Order" in which interimperialist rivalries are intensifying. But in Italy the CGIL and CISL public sector unions are threatening to strike. In Germany, the head of the rail workers union doesn't rule out the possibility of "spontaneous action by rail workers." In Belgium, 60,000 people demonstrated in Brussels on December 13 against the Dehaene government's austerity plans.

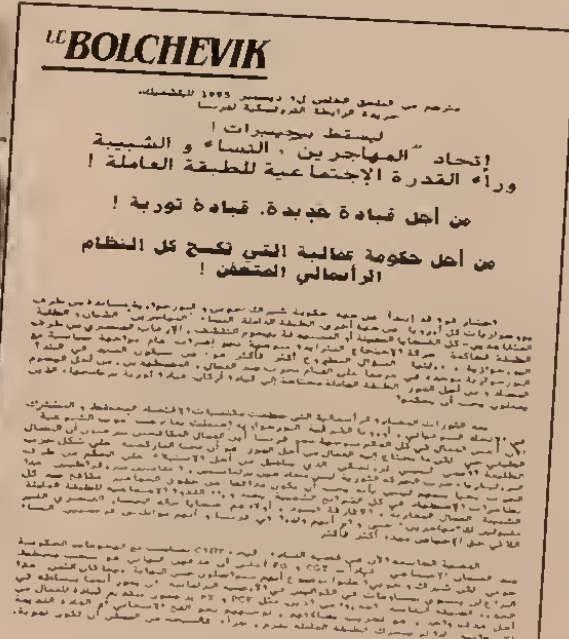
In this historic strike, through a process of political battles against the working-class misleaders and fake revolutionaries, we're looking to build a Bolshevik party and win the most advanced workers and youth to a revolutionary program. Join us!

- For elected and recallable strike committees!
- Picket lines mean don't cross!
- Extend the strike throughout all industry!
- Down with Vigipirate!
- French troops: Get your bloody hands off the suburbs, the colonies and the Balkans!
- French imperialism = economic diktats against workers, military diktats in the Balkans! Overthrow the capitalist system!
- For worker/immigrant mobilizations to smash the fascists!
- For a revolutionary, multiethnic and internationalist workers party!
- For socialist revolution! For a workers government that sweeps away the rotten capitalist system! ■



Chesnot/Sipa

Ligue Trotskyiste issued strike leaflet in French and Arabic (right). North African immigrants concentrated in auto and other industries are key to struggle for workers power.





# France...

(continued from page 1)

you can't turn struggles on and off like a faucet. The key question was and remains that of leadership.

From the beginning of the strikes, the union tops (along with the leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties) and the ranks of the strikers have had two completely different motivations. In this battle, the reformist bureaucrats were in effect in a temporary *bloc* with the workers for their own ends. The workers were fed up after 13 years of anti-working-class austerity, of attacks on wages and mounting unemployment (now over 12 percent) under Socialist president Mitterrand. Then came the "reforms" of the conservative Chirac/Juppé government, a sweeping attack on the standard of living they had achieved over the last several decades. But while the workers were fighting in their own class interests against a concerted ruling-class assault, the reformist leaderships were fighting to retain their role as class collaborators to control and sell out the working class.

The trade-union bureaucracy appeared uncharacteristically contentious in the course of this strike, because the "reforms" struck at its underpinnings. This included the social-democratic Force Ouvrière (FO) federation, long a mainstay of Cold War anti-Communism, which is concentrated among public employees. The labor leaders are heavily integrated into the state administration through a myriad of class-collaborationist bodies which help administer the huge French social service system that combines health benefits, unemployment benefits, pensions, etc. The bureaucrats got their own privileges from these gains, which allowed the unions to have hundreds of paid functionaries. This is the payoff for the reformists' social and political role in keeping France safe for capitalist exploitation at home and colonialism abroad. And now the material base for their role as *interlocuteurs privilégiés* with the bourgeoisie and its state was under attack.

The French strike wave was the first major class battle in the "New World Order," which Washington triumphantly proclaimed with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. The restoration of capitalism in East Europe and the former USSR has led to a worldwide assault on workers' living standards and organizations by the emboldened exploiters. Across West Europe, governments have declared that social services must be drastically slashed to conform to the 1992 Maastricht treaty for European integration. The German bourgeoisie has put enormous pressure on Paris to reduce the budget deficit as a precondition to creating a common European currency. Europe's capitalist rulers today are seeking to emulate the assaults on the working class carried out by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s. They want to increase their "competitiveness" in a climate of fierce inter-imperialist economic rivalry, as the dominant powers (U.S., Germany and Japan) consolidate their spheres of influence.

The massive strike wave in France sent shock waves throughout Europe and the world. The *Wall Street Journal* (22 December 1995) declared that the assault on social welfare programs was a "time bomb" and warned that the strikes in France could be "a foretaste of things to come elsewhere in Europe." Already on December 13, there was a 60,000-strong mobilization in Brussels against sweeping budget cuts ordered by the Belgian government. Even the *New York Times* (24 December 1995) showed signs of nervousness, fearing that "American unions will begin using aggressive tactics," while excluding a "replay of the events in France" because "American workers do not share France's tradition of general strikes and mass unrest," citing the 1789 revolution, the 1871 Paris Commune and the 1968 worker-student uprising. The new AFL-CIO chief, John

Sweeney, declared he was "impressed" with how the workers' strikes shut down France, but quickly added, "I hope it never comes to that here in America."

While the French strikes began as a defensive struggle by particular sectors, they quickly took on the character of a broad social struggle. But the reformists' political stranglehold kept them from taking on, for example, the government's "Vigipirate" police dragnet aimed at "immigrants," which in France includes many youth of North African and black African descent born in the country. Mobilizing the workers against the racist cop terror would have had a huge impact in spreading the strike to the private sector—where immigrant workers are a key component of heavy industry—as well as inspiring support from the seething suburban ghettos. Nor did the reformists raise a peep against France's participation in the NATO occupation of the former Yugoslavia, which was sealed in a ceremony in strikebound Paris on December 14. A revolutionary leadership would have seized upon the tremendous opportunity for working-class action against this imperialist expedition: as it was, the rail strike disrupted shipment of war matériel.

As the mobilizations reached their highest point, there was a chorus coming from bourgeois politicians, the media and CFDT leader Notat howling about the "politicization" of the strikes. The strike movement had reached the point where its scope had to be extended to the overwhelmingly non-unionized private sector and to directly challenge the *state power*. That is why the reformist working-class leaders hurriedly stepped in to bring the movement to a close. The Ligue Trotskyiste de France, section of



Reuters



AFP photos

**French trade-union leaders balled out Chirac/Juppé government by knifing labor upsurge. From left: FO's Marc Blondel, CFDT's Nicole Notat, CGT's Louis Viannet.**

the International Communist League, defined the crucial task: to build an authoritative revolutionary leadership rooted in the working class—a party like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky capable of transforming defensive struggles into a conscious assault on the bourgeois order. As the LTF declared in the leaflet printed on page 8:

"For some time now, the situation has been moving toward a total general strike, which would pose the question of who will be the master in this country.... What is posed in this historic strike is workers' rule of society. What is posed is the struggle for a workers government, for the overthrow of the capitalist system which is destined to perish and not to be reformed."

## Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution

The question of leadership was thrown into sharp relief in this strike. Daily general assemblies in virtually every striking workplace, often with hundreds of workers participating, voted on whether to continue the strike. Debates over how to go forward were intently followed. At the same time, these assemblies were kept separate from each other, the better to maintain the bureaucrats' control over the strikers.

In a number of cities, 24-hour organizing centers of the strike were spontaneously created—the Gare du Nord railway station in Paris, the central squares in Toulouse and Bordeaux. Strikers organized flying pickets, such as the postal workers of the PLM sorting center who brought out the workers at the Cen-



**Army troops deployed at Eiffel Tower in September as part of "Vigipirate" state terror campaign targeting "immigrants."**

tral Receipts office of Paris-XII. The rail strikers at Gare du Nord sent delegations to neighboring hospitals and postal sorting centers, and even tried to bring out a Citroën plant. Describing young strike militants at the postal sorting center of Saint-Lazare in Paris, *Libération* (9-10 December 1995) commented: "After nine days of voting on the strike every morning in a general assembly, they have the sense of participating in a real 'workers democracy.' They seem more like Communards than strikers."

Strikers returned to work bitter and furious at the trade-union bureaucrats for their sellout. In Rouen, where the December 16 demonstration was the largest in that city's history, demonstrating strikers

Paris, Montpellier, Saint-Etienne and Nantes. To smash the railway and public transportation strikes, the government organized scabs and even threatened to use the army. And in the middle of the bureaucrats' open strikebreaking, the government sent the same "security" force that terrorizes the "immigrant" population against strikers, for example at the Porte Maillot metro station.

Another key question in bringing out the private sector is the fight against unemployment. With under 10 percent of the French workforce unionized, and most of that concentrated in the public sector, in whole sectors of private employment unions are extremely weak or non-existent. And with joblessness in double digits, hitting "immigrant" youth particularly hard (over 25 percent), the hesitancy among private sector workers to join the strike was rooted in their vulnerability to reprisals, lacking protection against layoffs or firing. To overcome this, a class-struggle leadership would go beyond the initial narrowly sectoral and defensive demands of the strike to raise a program capable of uniting the working class as a whole. Thus we call for a *sliding scale of wages and hours*, in order to distribute the available work among all workers. For a revolutionary leadership, the fight for a shorter work-week with no loss in pay would be a key component in the necessarily convulsive battle to organize the private sector.

Mobilizing the private sector in the strikes also required a determined fight against the racist anti-immigrant terror which was carried out for 14 years under the "socialist" Mitterrand and has now been greatly stepped up by Chirac. The current "Vigipirate" police/army dragnet has led to more than 3 million identity checks, and thousands of deportations. Yet the union leaderships have not only done nothing to fight the racist crusade of the right-wing government, they even sought to mobilize support for the government's "anti-terrorist" crackdown.

While the trade-union bureaucrats bemoan the fact that the strikes did not spread to the private sector, they actually did everything in their power to *prevent* it. At the key Renault auto plant in Flins, the CGT put out a leaflet warning that a strike would be "premature." Such strikebreaking tactics are hardly new for the reformists. When Flins workers spearheaded strikes during last spring's presidential campaign, the union bureaucrats did nothing to mobilize in their support, while the bosses taunted the strikers for being led by North Africans. And in 1983, Flins workers were the first to strike against Mitterrand's austerity; the "socialists" in government called them "fundamentalists" who were supposedly manipulated from abroad.

Factory committees, worker-immigrant defense guards, a sliding scale of wages and hours: these are examples of *transitional demands*, which are meant to bridge the gap between the strikers' defensive struggles and the revolutionary

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# France...

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fight for power. The Third Congress of the Communist International, which first formulated such a transitional program as a counter to the reformist minimum program of the social democracy, called on Communists to "extend and intensify every defensive struggle, transforming it into an attack on capitalist society" ("Theses on Tactics," July 1921).

## Key Is Revolutionary Leadership

In their opportunist prostration before the government, the reformist bureaucrats were mimicked by the "far left," which ignominiously capitulated to and even joined Chirac's racist terror campaign. Last fall, as the government was brandishing the "terrorist menace," *Lutte Ouvrière* (20 October) wrote:

"If one really wanted to help the North African population to dissociate itself from the terrorists and to defend itself from them, if one wanted to aid the population of the poor districts where they are perhaps recruited, it would be necessary to show this population that they have nothing to fear from the Vigipirate plan."

Reacting against such vile chauvinism, some anti-racist youth have begun identifying themselves as anarchists, a current which had largely become moribund in France. For example, at Saint-Denis university outside Paris, where anarchists were in the leadership, students put out a leaflet during the strike movement attacking the government's racist anti-immigrant mobilization. Disgusted by the betrayals of the reformists, the anarchists reject political parties altogether in favor of spontaneous action. Yet the strike wave showed the limits of spontaneous working-class militancy, which was enormous but was unable to overcome the stranglehold of the bureau-

crats who were the central obstacle to extending the strikes and transforming the defensive struggle into a fight against the capitalist system.

In contrast to the opportunist "far left," the Ligue Trotskyiste has highlighted the struggle against the racist anti-immigrant attacks. The LTF's special supplement to *Le Bolchevik* was headlined, "Smash Vigipirate! Unite 'Immigrants,' Women, Youth Behind the Power of the Working Class! For a New, Revolutionary Leadership!" (reprinted in *WV* No. 635, 15 December 1995). This supplement was also translated into Arabic for distribution among workers and youth of North African origin.

A key role was played in the strike wave by "far left" organizations, who acted as the "left" face of the union bureaucracy. We noted in our last issue how their call for an "unlimited general strike" was simply a formula for pressuring the trade-union bureaucrats. The fact that these former "68ers" now have their perspective locked on the bureaucracy reflects a social fact: they are part of it. This is a key reason why, in contrast to the 1986 rail walkout, there were no coordinations (strike coordinating committees) this time. Those who were shop delegates then have become local presidents and national leaders. Thus the Parti des Travailleurs (PT) of Pierre Lambert is deeply entrenched at all levels of Force Ouvrière, where a PT supporter, Claude Jenet, is national organization secretary and a close ally of FO chief Blondel.

The opening for the "far left" was conditioned by the relative decline of the ex-Stalinist PCF, its influence sharply cut by its groveling support to Mitterrand and by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The PCF was largely invisible during the strikes, hardly surprising as Communist leader Robert Hue's policy of "constructive opposition" really means offering the hand of friendship to Chirac. So at the key moment, it fell to the "far left" to drive the sellout down the throats of

the workers. Thus, the SUD trade union in the Paris CCP (postal check center), which is led by Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) supporters, intervened in the general assemblies to tell workers to "keep up the pressure until Saturday" (December 16, the bureaucrats' "final" demonstration) and that then it will be necessary to "look for other forms of action."

This growing together with the reformists goes back years. The "far left" signed up as extra-parliamentary auxiliaries of the Mitterrand government in the early 1980s. They marched shoulder to shoulder with the Cold War social democrats in solidarity with Solidarność. And now they "know how to end strikes."

In contrast to the fake-Trotskyists (LO/PT/LCR) the Ligue Trotskyiste fights for the forging of a new, revolutionary workers party. As the LTF declared in its December 4 supplement: "The reformists and class collaborators of the PCF and PS and their centrist tails offer only illusory reforms. They are all incapable of leading the working class in the current struggles and in the struggle to end the system of wage slavery once and for all."

To really fight to win required taking control of the strike out of the hands of the venal bureaucrats. It meant going beyond the admirable local initiative of individual workplaces to create organized forms embodying the struggle: elected strike committees to unite all the unionists, now split into different unions along party lines, and non-union workers, some of whom were exemplary strike militants; mass picket lines to spread the strike and defend the strikers; and national coordinating committees, linking the capital with the heavily mobilized provincial cities, whose marches drew contingents from industry.

The strike movement had to go beyond simple trade unionism, on a program to unite the entire working class and draw along the pensioners, the youth, the immigrants, against whom the ominous

militarization of French society is being aimed. These immediate tasks cry out for revolutionary leadership and a Leninist party: to push the proletariat's struggles forward instead of subordinating them to the constraints of the capitalist system; to expose the pro-capitalist misleaders in their deeds; to reach out to struggling working people in other lands as the bourgeoisies drum up racism and trade war.

The fight against the government's attacks on social services is far from over. The French ruling class is gambling on the demoralizing effect of the strike movement being called off when millions thought they were winning. The government is counting on the misleaders, old and new, to keep a lid on the working class. The "left" leaders are more than willing, but nobody has the stranglehold that the PCF used to have on the most militant sectors.

While the French working class had sufficient defensive capacity to temporarily repel the Maastricht-driven attacks of the bourgeoisie, without a forward revolutionary strategy, embodied in the revolutionary Marxist program and a Leninist vanguard party, they can only succeed in frustrating the bourgeoisie, not conquering it. The capitalists will return to the offensive, perhaps in league with the fascists, if the reformists can no longer play their former role, and the working class remains intractable. In terms of class struggle in Europe, this is the opening act in this new historic period.

In the new world disorder, the capitalist onslaught against the working class will not abate—nor will the resistance against it, in the form of demonstrations, strikes, etc. It is in the crucible of such class struggles that an internationalist workers party will be built, a party like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, forged on a program to lead the working class and all the oppressed in the fight for socialist revolution. This is the crucial lesson of the French strikes. ■

# PDC...

(continued from page 2)

engaged in pitched battles with the cops and against the government that wants to do to the entire labor movement and society in France what Reagan started when he busted the air traffic controllers union here. The power exercised in the streets of Paris today, throughout all of France, is what Marx called "the class in itself." But how do we wield that power to make it "the class for itself"? How to break the power of the capitalist rulers, to put the wealth of the society into the service of humanity. That is a question of leadership.

Those who call themselves labor leaders in this country have sown the seeds for the decimation of the unions by tying the working class to their exploiters through the Democratic Party. They have demonstrated in the negative the truth of Karl Marx's statement, "Labor in the white skin cannot be emancipated where in the black it is branded." Many who now have a "life" of poverty, disease and death in the inner cities are the product of giveback contracts which sacrificed hundreds of thousands of jobs. But the destruction that was visited first on the black population is now becoming a reality for the majority of the working class.

In desperation, many blacks grabbed at Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March. This sinister demagogue who attempts to turn the anger of the ghetto against the Jewish, the Arab, the Korean shopkeeper preaches the sermon of Gingrich and Clinton that blacks are responsible for their own oppression and that they must "atone." This poison is directly counterposed to the struggle for black freedom. It's the program of a desperate black middle class who want to "do for self" off the backs of the ghetto population, who they consider to be "holding down the race."

The struggle for workers' rights and

black rights must go forward together or we will all fall back separately. The power of labor must be mobilized in the fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal—in the hands of the multiracial working class lies the power to not only win freedom for Jamal but freedom for all of us from a system which has condemned Jamal to death and which erodes the bodies and spirits of the working people and the poor through mass unemployment, hunger, lack of medical care, the destruction of welfare, illiteracy.

In a message from death row in 1993, Mumia powerfully captured the contradiction of a ruling class that must enforce its rule through terror: "The extension of the death penalty to dozens of new crimes is not a reflection of a secure state but a state swimming in insecurity. As they scuttle the Constitution and create judges fit for a star chamber, they loosen the very ground on which they stand, quickening their demise. This government which bombed babies in Philadelphia and in Baghdad, which mows down babies in Somalia"—and which now I might add is pouring in 20,000 troops to mow down babies in the Balkans—"is sowing the seeds of their own destruction. It is a time, not for confusion, but for opportunity, to transform what is into what must be."

What must be is the revolutionary transformation of this society, the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of an egalitarian socialist society. The working people need their own party, a workers party that doesn't respect the property rights of the bourgeoisie, one which says we produced all the wealth of this country, it's ours and we want it, we're going to take it. A workers party which understands that labor must champion the cause of all the oppressed, which inscribes on its banner the fight for black freedom, to finish the Civil War by overthrowing the rule of American capital which robbed the black population of the promise of liberation

for which they so courageously fought. A workers party which champions the cause of the desperate immigrant, saying anyone who made it to this country has the right to stay here—Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

I'll leave you with some words from James P. Cannon, the founder of the International Labor Defense, whose heritage of class-struggle defense is carried forward by the Partisan Defense Committee today, and whose fight for an international revolutionary Trotskyist leadership is carried forward today by the Spartacist League and the International Communist League. It is from a 1921 article appropriately titled "Who Can Save the Unions?": "Let the labor unions put aside their illusions; let them face the issue squarely and fight it out on the basis of the class struggle. Instead of seeking peace when there is no peace, and 'understanding' with those who do not want to understand, let them declare war on the whole capitalist regime. That is the way to save the unions and to make them grow in the face of adversity and become powerful war engines for the destruction of capitalism."

When those who labor rule, then we can genuinely talk of a society of "freedom and justice for all."

\* \* \*

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# Poland...

(continued from page 3)

loyal to Walesa's anti-Communist enterprise to the very end, as is evident in the name of their paper—*Solidarność*

*Socjalistyczna* (Socialist Solidarność!). Squeamish about supporting the widely detested Walesa, they called for a vote in the first round to another openly bourgeois candidate, Tadeusz Zielinski, a former senator of the Freedom Union (then Democratic Union) who endorses "Christian values" and supports employer lock-outs "under certain circumstances." The Clifftites brazenly amnesty the anti-Semitic Solidarność leadership, claiming that "it wants to call itself rightist only because the communist governments called themselves leftist."

The crassly pro-capitalist parliamentarism of the SLD has pushed many radical youth in Poland today to reject all political parties in favor of "direct action" anarchism. Denying the possibility of a political struggle to break the proletariat from its social-democratic and nationalist misleaders, the anarchist youth turn in despair to substitutionist actions which ultimately lead nowhere. At most, they occasionally land a few good blows against the fascist thugs but have no strategy to deal with the entrenched power of the anti-Semitic Catholic hierarchy and racist Polish nationalism.

What is necessary to sweep away the racist and sexist filth promoted by capitalist counterrevolution is the mobilization of the working class in the struggle for socialist revolution. The Polish proletariat must appropriate the revolutionary-internationalist heritage exemplified by Rosa Luxemburg—the greatest workers leader that Poland has produced—placing at the center of their struggles defense of the rights of women and minorities. Key to this is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party that will act as a tribune of all the oppressed. As demonstrated by its role in bringing to Poland the international campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, the SGP fights to cohere the nucleus of such a party as part of a reborn Fourth International. ■



# Harlem Fire...

(continued from page 12)

and have seized upon this case as the perfect vehicle. Giuliani immediately launched a sinister witchhunt operation against the boycott leaders, tapping phones, monitoring tapes of radio call-in programs, milking informers, seeking to hold the demonstrators criminally responsible for the gunman's crazed deed.

Ultimately, the fire at Freddy's is the product of a rotting social order, where the cops wage relentless war on the ghettos in the name of a phony "war on drugs," where Republicans and Democrats compete in seeking to abolish welfare and slash health care where capitalism does not supply jobs. In Harlem you can see the social wreckage of decaying American capitalism before your eyes. From the layers of devastation and hopelessness rise the poisonous fumes of nationalism and anti-Semitism; under extreme pressure applied by the state and its racists in uniform, this deadly mixture reached the combustion point in a fiery massacre.

## Racist Rulers Produce Black Desperation

Giuliani's election was the product of a racist backlash against black Democrat David Dinkins. Playing to his base among small property owners, right-wing ethnic enclaves and the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, "Rudy the slasher" has gone after every social program serving the minority poor with a vengeance. Hospitals, health clinics and schools being shut down, thousands thrown off welfare—the city's even charging rent for homeless shelters! This reactionary climate which leaves the impoverished black ghettos and Hispanic barrios isolated could be shattered by integrated class struggle. But NYC labor officialdom has criminally cut a private deal with Giuliani, refusing to lift a finger for the poor, in exchange for empty "guarantees" against layoffs.

From the beginning of his administration, Mayor Giuliani has pushed a program that aggressively fans ethnic hatreds. Immediately on taking office, he began pushing "quality of life" laws to harass poor people. It was one thing to chase off the guys with the fake Chanel scarves and Gucci bags outside Saks, but clearing out 125th Street was another matter. The crowded bazaar had transformed "the 1-2-5" from a devastated strip into a bustling marketplace. In 1992, the Dinkins administration tried to push the vendors out, but backed down in the ensuing standoff. So when Giuliani went in, he mobilized an army of riot cops to do the job. Roland Smith was one of those arrested. He saw it as a "cracker" conspiracy against the black community, and wanted revenge.

Now Giuliani and his cohorts are

ghoulishly using the fire at Freddy's for all it's worth in their continuing drive to keep down the black population through sheer repression. Blaming the massacre on people from "outside the Harlem community," D.A. Morgenthau has launched a grand jury investigation, reportedly looking to indict Al Sharpton (who lives in New Jersey). Officials say that, whereas "comments" by demonstrators are "normally protected by the First Amendment," in this case they're looking to charge the boycotters with civil rights violations.

The ravings of the boycotters have fueled the liberals' calls to outlaw "hate speech." As the *City Sun* commented, those who want to get Sharpton for "hate speech" might listen to racist Bob Grant on the radio. The aftermath of the Harlem fire shows exactly how such legislation will be used to spy on and criminalize protest by leftists and blacks. In this, of course, Sharpton is getting the payback for his own corrupt and treacherous complicity with the racist rulers. He wore a wire for the FBI and NYPD "black desk" who were carrying out surveillance on black militants in the 1980s!

When it comes to criminal indictments, it ought to be noted that the seven people who died in Freddy's besides the shooter were workers who had sought refuge in the back of the store and in the basement. The cause of death was smoke inhalation. They were unable to get out because the building owner had bricked up the fire exit against burglars, and the fire quickly spread out of control because the sprinkler system was turned off for construction work. Freddy's had repeated citations for faulty sprinklers.

The mayor's attempt to target the demonstrators for the attack at Freddy's prompted the Rev. Lawrence Lucas, chaplain at Rikers Island, to observe that during the Dinkins administration Giuliani "led a bunch of white cops in a demonstration in which they called the mayor all types of foul racist names, and later on they attacked a Black youth in the subway and put him in the hospital." In October 1993, then mayoral candidate Giuliani whipped up a racist mob of 10,000 armed cops besieging City Hall. Once he got into office, the police went on a deadly and sustained rampage against minorities: in 1994 the number of black and Hispanic people killed by the cops shot up 42 percent.

## Nationalist Bigots Feed on Despair

The boycott outside Freddy's had been going on intermittently since last fall. It was put together by Sharpton and a nationalist demagogue named Morris Powell, head of the "125th Street Vendors Association." Its ostensible purpose was to save the lease of the Record Shack, owned by black South African Sikhulu Shange, who subleased space from Freddy's and was being evicted. In the convoluted real estate wheeling and deal-

ing of New York, it turns out the building owner was actually a wealthy black Pentecostal church, the United House of Prayer founded by "Sweet Daddy Grace." Freddy's wanted to expand into the space occupied by the Record Shack, and the church wanted the higher rents. The church used a similar strategy in other real estate conflicts, such as in Cleveland last summer, where its plans to evict elderly residents to make way for a new church building and parking lot were exposed.

The protests were rife with anti-Semitism, focusing on Fred Harari, the Jewish owner of the clothing store. In an affidavit by the store's security guard, who died in the fire, he recounted hearing repeated threats to "Get the Jew owners out," "Kill the crackers," "Burn and loot the Jews." This is the language of pogroms, of lynch mobs. The day after the fire at Freddy's, the boycotters were out in front of Bargain World, another Jewish-owned store on 125th Street. Ominously, at least ten white or Korean store owners in the area have since received threats. This poisonous anti-Semitic and anti-Asian chauvinism plays into the hands of the white racists who hold power.

In the mouths of the boycotters, Jews were "bloodsuckers" and blacks who bought in their shops were "cracker lovers." Heard more and more on the street, the current revival of these murderous words is because they are Nation of Islam (NOI) leader Louis Farrakhan's epithets of choice. Days before his "Million Man March" in Washington, D.C. last October, Farrakhan said in a TV interview: "The Jews who owned the homes, the apartments in the black community, we consider them blood-suckers.... And when the Jews left, the Palestinian Aarabs came, Koreans came, Vietnamese...and we call them blood-suckers." Now that Farrakhan has stepped so prominently into the vacuum of black leadership, his rhetoric of ethnic hatred is being echoed by all sorts of imitators.

At a rally for Sharpton, Powell and

Shange at the Slave Theater in Brooklyn, December 14, a packed crowd applauded CCNY professor Leonard Jeffries, Alton Maddox, and NOI minister Conrad Muhammad, who railed, "There's many more Roland Smiths out there," and praised Powell's fight for "economic empowerment in the Black community." Powell, in turn, accused the "crackers and the Asians on 125th Street" of "stealing our dollars." The dollars this bunch is after are the \$300 million slated to be spent over the next decade in the federal government's "Empowerment Zone" in Harlem and the South Bronx. Similarly, Farrakhan talks of separatism while getting federal contracts for "NOI Security Agency, Inc." at housing projects from Baltimore to L.A. Prisons and police are the real "expansion" industry in the inner city, and Farrakhan is selling his services to police the ghetto.

A mass outburst of class struggle would break down the poison of nationalism and can heat back the racists with state power like Giuliani. The sit-down strikes of the 1930s may appear remote, but the working people who make this city run can bring it to a screeching halt. In New York, the heavily black and Hispanic hospital workers in AFSCME Local 420 are on the verge of rejecting a sellout contract. A struggle by these workers in defense of labor rights and against the life-threatening cuts in social services for the poor, the soaring tuition and mass purge of working-class and poor students from CUNY, could galvanize tens of thousands in struggle and break down the deadly divisions fostered by the capitalists and their agents such as Farrakhan and Sharpton.

Desperately necessary is the forging of a revolutionary workers party which can lead the fight to oust the treacherous misleaders of labor and lead the working people and oppressed minorities in fighting their way out of the churning cauldron of racist oppression, nationalist demagoguery and ethnic hatreds into a fight against the common oppressor, the capitalist system, for a revolutionary socialist future. ■

# Boeing...

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comparison. But a "victory" it isn't.

In order to get the contract approved, Boeing agreed to offer a hefty strike settlement "bonus" just before Christmas. Real wage increases are a pittance, and won't come for two years. The hated medical copayments were only *delayed* until mid-1998. On the key issue of "outsourcing" jobs, despite talk of "consulting" and "retraining," Wall Street analysts were boasting that the contract "still protects management's freedom of action" (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 14 December 1995).

This means that the dramatic cuts in the Boeing workforce, down to 105,000 today from 165,000 six years ago, will continue unabated. In just the nine months before the strike, 12,000 were laid off. And the Machinists tops slipped in an extra year on the contract, granting *four years* of labor peace to Boeing, through its heaviest years of pre-scheduled production.

This continues IAM chief Kourpias' wretched program of "partnership" between the aerospace giant, the government and the union, centered on President Clinton's calls for protectionist measures against Japan and pushing an anti-Communist crusade against the Chinese deformed workers state (see "Protectionism vs. Class Struggle: Exchange on Boeing Strike," WV No. 634, 1 December 1995). This program serves the interests of Boeing and American imperialism.

To enlist Boeing strikers in a reactionary diversion from their struggle, the IAM tops brought Harry Wu to the picket

line on December 1. Once a victim of Stalinist repression in China, Wu has become a professional anti-Communist (employed by the right-wing Hoover Institution) who declared at the AFL-CIO convention that "The strike by Boeing members is really a strike against the Chinese government. It is a strike against those in America who would let China dictate American policy."

The national chauvinism and anti-Communism of the labor misleaders tie the working class to the class enemy, as U.S. imperialism ratchets up exploitation at home and aims to bring "free market" immiseration to China through capitalist counterrevolution. As a striker told WV, "The enemy is not other workers fighting for their jobs, it is those exploiting all of us."

From the start of this strike, we called for workers to build mass pickets, occupy the plants and shut production down tight. We repeatedly warned that poisonous protectionism would dig a trap for the strike; we called instead for Boeing workers in the U.S. to forge a fighting alliance with Boeing workers in other countries. But the IAM brass would sooner pit U.S. workers against "foreigners" than call for joint strike action that necessarily threatens the profitability of U.S. capitalism.

The labor bureaucrats *oppose* the mobilization of workers' power because this would threaten not only the offices they cling to, but also their goal of class peace. It will take a political fight within the unions to oust the existing bureaucracy, replacing the sellouts with a class-struggle leadership based on a program of proletarian internationalism. This task is inextricably connected with the fight to build a revolutionary workers party. ■

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Giuliani Set It Off Racist Cops, Black Nationalism and the Harlem Fire

A deranged individual burst into Freddy's Fashion Mart on 125th Street, central Harlem's biggest shopping area, on Friday morning, December 8, brandishing a .38 revolver and a container of flammable liquid. Outside, a boycott was going on, trying to drive the Jewish-owned shop out of business, or out of Harlem. In fact, the owner of the building was a wealthy black church. The gunman shot and wounded four people, then set fire to the shop before shooting himself. Eight people died in the fire at Freddy's, seven of them store workers who died of smoke inhalation, as well as the gunman himself. The dead were five young Puerto Rican saleswomen, a man from Guyana and an American black security guard. All fighters for social justice and defenders of black rights must condemn the hideous attack on Freddy's and any attempt to apologize for it, as well as denouncing the vile anti-Semitism of those who were pushing the "huy black" boycott. But the far greater danger is from the racist rulers who sermonize about "racial harmony" and "conciliation" as their cops gun down black youth in Bed-Stuy and stage mass arrests in Hispanic barrios from Brooklyn to the Bronx.

The smoke had barely cleared at Freddy's when New York City mayor



Nubile/JB Pictures



Sotomayor/NY Times

Racist NYC mayor Giuliani ordered police sweep of Harlem vendors in 1994 (above), setting stage for hideous fire at Freddy's Fashion Mart.



Lee/NY Times

Rudolph Giuliani went before the TV cameras at One Police Plaza to call the blaze "racial arson." Police immediately began going over videotapes of the boycott, looking to prosecute the protesters for "bias crime." Yet it was the Giuliani administration which set the stage for the tragic fire as its cops

tromp on Harlem like an occupying army. The shooter, Roland Smith, had been a sidewalk vendor on 125th Street selling African jewelry. He was driven into a fury when a police sweep ordered by City Hall drove off the vendors and ruined his meager livelihood in late 1994. He had recently lost his apartment and was living in a homeless shelter. Roland Smith snapped. As he

lashed out, his head was full of Jew-baiting, black nationalist rage. It is the masters of this oppressive capitalist society who fuel that rage and now seek to feed off it.

The mayor, police commissioner and district attorney want to use the power of the state to suppress all black protest

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## Boeing Strike Called Off As Bosses Were Hurting

In the second week of December, strikers at Boeing aircraft plants in Washington, Oregon and Kansas voted heavily in favor of a contract negotiated by the leaders of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and returned to work. This ended the 69-day walkout by more than 30,000 workers, the longest since Boeing was struck for 140 days in 1948 during the post-World War II strike wave.

A striker in Portland told *Workers Vanguard* that the IAM bureaucrats arrogantly thought they would have the workers "signed, sealed and delivered to Boeing by Thanksgiving, like a turkey." But in mid-November, strikers who were furious at multimillion dollar stock options awarded to the Boeing executives decisively repudiated a sellout deal which would have imposed medical co-payments, a key issue in the strike.

Although management scabs kept production crawling along during the walkout, the strike blocked delivery of 30 aircraft. Boeing customers and its profit-

bloated bosses were clearly beginning to hurt. Boeing workers were in a position of strength, but at this point Machinists leader George Kourpias called off the strike.

The same IAM tops who three weeks earlier tried to ram through the first miserable sellout crowed that the settlement represents the "renewal of the labor movement." For the new heads of the AFL-CIO, the Boeing contract was a "'slam-dunk' win" (*AFL-CIO News*, 18 December 1995). The bosses' press portrayed the settlement as "the only significant union victory across a national landscape littered with labor defeats" (*Seattle Times*, 14 December 1995).

The Boeing strike certainly gives the lie to the notion that strikes are "outdated." Coming just days after the devastating defeat of the Caterpillar strike—a total surrender ordered by the UAW's top bureaucrats and hacked by AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney—the settlement at Boeing can't help but look good in

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Haley/Tacoma News Tribune

Boeing strikers burned sell-out contract proposal in November. Strike ended three weeks later as IAM tops pushed through back-to-work deal.