

Popular Front of Racism, Austerity Paved the Way

France: Fascist Le Pen Scores Big Gain in Elections



Mass protests have swept France in response to large vote for Le Pen. But outrage has been channeled into support for right-wing politician Chirac in the name of saving “honor” of racist capitalist French Republic.

APRIL 29—The successful second-place finish by the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of the presidential elections last Sunday has detonated a storm of protest in France. Almost daily, tens of thousands of people, overwhelmingly high school students and other youth, have filled streets across the country in spontaneous and highly integrated demonstrations. The streets of Paris are covered with graffiti reading, “Asian, Arab, Black and White: Together!” and “No Nazis in This Neighborhood!” Yet the combative spirit and anger of the youth is being manipulated by the entire political spectrum in order to re-elect President Jacques Chirac, a right-wing racist thief! One placard at an April 27 demonstration in Paris expressed the “choice” in the runoff election: “Fascist or Crook—This Is Democracy?”

Last week’s election was a stinging repudiation of the class-collaborationist popular-front coalition—led by the Socialist Party (PS) and including the Communist Party (PCF) and the bourgeois Greens—which currently administers the French capitalist state. The government’s anti-working-class and anti-immigrant attacks paved the way for Le Pen’s second-place finish in the elections. Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin fell to one percentage point behind Le Pen’s 17 percent and was eliminated from the second round of elections, while PCF candidate Robert Hue garnered a scant 3.9 percent. Significantly, the self-avowed revolutionaries of Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) totaled a combined 10 percent of the vote.

Now, these same parties have cobbled together a reactionary national front, stretching from the right wing to the “far

left,” to wrap Chirac in the French tricolor as the supposed “savior of Republican values.” The anti-Le Pen demonstrations are replete with nauseating chauvinism. Whitewashing the France of “Vigipirate”—the campaign of cop terror in minority communities—and embellishing the France of Vichy (the government of collaboration with the Nazis) and the Algerian War, the demonstrations are filled with signs and banners proclaiming that “la belle France” is not Austria or Italy, where ultraright or fascist-infested governments hold power.

Notably, the PS, PCF, Greens and LCR all issued leaflets proclaiming the same slogan: “Block Le Pen!” This means: Vote Chirac on May 5. Support to this right-wing politician can only strengthen his bonapartist appetites and lead to even more severe state repression against workers and the oppressed. At the April 27 demonstration of 50,000 people in Paris, the climate of “national unity” was so strong that the refusal by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France to call for a vote to Chirac provoked a storm of indignation. LTF signs at the demonstration proclaimed: “The PS/PCF/Green Popular Front Opened the Road to Le Pen’s Fascists!” and “Break with Class Collaboration! For a Genuine Revolutionary Multiethnic Workers Party!”

The large vote for Le Pen is part of a rightward shift in West Europe’s bourgeois political spectrum, from Spain and Portugal (where rightist parties are in power) to Denmark. In Austria, a coalition government including Jörg Haider’s openly racist Freedom Party (FPÖ) came to power two years ago. Last year, a popular-front government in Italy was replaced by the right-wing demagogue Silvio Berlusconi in coalition with the

fascistic Lega Nord and the Alleanza Nazionale, which is currently primarily an electoral vehicle but also heir to the historic party of Mussolini’s fascism. In Germany, the right-wing Christian Democrats have found renewed strength, soundly defeating the governing Social Democrats last month in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt.

But the shift to the right in bourgeois politics has also been accompanied by a polarization at the base of European society. This is indicated in the vote for LO and the LCR and is particularly reflected in huge demonstrations in various countries in defense of immigrants.

By outlook and history, Le Pen is a fascist. But like Haider’s FPÖ, Le Pen’s National Front (FN) is currently scoring big gains primarily as an *electoral party*. Reactionary views alone do not define fascism. Contrary to fake leftists who cynically pretend that fascism is just around the corner in order to justify voting for Chirac, France is not currently besieged by organized fascist gangs attacking workers’ picket lines or assaulting parliament as the French fascists did in the 1930s.

As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky wrote at the time in “Whither France”

(October 1936): “The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery.” Since the proletariat does not currently pose a threat to bourgeois rule, the French bourgeoisie sees no need to unleash its fascist dogs as a last resort to annihilate the workers movement. However, Le Pen’s electoral gain will indeed encourage the fascist bands to come out of their holes and carry out attacks on the most vulnerable sectors of society, in particular dark-skinned immigrants.

A significant threat is posed on May Day, when tens of thousands of workers and leftists mobilize to celebrate the workers’ holiday. Le Pen threatens to bring tens of thousands of his supporters to demonstrate the same day in Paris, posing the danger of pumped-up fascist bands roaming the streets and attacking workers, leftists and minorities. If the PCF, LCR or LO—or the CGT trade-union federation—were serious about stopping Le Pen, they would fill the Place du Châtelet with organized union members hours before Le Pen’s fascist

continued on page 6

Young
Spartacus

Defend the Palestinians!

What’s Wrong with
Campus Divestment Campaign... 4



—Anti-Immigrant Raids at D.C. Airports— Free Arrested Airport Workers!

On April 23, the government’s “anti-terror” terror machine struck again. In a racist dragnet dubbed “Fly Trap,” agents of the INS, FBI and Department of Transportation invaded three airports in the Washington, D.C. area, arresting more than 130 workers, many of them immigrants. Though admitting that not one of those arrested was connected to organizations deemed terrorist by the government, U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty called the racist dragnet an “anti-terrorism initiative.” McNulty declared, “All of these individuals present a risk,” but “we don’t have information as to exactly what risks.” Since September 11, over 450 workers at 14 airports around the country have been rounded up in the government’s sinister “Operation Tarmac.”

The capitalist press railed about workers “fraudulently obtaining airport security badges.” But what the airport workers are actually charged with is nothing more

than lying on their job applications, for which they face up to five years in prison, \$250,000 fines and deportation. If the government were to go after everyone who falsified their job records, probably half the country would be in jail, including those who make and enforce the laws. ***We demand: Free the arrestees! Drop all charges now! Reinstate all the workers with full back pay!***

Following September 11, more than 1,200 men of Arab and South Asian descent have been rounded up as “terrorist” suspects and thousands of immigrants face imminent deportation—yet not one has been charged with being even remotely connected to Al Qaeda or any other group designated by Washington as “terrorist.” To justify the escalating attacks on civil liberties, barely a day passes without the government announcing yet another “terrorist threat.” Just before the airport raids, the Justice De-

partment announced it had information that American banks were imminent targets of Al Qaeda. When nothing materialized, the Feds cynically floated a public warning that shopping malls were now in the terrorists’ sights—at the same time encouraging consumers to keep shopping to boost the “economic recovery.”

As we wrote in “Down With Anti-Immigrant Purge of Airport Workers!” (WV No. 777, 22 March): “The domestic ‘war on terrorism’ is a war against the working class.” A new Federal Aviation Administration rule mandating criminal background checks for current and prospective employees who might have access to a “secure area” is a device to purge immigrants, blacks and union activists from the workforce. The Maritime Security Act (MSA) pending in Congress would have an immediate impact on the many black and Latino waterfront workers who might once have been ensnared in the “war on drugs,” which is really a war on the ghetto and barrio masses.

Now New York governor George Pataki has proposed legislation calling for criminal background checks even of airport vendors, like the largely minority youth who work behind cash registers at fast-food counters. Air travelers are supposed to feel safer knowing that the cashier to whom they’re forking over \$3 for a hot dog was never busted for smoking a joint!

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) vice president Eliseo Medina blasted last week’s arrests, whose victims included SEIU members, as “scapegoating” and added, “They have created a climate of fear in the immigrant community.” But the SEIU and other union tops have not lifted a finger to mobilize union power in defense of immigrant rights. On the contrary, the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy has lined up behind the government’s “war on terror,” seeking only to lobby Democratic Party politicians to tone down some of the anti-union provisions in the new legislation. An article in SEIU Local 790’s *United Worker* (November-December 2001) called for “stringent background checks” of all airport screeners before they are hired.

For its part, the Amalgamated Transit

Union (ATU) bureaucracy supported the draconian USA-Patriot Act, which defines terrorism so broadly that striking transit workers could be jailed as “terrorists” for stopping scab buses. Now the ATU tops are lobbying for passage of the “Over-the-Road Bus Security and Safety Act of 2001,” which would extend security checks to ground transport workers.

The labor bureaucrats’ support for such repressive legislation by the capitalist state is of a piece with their organizing of the enforcers of state repression, cops and prison guards. Similarly, SEIU union tops, among others, have been recruiting airport security screeners, who are an auxiliary of the armed forces of the capitalist state, albeit on the bottom rung. Thousands of screeners—immigrants from the Philippines, Latin America, South Asia, Africa and elsewhere—are threatened with losing their jobs under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act “federalizing” airport security, which requires screeners to be U.S. citizens. We oppose making citizenship a requirement of employment for anyone. But while we support union campaigns to organize food service workers, cabin cleaners, baggage handlers and ramp workers, we ***oppose*** union organizing of screeners and security guards.

To mobilize labor’s social power in defense of its interests and those of all the oppressed requires piercing through the “national unity” promoted by the U.S. capitalist rulers and their labor lieutenants. This understanding was key in building the February 9 demonstration in Oakland initiated by the Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee against the anti-immigrant witchhunt and the MSA. That united-front protest, which was endorsed by the powerful ILWU Local 10 long-shore union and a number of other unions, was the first time that organized labor had been mobilized in defense of immigrants against the U.S. rulers’ “war on terror.” As the Spartacist League speaker at the rally explained:

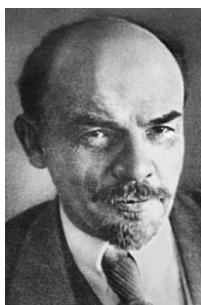
“The workers and the capitalists have irreconcilable interests: the capitalists want to extract as much profit as possible, drive down wages, etc. The capitalists have a state to help them do this—the cops, the courts, the prisons—and then they try to scam you and say this is democracy. Well, it isn’t a democracy, it’s a ball and chain, and the trade-union misleaders telling you to vote for the lesser evil, they’re the chain tying you to the ball. A class-struggle leadership in the trade unions must be forged, a leadership that knows who our friends are and who our enemies are. We need a workers party to fight for a workers government.” ■



TROTSKY

Capitalism and Unemployment

Chronic unemployment and immiseration are endemic to the very workings of the capitalist system. In the 1938 Transitional Program, written in light of the Great Depression, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stressed the need to mobilize the trade unions in a fight for jobs for all. But the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats, who tie the workers to the class enemy, are incapable of leading such a struggle. The elimination of joblessness and poverty can only be realized



LENIN

through the expropriation of the capitalist class, when the wealth of this country will be turned over to those who produced it, under a workers government.

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the crumbs of a disintegrating society. ***The right to employment*** is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, “structural” as well as “conjunctural,” the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of ***a sliding scale of working hours***. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, with a strictly guaranteed ***minimum***, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period.

Property owners and their lawyers will prove the “unrealizability” of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a “normal” collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. “Realizability” or “unrealizability” is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.

—Leon Trotsky, “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International” (1938)

South Carolina: He Burned Confederate Flag Defend Emmett Rufus Eddy!

We print below a 27 April letter by the Partisan Defense Committee to the solicitor of Richland County, South Carolina. The PDC calls on all trade unions, civil rights organizations and student groups to defend Emmett Rufus Eddy for his brave act.

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the arrest and physical abuse by the police of Emmett Rufus Eddy, also known as Reverend E. Slave, on the outrageous charge of “defacing a monument.” He was arrested after torching the Confederate flag prominently displayed at the “Confederate Soldier Monument” adjacent to the South Carolina Statehouse. Mr. Eddy, with a commendable history of activism against this grotesque symbol of slavery and racist terror, now faces three years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines.

The only thing criminal involved in this incident is that the Confederate flag was flying at all: it is an inflammatory symbol which everyone in this country knows stands for black enslavement and racist murder, Ku Klux Klan cross-

burnings and church bombings, the lynching of anyone who would fight for the rights of blacks, immigrants or labor. Everywhere it flies, from Southern state capitols to KKK and Nazi skinhead rallies, it is an ***incitement to racist terror***; any pretense to “historical representation” is a sham!

The Confederate flag was placed on the South Carolina Statehouse in 1962 as an act of racist defiance against the mass civil rights struggle for black equality and integration. Now, while the Confederate flag flies nearby the Statehouse, inside a major effort is taking place to reinforce union-busting “right-to-work” laws, making clear that those who fly the flag of racist terror want to attack ***all*** of labor.

We demand that all charges against Emmett Rufus Eddy (Rev. E. Slave) be dropped immediately!

Send protest letters to: Warren B. Giese, Richland County Solicitor, P.O. Box 1987, Columbia, SC 29202. Send contributions for Eddy’s defense to: E. Slave Defense Fund, P.O. Box 4681, Columbia, SC 29240. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.



EDITOR: Len Meyers

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Michael Davisson

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Irene Gardner

EDITORIAL BOARD: Ray Bishop (managing editor), Bruce André, Jon Brule, George Foster, Liz Gordon, Walter Jennings, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alison Spencer, Alan Wilde

The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and with a 3-week interval in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is 30 April.

No. 780

3 May 2002

The following article is translated from *Espartaco* No. 18 (Spring-Summer 2002), newspaper of the Grupo Espartaquista de México.

Gloria Trevi, Sergio Andrade and Maria Raquenel Portillo (Mary Boquitas) have spent more than two years behind bars in a Brazilian prison awaiting extradition to Mexico. Marlene Calderon, another member of superstar Trevi’s clan, spent more than eight months in prison in 2000, and Katia de la Cuesta was also detained. All of this is a result of the witchhunt launched by ex-members of Trevi’s entourage and their families and carried out by the Mexican authorities in the state of Chihuahua and at the federal level. The two main prosecution witnesses are Karina Yapor, who spent five years with the Trevi clan, and Andrade’s ex-wife, Aline Hernández. Yapor initially defended the trio against accusations by her relatives and by those of other group members. Yapor and Hernández have now each

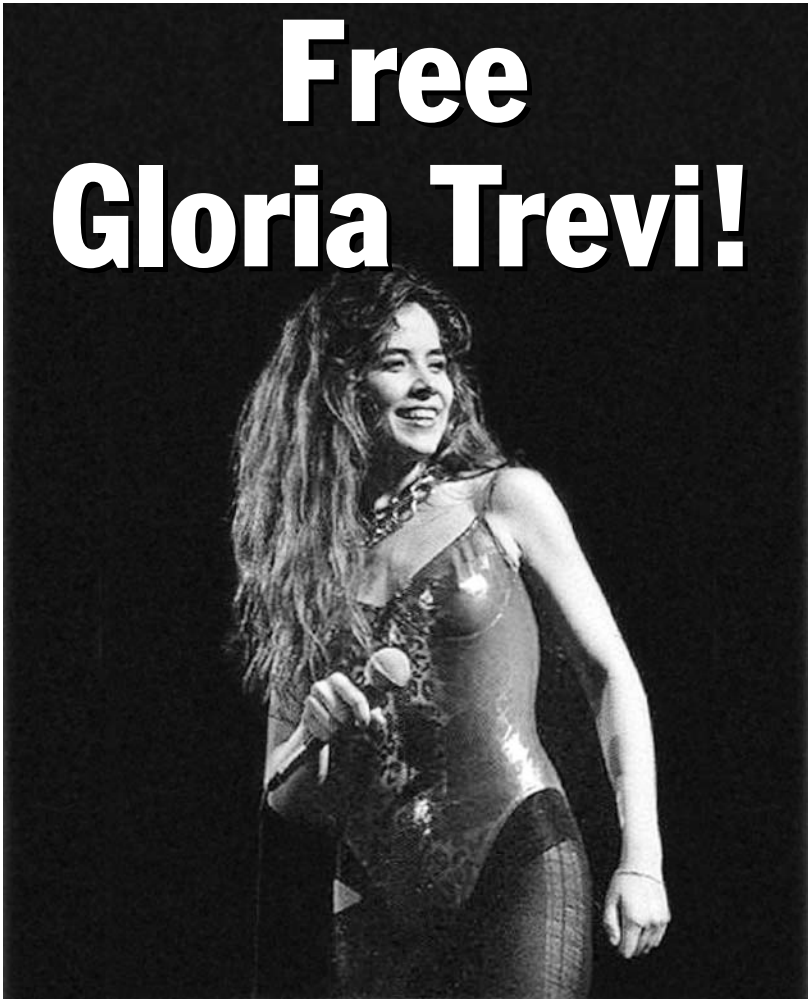
ESPARTACO

written a book full of unbelievable tales as well as accounts of punishments they say they received at the hands of Andrade. We are unable to know what did or didn’t happen among the group members, but even in their wildest claims these two supposed victims of Trevi/Andrade never state that they had been raped or physically prevented from leaving [the group]. Yapor and Hernández maintain that they had sexual relations with Andrade and stayed with the group because they chose to and because they worried about the effect of leaving on their artistic careers. Yet Trevi, Andrade and Portillo now face charges of rape and kidnapping, which could keep them imprisoned in hellish conditions for many years. The fact that Hernández and Yapor were under the arbitrarily set “age of consent” for young women when they engaged in consensual sexual activity means that the Trevi group now also faces “corruption of minors” charges. Drop the charges against Trevi, Andrade and Portillo!

Gloria Trevi was one of the most popular and controversial celebrities of the 1990s in Mexico. The name of her famous album “*Más turbada que nunca*” [literally “More Perturbed than Ever” and a play on words for “masturbation”] made jaws drop among the more conservative sectors of society, while millions of youth rushed to buy her album before it sold out of stores. The beautiful, sexy singer who rebelled against a society that has strict ideas about what a woman should and shouldn’t say and do was attractive to both sexes. A recent muck-raking television docudrama on Trevi interviewed woman after woman who all explained that they had wanted to be like Gloria Trevi because she didn’t accept the way things are. “La Trevi” represented a challenge to bourgeois Catholic morality, characterized by its inculcation of a submissive role for women and the repression of their sexuality, as well as that of youth and gays.

Trevi’s statements didn’t only relate to sexual freedom. She regularly spoke out on the issues of the day, often standing against oppression and therefore against the powers that be in this racist, sexist society. Trevi solidarized with the massive Mexico City UNAM student strike for free public education in 1999. She

Mexican Trotskyists Say:



Down With the Anti-Sex Witchhunt!

expressed indignation at the massacre of peasants in Aguas Blancas by Guerrero state police in 1995. And Trevi stood for the right of women to have abortions, something that is illegal throughout Mexico. In some states, even the right to abort in the case of rape is being attacked with the increasing role of the Catholic church in politics under [Mexican president] Vicente Fox’s PAN [National Action Party]. All of these things make Trevi, and those around her, a target in the eyes of the Mexican rulers.

On 8 February 2000, with Trevi, Andrade and Portillo already behind bars in Brazil after an international search, Karina Yapor appeared as a witness in court proceedings in Mexico against two other members of the Trevi group. Yapor stated, “I have never been raped or mistreated by Sergio Gustavo Andrade Sánchez, nor have I ever been deprived of my liberty. I didn’t see nor have knowledge of Sergio hitting any of the people that I knew.” At the end of the month, “She declared before the court the love she feels for Andrade; she also reaffirmed to family members the feelings that bound her to him and that she felt like a prisoner in her home [with her parents]” (*Reforma*, 27 June 2000), while her

brother publicly accused her of hitting her son and her father stated on TV that she was a liar. The fourth penal court of Chihuahua declared Yapor the “queen of the group” and Yapor was forced, first by the state and then by her parents, to see psychiatrist after psychiatrist for treatment for “permanent psychological trauma.” Their proof of her trauma? At 17, she rebelled against her family which was publicly attacking her and was initiating legal proceedings against the people she had lived with for the last five years. Finally, in April 2000, Yapor read a letter in which she stated that all her previous declarations were false and that she had been a prisoner of mental domination, as the psychologists told her. Both Yapor’s and Aline Hernández’s change of opinion had to do with “supernatural phenomena.” Karina says that it was thanks to being able to make contact with god himself. Hernández, more modestly, simply received a letter from her dead father. At the height of obscurantist stupidity, Yapor in her book tries to prove Andrade’s links with the devil because he spent a lot of time in the bathroom without making noise!

The prosecution of Trevi, Andrade and Portillo fits into a wider anti-sex witchhunt which includes everything from repeated attacks on the “Condommobile” and people who work in it, to anti-“pedophile” campaigns, to brutal, murderous attacks on homosexuals. One aspect of the witchhunt is that it seeks to strengthen the state in its regulation of the population and to spread panic as a diversion from the real brutality of life in a country where 60 percent of children are born into poverty, women are forced to bear child after child or risk their lives with unsafe abortions, and many of those who manage to find employment get paid starvation wages. We oppose the intrusion of the government into private life and demand an end to all laws against consensual activities like sexual experimentation among youth,

consensual sex between adults and youth, and “crimes without victims” such as prostitution, drug use and pornography. We oppose “age of consent” and “corruption of minors” laws. These laws, which set an arbitrary age (generally different for men and women, or even only applicable to women) at which one is deemed capable of making decisions about sex and drinking, are reactionary. Their purpose is to repress youth sexuality (which is, although some might not like it, a biological fact), impose abstinence and equate sex with guilt. As we explained in “Britain: Marxism vs. Anti-Sex Hysteria” in *Espartaco* No. 16 (Fall-Winter 2001) [see also WV No. 744, 20 October 2000]:

“The guiding principle for sexual relations should be that of effective consent, nothing more and nothing less than mutual agreement and understanding as opposed to coercion. One might say that a girl of 11 is too young, whereas one of 14 is able to decide for herself what she wants to do. In any case this is not a matter to be determined by the capitalist state which upholds in every way it can the inherently oppressive nuclear family, including enforcing sexual repression and fear, with untold results of increased human misery. We vehemently oppose state intervention into people’s sexual activities and private lives: *State out of the bedroom!*”

If Yapor and Hernández now believe that they shouldn’t have been able to make decisions about their own lives when they were teenagers, at that time they certainly thought they should be able to, and in fact they did. Second thoughts and regrets or even unpleasant experiences (which are quite common in sexual activity in this society) cannot retroactively turn consensual activity into rape.

On the other hand, when there is not effective consent what takes place is a violent sexual assault. Rape and wife-beating are horrible and terribly common crimes against women in Mexico. A measure of the indifference of the Mexican rulers to the desperate plight of women and to rape in particular is the case of Paulina, an adolescent who was raped and then denied the abortion she requested (see *Espartaco* No. 14, Fall-Winter 2000). It is also grotesque that the laws equate consensual sex involving youth with violent crimes like rape or wife-beating, to which we are unconditionally hostile.

Mexican law makes it impossible for a young woman to decide she wants to have sex unless she’s a prostitute or unless she gets married (rather tellingly, the legal age for marriage is less than the legal age for sex!). The Penal Code of Chihuahua, which sounds like a passage from the Old Testament, reads:

“The person that has intercourse with a chaste and honest woman under the age of 18 but older than 14, obtaining her consent through seduction or deception, shall receive one month to three years in prison.”

The message is that young women aren’t supposed to have any sexual desires, and that’s backed up with the threat of prosecution for anyone who awakens those desires. The utter hypocrisy of the penal code and bourgeois morality is shown in Chihuahua’s Article 244: “If the active subject marries the offended woman, legal action will be annulled.”

For the bourgeoisie, religious obscurantism, reactionary social mores and the monogamous heterosexual family are weapons to assure ideological conformity and respect for the “authority” of the institutions of the bourgeois state. As Marxists, we understand that these ideological props will only be done away with for good when there is no longer a class-divided society where the ruling class needs to justify its oppression and repression of the masses of the population. Then we can begin to see the free expression of human interest and desire, including sex, without the restrictions, humiliation and guilt with which this society imbues us. Meanwhile, the bourgeois state seeks to increase its power to counter any challenge to its exploitative and oppressive rule. It is in the interest of the entire workers movement to expose and oppose the anti-sex witchhunt. Defend Trevi, Andrade and Portillo! ■

Espartaco

Publication of the
Grupo Espartaquista de México

No. 18 (Spring-Summer 2002)
\$.50 (24 pages)

Subscription:
\$2 for 4 issues
(includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

Order from/make checks payable to:
Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116



Young Spartacus

Defend the Palestinians! What's Wrong with Campus Divestment Campaign

Israel's assault against the Palestinians on the West Bank, marked by the wholesale destruction of entire areas and the cold-blooded massacre of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, has spurred significant demonstrations internationally, including in the U.S. On April 20, some 20,000 people protested in San Francisco and some 70,000 in Washington D.C., the largest mobilizations since the Gulf War protests of 1990-91. This wave of protests has also hit campuses across the country.

At the University of California Berkeley campus, more than a thousand students attended a "Palestine Day of Action" on April 9 called by the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). The demonstration culminated in a sit-in at a campus building, where 79 protesters were arrested. Most were charged with trespassing, though some face additional charges of resisting arrest, while one student was charged with assaulting an officer. The UC administration has announced that those arrested will face student conduct charges and possible suspension from school. The SJP has been suspended as a campus group and prohibited from organizing or having events or literature tables on campus, pending an "investigation." This blatant attempt to stifle political dissent is of a piece with the government's "anti-terror" witchhunt. The UC administration is trying to roll back the clock to the days before the 1960s Free Speech Movement, when political groups were banned from campus. Drop all the charges now! Down with the suspension of the SJP! No administration reprisals against the protesters!

The main demand of the Berkeley sit-in (as well as a demonstration called by the SJP at New York's Columbia University on April 17) was that the university administration "end its financial ties to Israel by divesting from companies with subsidiaries in Israel and/or substantial financial commitments (over 5 million dollars) to the Israeli economy." This demand, initiated by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, has been taken up by ostensibly socialist organizations like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), active in the leadership of the Berkeley and Columbia SJPs, and the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (RCYB, youth group of the Revolutionary Communist Party), whose members are active in the Berkeley SJP.

At bottom, the divestment campaign



Fake leftists at April 11 Berkeley protest promote liberal illusions in U.S. imperialism. Below: Spartacist banner at April 20 protest in Washington, D.C.

Buzz/Indymedia

Young Spartacus



looks to employ moral suasion to pressure campus administrations, American corporations and ultimately the U.S. capitalist rulers to ditch Israel and implement a more benevolent policy toward the Palestinians. Aside from the fact that American corporations do not have significant investments in Israel, the notion that moral suasion will make the U.S. dump a strategic and longstanding ally in the Near East is simply ludicrous.

The divestment movement is based on the lie that the Zionist rulers are somehow

worse than their imperialist patrons in Washington, who just devastated Afghanistan and whose starvation blockade of Iraq (not to mention countless wars from Korea to Vietnam) has killed more innocent civilians than the Israeli state by orders of magnitude. In this sense, the call for divestment serves merely to prettify the image of blood-drenched U.S. imperialism.

Indeed, the April 20 Washington demonstration's fake-left sponsors, among them the ISO, pleaded for "a U.S. foreign policy based upon social and economic justice, not military and corporate oppression." And their chosen keynote speaker, Democratic Congressman Cynthia McKinney, proclaimed: "I believe we once again can make America a force for good in the world. We are the world's most powerful nation and have a responsibility to act in defense of the weak and to protect them from harm."

When has capitalist America ever acted as a force for good in the world? From its emergence as an imperialist power in the late 1800s, the U.S. has left a grisly trail of carnage around the globe—from its

murderous "pacification" of the Philippines after it seized those islands in the 1898 Spanish-American War to its slaughter in Iraq a decade ago. Social democrats like the ISO to the contrary, the capitalist state is nothing other than an instrument of corporate—i.e., capitalist class—oppression, a machinery of violence to maintain the rule of capital and suppress the struggles of the exploited and oppressed. The notion that this state can promote social and economic justice is a con job that serves to channel the discontents of working people and rebellious youth back into Democratic Party electoralism.

Like the demonstrations nationally, a central slogan of the Berkeley protest was "Stop U.S. aid to Israel." There were also calls for the United Nations to intervene militarily on behalf of the Palestinians. The Spartacus Youth Club participated in the Berkeley march and protest with signs calling for defense of the Palestinian people. We chanted, "No illusions in UN peace! For a socialist federation of the Near East!" and "Arab, Jew, black and white—Workers of the world unite!"

The UN, far from being a force for "peace," is simply a den of imperialist thieves and their victims that acts as a fig leaf for U.S. military adventures around the globe, from the 1950-53 Korean War to the Gulf War in 1991 and countless other imperialist interventions. A U.S./UN "protection" force paved the way for the 1982 massacre of over 2,000 Palestinian men, women and children at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. Particularly today, appeals for imperialist military intervention in the Near East, in the guise of defending the Palestinians, only plays into the hands of the Bush administration, which is preparing an "intervention" force to attack Saddam Hussein's Iraq. U.S. hands off Iraq! All U.S./UN troops out of the Near East!

What is urgently necessary in the face of escalating Zionist terror is the mobilization of the working class in concrete acts of class-struggle solidarity with the besieged Palestinian masses, including political protest strikes and labor action to prevent the shipment of military goods to the Israeli rulers. But such a perspective can only be realized by mobilizing workers in the U.S. against their *own* rulers, not by fostering illusions in the potential benevolence of the American state.

A "Moral" Investment Policy?

A campaign to convince capitalist institutions to make business decisions based on moral considerations rather than profit motives is patently absurd, and it goes along with the liberal calls on consumers to boycott products made by companies that do business in Israel. The SJP's sister group at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign demands that its administration "not morally associate itself with the Israeli apartheid/colonial economy nor the weapons manufacturers

continued on page 7

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

BAY AREA

Alternate Saturdays, 2 p.m.

May 18:

**Defend the Gains of the
Anti-Capitalist Revolutions in
China, Cuba, Vietnam and
North Korea Against Imperialism
and Counterrevolution!**

1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor, Oakland
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851

LOS ANGELES

Alternate Saturdays, 2 p.m.

May 11:

**Capitalist Counterrevolution in the
USSR and Eastern Europe**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Suite 215
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@cs.com

www.icl-fi.org

Spartacus Youth Club Protest at Berkeley

ROTC Off Campus!

On April 20, the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club led a demonstration against the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and its effort to recruit prospective UC Berkeley students to the officer corps of the U.S. imperialist military. Students got a refreshing dose of revolutionary opposition to capitalism as the SYC chanted: "ROTC recruiters—imperialist looters! Off campus now!" A handful of leftist youth enthusiastically joined our picket line and chanted over the hokey Cal marching band that soon came to try to drown us out.

The right-wing, rabidly anti-communist *California Patriot* crowd mobilized with their American flags in a tiny counter-demo. Their McCarthyite signs, "Shoot a Communist Revolutionary for the US" and "Tell the Proletariats [sic] to Get Back to Work," constitute an ominous silhouette of a fascistic program: to kill the communists and smash all workers organizations to extract a higher rate of profit from the sweat and blood of the proletariat. These Pentagon advisers-in-training whip up the "war on terror" hysteria on college campuses against any social dissent.

Although the cops prevented us from using a megaphone, onlookers heard SYC speeches addressing our defense of the Palestinians and our opposition to the U.S. rulers' "war on terror." One SYC'er from Berkeley High School read a letter addressed to his school newspaper condemning the new so-called "No Child Left Behind" law, which would pull federal funding from schools that refuse to hand over student records to military recruiters. A statement of solidarity with Puerto Rican student militant Pedro Colón Almenas was also read. Colón Almenas is serving one year in federal prison for allegedly hitting a ROTC officer while protesting the return of ROTC to the University of Puerto Rico. Raising the call for the right of independence for Puerto Rico, UC Berkeley demonstrators held signs that read: "Free ROTC Protester Pedro Colón Almenas! U.S. Troops Out of Puerto Rico Now!"

The SYC posed the need for joint action against the ROTC would-be imperialist killers to other left groups on campus, yet they scandalously refused to participate. Members of the Berkeley Stop the War Coalition said that they didn't want to share a platform with the red Spartacists. Students for Justice in Pal-



Young Spartacus

estine refused to endorse because we openly disagree with their strategy to pressure the UC Regents to divest from companies doing business with Israel. The International Socialist Organization and the Revolutionary Communist Party likewise didn't endorse, counterposing the April 20 ANSWER coalition's anti-war demo in San Francisco to our anti-ROTC protest, even though our rally was purposely called earlier in the day. In fact, the anti-ROTC demonstrators later joined the SYC/SL's revolutionary contingent at the large demonstration in San Francisco under the banner "Defend the Palestinian People! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East! No U.S./UN/NATO Intervention! Hands Off Iraq!"

We reprint below the 7 April leaflet issued by the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club and distributed in building the anti-ROTC demonstration.

* * *

On April 20, "Cal Day," prospective students here at UC Berkeley will receive a taste of the murderous U.S. imperialist military machine, fresh off its deadly ravaging of Afghanistan and eagerly set to launch a new round of human massacre in Iraq. The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) plans to showcase the U.S. armed forces by rappelling down Wheeler Hall. Although the university provides it with academic camouflage, ROTC's role is to train the next generation of men and women to direct mass slaughter for the most rapacious imperialist power in the world. To carry out its imperialist adventures, the bourgeoisie needs to regiment the population to accept authority without question. On campus this means enforcing conservative codes of conduct and suppressing leftist ideas. While the administration and its right-wing lackeys have recently sought to purge what they consider to be sexual and political "deviance" from campus, ROTC is given free rein. But ROTC has not always enjoyed that right. Organized outrage during the Vietnam War successfully drove ROTC off campuses all over the nation. When ROTC was reintroduced to Cal in the mid-seventies, we led a campaign against its return. The Spartacus Youth Club today calls on students opposed to U.S. imperialism's deadly rampages—those of the present and those that are all too imminent—to demonstrate on April 20 and demand: **ROTC Off Campus! U.S. Imperialism: Hands Off Iraq and the World!**

Seizing on the entirely criminal attack on thousands of people in the World

Trade Center, the American bourgeoisie has found the golden opportunity to use "national unity" patriotism to line up the population behind the government. Washington's quick win in Afghanistan has only emboldened its readiness to employ military force against absolutely anyone, with Iraq directly under the cross hairs. Bush's mad ranting about "the axis of evil" combined with the \$312 billion military budget, the world's biggest and larger than the arms budgets of the next nineteen countries combined, underline that the main enemy of the world's peoples truly is American imperialism. As U.S. imperialism sends troops to all corners of the globe, including Colombia, Yemen, Georgia and the Philippines, the Pentagon, the world's only veteran in the art of nuclear holocaust, declares its readiness to unleash nuclear tactical weapons against any regime that stands in its way. Meanwhile, the U.S. rulers have given the green light to the Zionist terrorist state, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, in its escalating genocidal war against the Palestinian people. We say: **Defend the Palestinians! Zionist Troops, Settlers Out of the Occupied Territories!**

American imperialism's current military adventures are not simply the result of a particularly hawkish White House foreign policy. War is endemic to imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism in which world powers wage ruthless warfare over markets in order to improve their relative competitive positions. ROTC is the direct appendage of the bloody military machine that defends the interests of the American ruling class. Imperialism is *not* a policy, but a system. It cannot be

pressured to act more benevolently, but must be exploded from within through workers revolution.

However, many of the current peace coalitions led by so-called socialist organizations such as the Workers World Party and the International Socialist Organization operate under an entirely different understanding—the ultimate reformability of the capitalist state. The ANSWER coalition is organizing an April 20 march against "war, racism, [and] poverty." While ANSWER professes to fight to end war and racism, its demand that the capitalists "Stop Funding the Pentagon Budget" and instead provide "Money for Jobs, Schools, Housing," and other nice things pushes the illusion that the imperialist rulers can be pressured into abandoning their class interests in order to act on behalf of working and oppressed people. Their reformism stands as an obstacle in the path of the only effective antiwar strategy—militant class struggle organized to smash the entire system of capitalist exploitation. This was the perspective underlying the February 9 labor-centered demonstration against the capitalists' domestic war targeting immigrants, blacks and labor, a demonstration organized in part by the SYC. Initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Labor Black League for Social Defense, this rally mobilized multiracial union power, like the powerful dockworkers of ILWU Local 10, independently of the capitalist Democrats and Republicans, and went up against the rulers' mythology of "national unity"—the lie that working people have the same interests as their capitalist exploiters.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism has increasingly turned its attention to the remaining deformed workers states, the only places on earth where imperialists cannot roam freely due to the expropriation of capitalism. Not coincidentally, U.S. imperialism has these same countries at the very top of its hit list; China and North Korea are among the seven countries listed as potential nuclear targets and the United States for years has been building its military presence in the Far East. We say: **For the Unconditional Military Defense of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba Against Imperialist Attack and Internal Counterrevolution!**

The present period is not solely one of unrestrained imperialist war and militarism. Across the world, from Argentina to Italy to South Korea, working class discontent has arisen against capitalist exploitation. Here in the heartland of world imperialism, there is a burning need for a revolutionary workers party capable of leading the working class and radical youth in the fight for socialist revolution to smash capitalism for good. We in the SYC fight to build such a party. Come join a united front demonstration to protest the presence of the U.S. military on campus! Come demand: **ROTC Off Campus! U.S. Imperialism: Hands Off Iraq and the World!** ■

Spartacist League/TLC Forums

**All Israeli Troops, Settlers Out of the Occupied Territories!
No U.S./UN/EU Intervention in the Near East!
U.S. Hands Off Iraq!
For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!**

Defend the Palestinian People!

Wednesday, May 8, 7 p.m.

University of Illinois at Chicago
750 S. Halsted, Circle Center (CCC)
Room 501-2
For more information: (312) 563-0441

CHICAGO

Saturday, May 11, 7:30 p.m.

Trinity-St. Paul's Centre
427 Bloor Street West
(just west of Spadina subway)
For more information: (416) 593-4138

TORONTO

A Spartacist Pamphlet

Imperialism, the "Global Economy" and Labor Reformism

Imperialist Rivalries Heat Up... 3
The "Global Economy" and Labor Reformism... 13

\$2 (32 pages)

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Company
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

about the “anti-Semitism of the Maghrebians” recently, because that’s a pretext for the repression in the ghettos. But it’s not the Maghrebians who voted for Le Pen, who declared that the Holocaust of the Jews was just a “detail” and who still identifies himself with the Vichy regime.

Le Pen and the fascists don’t represent “bad ideas” that one can debate. Fascism is a program to wipe out the organized workers movement, send women back to the home and massacre “immigrants,” Jews, minorities and homosexuals. The fascists are the extreme expression of the interests of the bourgeoisie and are their reserve army against the proletariat. That’s why the fight against fascism has to be linked to the struggle against the system of capitalist exploitation. Le Pen isn’t on the verge of taking power in this country, but his election score will be translated into an augmentation of racist crimes in the streets. *Smash the fascists before they smash us! For worker/immigrant self-defense groups based on the factories!*

In 1995 the National Front launched its electoral campaign by assassinating Ibrahim Ali and “celebrated” its showing by killing Brahim Bouraam on May Day. Le Pen’s call for an FN mobilization on May Day [this year], the international day of the working class, is a sinister provocation. What’s necessary is mass mobilizations to repulse this danger. As Trotsky wrote (“Germany, the Key to the International Situation,” 26 November 1931):

“On the scales of electoral statistics, a thousand fascist votes weigh as much as a thousand communist votes. But on the



scales of the revolutionary struggle, a thousand workers in one big factory represent a force a hundred times greater.”

But instead of mobilizing the working class to sweep the fascists off the streets on May Day, the fake left uses the anger of the youth and of all the opponents of the fascists to refurbish not only the social democrats but even Chirac! The “CGT police union” just called for “all republican policemen to participate in all demonstrations organized by the forces of progress.” In fact, the cop “unions” would be the organic support for a fascist regime. We say: *Cops out of the unions!*

Divestment...

(continued from page 4)

who supply one of the most powerful armies in the world,” and claims that divestment will “shame” (!) capitalist behemoths like arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

At Berkeley, SJP spokesman (and prominent ISO supporter) Snehal Shingavi told the *Christian Science Monitor* (9 April): “The people who run our universities are not just tacitly supporting but are actually benefiting from the exploitation of Palestinians.” Where would Shingavi & Co. have the university invest its endowment? Is it more “moral” for campuses to invest in companies that run sweatshops in Indonesia—or, for that matter, that exploit workers in the U.S.? What about the weapons manufacturers that supply the biggest terrorist government in the world—U.S. imperialism?

The boards of trustees and campus administrations to whom the divestment protesters appeal exist precisely to ensure that the universities serve the interests of the capitalist class—and that includes U.S. imperialism’s current “war on terrorism.” This should be evident to members of the SJP, whose attempt to act as the Board of Regents’ stockbroker with a conscience was met by mass arrests and the suspension of their organization. Many administrations have been handing over the files of Near Eastern students to the FBI.

The UC Regents have far more direct connections to U.S. imperialist oppression than their stock portfolio; e.g., they preside over the country’s pre-eminent nuclear weapons research program, including the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore facilities. They also aid in the direct recruitment of students into the imperialist military through the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC).

At the University of Illinois, spokesmen for the divestment campaign argue that “as Israel becomes more internationally isolated, Israel will have to come to the negotiating table.” What this is really about is beseeching the American imperialist state, the executive committee of the American capitalist class as a whole, to reorder its foreign policy to “isolate” Israel. U.S. economic and military aid to Israel has been a cornerstone of American policy in the Near East for decades,

because Washington sees in the Zionist state a stable and reliable ally. To further its interests in the region, the U.S. has also given billions in aid to Egypt and other Arab client states.

Israel has received some **\$80 billion** from the U.S. government since 1974. By contrast, the sum total of direct investment by U.S. companies in Israel by 1998 amounted to just under \$3.1 billion—about .3 percent of total U.S. foreign investment. Even now over one-quarter of the Israeli assets held by foreigners consists of government bonds, which the world Zionist movement buys for *political* reasons. At the same time, Israel is not a mere pawn of U.S. imperialism but a regional power with its own interests and the military wherewithal—including hundreds of nuclear weapons—to pursue them.

Divestment *is* occurring in Israel, but the rate of profit (or more precisely, the lack thereof) has a lot more to do with it than opposition to Zionist brutality in the West Bank. The economic disruptions and insecurity caused by the *Intifada* have sent the Israeli economy into a tailspin. Of the country’s chief income earners, tourism has plummeted by \$5 billion and high-tech exports by double that amount. *Business Week* (29 April) estimates that in the first quarter of this year alone, direct capital outflow or transfers to foreign currency accounts totaled \$500 million! Even if such continuing “divestment” led decisive sections of the Israeli bourgeoisie to push for a policy different than the one being implemented by the government of mass murderer Ariel Sharon, it would be no less oppressive to the Palestinian people. The “alternative” currently being mooted is “unilateral separation,” i.e., fencing off parts of the West Bank the way Gaza has already been fenced off and leaving the Palestinians in isolated ghettos with few means of economic subsistence.

The SJP and the ISO point to the campus divestment campaign against apartheid in South Africa in the U.S. and Europe in the mid to late 1980s as a great success and a model to be emulated with regard to Israel. Israel is vastly different from South Africa. But in any case, it was not divestment that led to the replacement of the white-supremacist regime by the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) of Nelson Mandela. It was the mass social struggles of the black

and other nonwhite toilers within South Africa—centrally the working class—that brought an end to direct white-supremacist rule. The massive outburst of black labor struggle won significant wage gains, decreasing the profitability of investment in South Africa. In response, the imperialists and a section of the apartheid ruling class decided to go for a “power-sharing” deal with the ANC. By and large, divestment took the form of overseas corporations signing over their interests to local subsidiaries, which often treated their workers even more brutally. Indeed, in 1989 there were two strikes by black workers against such divestment schemes.

Moreover, the end of legalized apartheid has not brought an end to the oppression and exploitation of the black workers by the white South African capitalist class. Rather the ANC leaders, Mandela and his successor Thabo Mbeki, have since served as the black front men for the South African ruling class and its senior partners in Wall Street and the City of London. In an article titled “Black Workers Strike Against ‘Divestment’ Union-Busting” (WV No. 486, 29 September 1989), we wrote: “The only kind of ‘divestment’ that will benefit the exploited and oppressed will be proletarian revolution, and the expropriation of these riches by a black-centered workers government as part of a socialist federation of southern Africa.” That remains no less true today.

Similarly, the only road to social and national liberation for the oppressed Pal-

estine? With “union rights and the right to strike for the police” (*Rouge*, 13 December 2001)? Their capitulation to bourgeois triumphalism and the ideological anti-communist campaign was expressed in the campaign of Besancenot, who prated about “democracy” and denounced the organizer of the socialist revolution of October 1917, Leon Trotsky, by saying about him (*Le Monde*, 11 April): “It’s not certain he would have been much better than Stalin.” Stalin was the gravedigger of the Russian Revolution!

The disaster of parliamentarism could also benefit the anarchists. Quite a few youth with good impulses reject parliamentary cretinism. But more than ever in the climate of the “death of communism” after the capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR, they are hostile to the very idea that struggles need leadership, and they reject the leading revolutionary role of the working class. As Trotsky said, in reactionary periods there are “monstrous ideological relapses” and “senile thought seems to have become infantile.” The numerous spontaneous demonstrations are not sufficient to wipe out the gangrene of racism and fascism, and the capitalists’ and social-democrats’ attacks on the working class. It’s necessary to have the perspective of a workers revolution to sweep away the whole capitalist system. The working class, which produces the wealth of society, draws its power from its role in production; it must lead the struggles of all the oppressed against this rotten capitalist system. But for that the working class needs a new leadership, which we are determined to build. ■

estinian masses lies through common class struggle by the Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers against both the Israeli and Arab ruling classes, which are likewise oppressors of the Palestinian people. The Zionist garrison state must be shattered from within, through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution. Only within a socialist federation of the Near East can the conflicting national rights of the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples be equitably realized.

Some of the more thoughtful advocates of divestment acknowledge that the divestment campaign will not result in change, but argue that it serves as a small step forward by increasing awareness. But awareness of what—that U.S. imperialism, the deadliest enemy of the world’s peoples, can be reformed through pressure politics? The opportunist ISO makes this explicit: “The Democrats won’t promote policies in our interests—until we build a movement that forces politicians of whatever political stripe to do what we want” (*Socialist Worker*, 29 March). The lie that U.S. imperialism is reformable and accountable to the American population is a roadblock to social struggle mobilized consciously *against* the entire system of class exploitation and imperialist oppression that is American capitalism. We in the Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Clubs recognize that there can only be an end to imperialist war and oppression through mobilizing the working class internationally in proletarian socialist revolution that sweeps away capitalist class society as a whole. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

- ☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail ☐ New ☐ Renewal
- ☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)
- ☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

780
Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Welfare...
(continued from page 12)

white workers' anger away from capitalist exploitation and toward black people and immigrants.

Black women face triple oppression in racist, sexist America—as black people, as workers and as women. Although there have always been more whites on welfare than blacks, the ruling class lyingly demonizes black women as the problem to be solved by “welfare reform.” Young black men are criminalized and targeted by the cops, who just shoot them down in the streets or throw them into prison. The bourgeoisie pointed to the lower unemployment figures of the late '90s as proof that only the “undeserving poor” could be out of work in such a booming economy. In fact, one of the factors that contributed to the lowering of unemployment statistics was the high rate of incarceration of young black and other minority men, mainly imprisoned because of the racist “war on drugs.” This so-called “war” is a pretense to increase the violent police occupation of the desperately poor ghettos and barrios. By 1995, over 33 percent of black men between the ages of 20 and 29 years were in prison or on probation.

In order for the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation, they require regimentation and control of the workforce. They need a compliant population to throw onto the trash heap depending on the ups and downs of the boom-bust capitalist business cycle. Creating a reserve army of labor is a necessary component of capitalism. Unemployment figures also don't tell the story of the huge increase in low-paying, irregular, two-tiered, part-time and temporary jobs that have replaced regular full-time jobs that used to have benefits and pensions. Remember the immensely popular 1997 UPS strike which put young workers—black, white, Latino and Asian—together on the picket lines across the country, fighting for full-time employment.

The War Against Poor Women

AFDC funding is a tiny fraction of the U.S. social welfare budget today compared to Social Security or Medicare. This makes clear that the campaign for its elimination is largely ideological. The latest attack on poor women, especially minorities, continues the “family values” bourgeois morality campaign that has characterized reactionary “welfare reform” for decades. This is no accident, since the family is a cornerstone of women's oppression under capitalism.

Clinton's 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act begins with the following sentence: “Marriage is the foundation of a successful society.” The current legislation in Congress to renew the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program that replaced AFDC promotes “illegitimacy reduction and family formation.” This year, Bush is proposing \$300 million for programs promoting marriage. West Virginia is already penalizing unmarried



Clinton signing 1996 bill to “end welfare as we know it.”

mothers by reducing their monthly welfare checks by \$100. Battered women who flee their husbands for fear of their lives are encouraged to try marriage counseling from Christian groups like “Marriage Savers.”

New laws codify mandatory maternal cooperation in paternity suits. So even if the biological father was abusive or penileless, or if the mother simply wants him out of her life, she still is coerced into pursuing him. In many states, additional assistance is denied to children born after a woman starts receiving welfare. This particularly vindictive regulation retreads the old vicious, racist stereotype of black women who supposedly need an incentive to “control their sexuality” or, conversely, are so calculating that they plan to have additional children so they can get the extra big \$32 a month. And no benefits come without strings. In a policy disguised as extending medical coverage to pregnant women, the Bush administration has proposed a redefinition of fetuses as “unborn children,” part of their ongoing anti-woman crusade to overthrow the legal right to abortion.

Going along with the elimination of AFDC is an all-out attack on historic state-financed social services, for example, turning over Medicaid and Medicare to private insurance vultures. Another proposal is to raise Medicare eligibility to age 67, which would mean, according to the latest statistics, that most black men would be dead before they qualified. There's back and forth among the buzzards in Congress regarding the best time to auction off Social Security on Wall Street, but it's a tough sell. It's difficult to convince people of the magical long-term viability of the capitalist marketplace while the stock market is going down the tubes and you are reading every day how the insatiably greedy Enron executives lied and fleeced their employees and shareholders.

Two Spartacist Pamphlet covers are shown. The left cover is No. 14, titled 'Black History and the Class Struggle', featuring a photo of a protest and the headline 'Capitalist Rulers Wage War on Blacks, Immigrants'. The right cover is No. 16, titled 'Black History and the Class Struggle', featuring a photo of a crowd and the headline 'South African Workers Battle ANC Neo-Apartheid Rule'. Both covers include a table of contents and a price of \$1. Below the covers, text reads: 'No. 14 \$1 (48 pages)', 'No. 16 \$1 (48 pages)', 'Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116'.

The current situation recalls the first forms of “workfare” in the epoch of the rise of capitalism. The English Poor Laws of 1834 included the first test of what makes up the “truly deserving poor.” If you were willing to assign yourself and your family to a workhouse and be compelled to perform mindless, repetitive labor such as running treadmills, crushing bones for fertilizer or breaking stones, then the work ethic of the poor could be preserved. Subjecting the poor to degradation as a condition of receiving assistance was meant as a club for others to labor for the meanest wages. The same assumptions underlie “workfare” today. But the reality today is even more brutal, in that if you exceed your lifetime limit, you won't even get bench space at the workhouse. You will receive nothing. Period.

A Revolutionary Perspective

The social service programs that have existed in the U.S. have never been bestowed from above by a benevolent state but have always been grudgingly enacted as the result of mass social struggle. Reformists peddle the tattered civics lesson that the capitalist state is a neutral arbiter, that the ruling class can be pressured to shift its priorities. Bourgeois feminists and liberal academics write reams of analysis on poverty and public welfare which invariably end up with the feeble plea for a “socially conscious public policy.”

A comrade and I went to an event at the International Action Center a few months ago where Workers World Party leader Larry Holmes called on the capitalist government to declare a “morator-

ium on welfare reform, layoffs, evictions, utility cutoffs, etc.” Who will call such a moratorium? And since it's just a “moratorium,” until when and why? He also raised the following proposal: taxing stockbroker transactions and turning the money over to the poor! We counterposed to these reformist soap bubbles the urgent need to fight for a revolutionary workers party independent from the capitalists that will fight for jobs for all and for socialist revolution to expropriate the bourgeoisie.

The social-democratic International Socialist Organization (ISO) has an article in *Socialist Worker* (1 February) titled “Why Won't the Democrats Fight?” After saying some standard things about how the Democrats defend capitalism, they conclude by saying: “Working people can't wait for the Democrats to wake up. We must organize to demand health care, the right to join unions and money for education. That's the only way the working-class majority will make its voice heard.” So if we just protest loud enough we would wake up the Democrats who are taking too long and we could hurry them along to fight!

The Gains of Radical Reconstruction

First let me talk about Radical Reconstruction, a period of limited but real gains for black people and poor whites. Social welfare programs came directly



Election rally of freed black slaves during Reconstruction, most democratic period in U.S. history.

out of the revolutionary struggle of the American Civil War. The Civil War was the second American Revolution—a social revolution in the South which smashed chattel slavery, i.e., private property in human flesh. Established in 1865, the Freedman's Bureau was the first federal welfare agency in American history. The Bureau had to feed, house and clothe thousands of newly freed slaves and ensure that they were not re-enslaved by the landowners.

The expropriation of the slaveowners laid the basis for a broad range of progressive social measures. Across the South, relief was extended to poor laborers. The Republican Reconstruction state governments built hospitals and asylums for orphans and the mentally ill. Laws were passed protecting minors from parental abuse and holding white fathers responsible for support of their mulatto children. South Carolina funded medical care for the poor and Alabama provided free legal counsel for indigent defendants. In South Carolina, a law was passed declaring that the property of a married woman could not be sold to pay her husband's debts. For the first time, the state had divorce laws.

One of the greatest gains of Radical Reconstruction was the establishment of the free compulsory public school sys-

WORKERS VANGUARD

tem for blacks and whites, against the landowners' opposition. The South had virtually no schools, since the plantation economy had no need for educating poor whites; and, in regard to slaves, it was a crime to teach reading. Under the rule of the Union Army, virtually every Southern state legislature—which included black members, many of whom served in the Union Army—passed laws to build and fund schools. The education system in reality only touched a fraction of the population, but the principle of public education was made part of the new Reconstruction constitutions of every Southern state. It is an indictment of this decaying capitalist system that this historic achievement of free public education is being undermined through school vouchers and privatization schemes, and that school busing to achieve racial integration has been long abandoned.

The Compromise of 1877 withdrew the troops from the South and marked the betrayal by the Northern capitalists of the struggle for black freedom. This was a political counterrevolution in which black people were left defenseless against the ex-slaveholders and Ku Klux Klan terror and lynchings. Over the following decades, Jim Crow laws buried the possibilities of Radical Reconstruction. Blacks were disenfranchised as virtual serfs, toiling as sharecroppers and rural laborers under the boot of white landowners. The “separate but equal” *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896, which legitimized segregation in railroad cars, symbolized the end of racial integration, including in schooling.

The 19th century “cult of domesticity,” which extolled the virtues of women in the home, did not extend to black women who labored in the fields and homes of whites. Black women as well as men were cut off relief during cotton-picking season and always faced more restrictions to get on relief. The black unemployed were awarded less money than whites, with the argument that black people needed less to live on. The real reason was to give them so little that they would be driven back into back-breaking, low-paying farm work. In the Jim Crow South, black women’s clubs organized the construction of the only clinics, hospitals and nurses’ training programs for black people.

For decades, minimal public funds were expended on education and welfare for black people. By the beginning of the 20th century, “Progressive Era” reforms brought some public health and relief programs, but private philanthropy and mutual benefit societies were often the only recourse for the black population. The bourgeoisie always resists spending money on a population that it considers surplus. On the other hand, in 1889 steel magnate Andrew Carnegie gave a class-conscious explanation of the importance of dispensing social welfare: “The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship.” This is the same Carnegie who dispatched Pinkerton agents to shoot and kill seven steel workers in the fiercely fought 1892 Homestead strike. John Reed, one of the founders of the American Communist Party and author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, a great eyewitness report of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, referred to turn-of-the-century philanthropies as “deadening and life-sapping” agencies whose object “is to get efficient results—and that means, in practice, to just keep alive vast numbers of servile, broken-spirited people.”

The Class Struggle and the 1930s New Deal

The next period I want to talk about is the 1930s. Certainly *no* period has been more mythologized as an era of benevolent “humane” capitalism as the 1930s and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal.” This was a period of massive social struggle in reaction to the Great Depression as well as a broad radicalization in response to the rise of fascism in Germany.



Free Press

Left: Unemployed demonstrate in New York City, 1932. Below: Workers battle cops and strikebreakers during Trotskyist-led 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike.



Minnesota Historical Society

Particularly with the onset of World War I, thousands of black sharecroppers were recruited to work in industry in Northern cities. But the racist, anti-immigrant AFL craft union leaders kept a job-trusting hold over the better jobs. After the 1929 stock market crash, some 13 to 15 million workers lost their jobs. By 1933, unemployment among black people was double the national average, and two million were on relief programs.

Central to the class battles that ensued was the struggle for mass industrial unions—those including all the workers of a particular industry—that culminated in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Unions. The struggles to forge the CIO unions were often led by Communists and socialists. Black workers became part of powerful, integrated mass organizations. You could not organize unions without organizing blacks and whites together. When racist white workers protested bringing blacks into production jobs, unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW) came in and forced them to accept their black brothers and sisters. These unions were forged through militant class struggle—such as sit-down strikes and mass pickets in auto, rubber, steel, coal, the docks and other strategic sectors of the economy—that challenged American capitalism.

In 1934, major class battles like the San Francisco General Strike and the Toledo Auto-Lite strike helped to lay the basis for the later formation of the CIO. The high point of working-class political consciousness was the 1934 Minneapolis General Strike led by the Trotskyist Communist League of America. It is significant that in the midst of a bitter struggle for union recognition, the revolutionary Trotskyist leadership of that citywide strike also administered social services that had been cut off by the vindictive bosses. They solicited food from sympathetic grocers and farmers for needy striking families and organized an emergency hospital with transportation. They fought for public relief for union members, as well as for the unemployed, and represented them against their landlords. The working class demonstrated that it could run things on its own.

In this climate of rising working-class discontent and militant struggle, social legislation was hastily put forward to derail the growing class consciousness of

the masses. Roosevelt launched a whole series of programs. Many were meant to be temporary, although many lasted until the mobilization for World War II revived the economy. Others, like Social Security and unemployment compensation, continue to exist today.

The 1935 Social Security Act was an unprecedented national social insurance program that originally had sections to benefit the aged, unemployed and single mothers. Nevertheless, the public assistance programs for poor women were uniquely punitive and inadequately funded as compared to the old-age and unemployment insurance mandated by the same act. Pensions and unemployment benefits were labeled “insurance,” conveying the notion that they were a guaranteed entitlement. Poor mothers got “aid” that was discretionary and stigmatized—not an automatic, socially acceptable form of support but a payment for which the recipient must prove “worthy.”

A 1939 amendment created a special category of guaranteed insurance for so-called “blameless” widows—those whose poverty was due to their husbands’ deaths and not something that supposedly they could control. Aid to white women—the majority of this category—was not stigmatized. The vast majority of impoverished black women were left in the

“guilty” category. As more black women entered the welfare rolls, the whole idea of relief for mothers changed from assistance to enable them to stay at home with their children to a way to police and humiliate black women who had supposedly chosen poverty.

Social Security was universal in name only. Domestic workers and agricultural workers, both disproportionately black, were excluded from the Social Security Act. Agricultural workers were left out explicitly because Roosevelt knew he would never get Southern support if any benefits ended up in the hands of black sharecroppers. Only just over half of all employed workers were eligible. About *two-thirds* of the labor force was excluded from unemployment compensation.

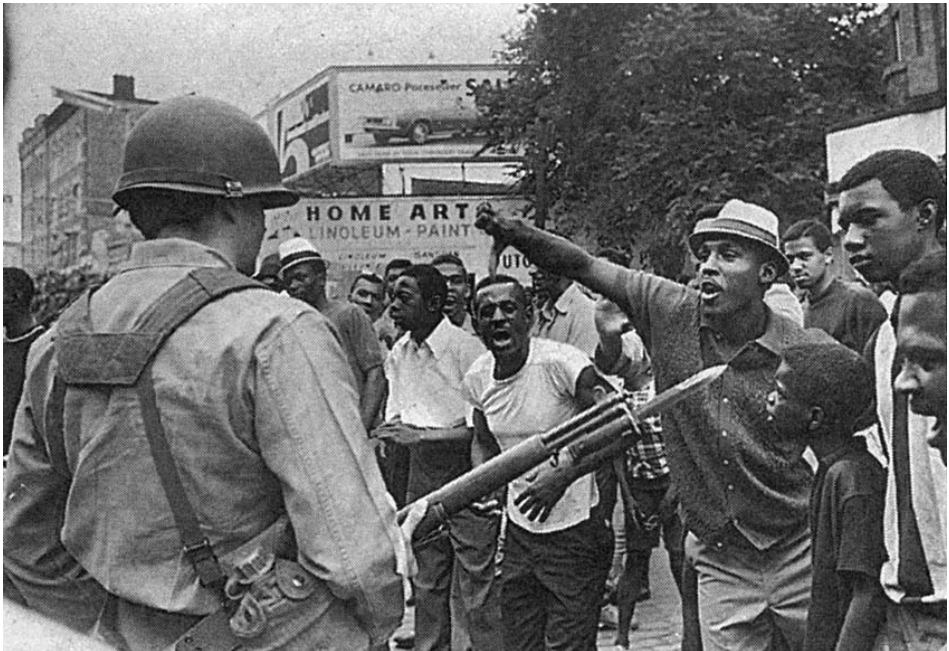
In the late ’30s, with the support of the reformist Communist Party (CP), Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition tied organized labor not only to its Northern liberal class enemies but also to the Southern Dixiecrats, to whom Roosevelt gave free rein to wage racist terror against black people and labor. That the majority of the black population looks to this day to the Democratic Party, the historic party of slavery, as the “lesser evil” is a legacy of the treachery of the CP of the 1930s.

The Civil Rights Movement and the “War on Poverty”

Attitudes toward social welfare during the post-World War II period were shaped by the bourgeois ideology of the “American Century”: capitalist prosperity and growth would conquer all remaining poverty, and any expansion of social programs provided by the state was un-American and subversive. But beginning with the 1955 Montgomery bus boycotts, the society was shaken by the fight for black equality and democratic rights, a struggle which for over a decade dominated American political life. The civil rights movement was an eruption of black struggle against a century of Jim Crow. Protests ranged from the lunch counter sit-ins to “freedom rides,” wildcat strikes, marches, rallies and massive ghetto uprisings. The civil rights movement shattered the anti-Communist atmosphere of the ’50s, which we should keep in mind today as we face increasing repression.

The social legislation known as the “War on Poverty” and “Great Society” was passed because the ruling class saw the urban centers go up in flames, as black youth saw that they had no future in capitalist America. These youth saw the legalistic pacifist strategy of the civil rights leadership hit a stone wall when it came up against the deeply rooted poverty and racist repression of the Northern ghettos. In an attempt to defuse social struggle and quell the ghetto explosions spreading across the country, the Democratic Party administration of Lyndon B. Johnson began putting token amounts of money into the cities, where 95 percent of Northern black people lived. Between 1964 and 1972, the federal government

continued on page 10



NY Times

Newark ghetto upheaval, 1967. “War on Poverty” programs sought to quell inner-city explosions.

Welfare...

(continued from page 9)

set up a myriad of agencies and social programs, among them Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, Head Start school programs, job training and legal aid. At the same time, mass protests erupted against the long, bloody and losing imperialist war waged by U.S. imperialism against the Vietnamese people.

Johnson’s “War on Poverty” programs were effective in co-opting a new generation of black radicals into the lower levels of government bureaucracy. Some became part of the Democratic Party, like Marion Barry of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, who became mayor of Washington, D.C. and served his masters by administering cutbacks and layoffs. Installed to cool off the ghettos, the black Democratic mayors of the major urban centers were key to the dismantling of social welfare programs throughout the ’80s and ’90s. They are the black front men for murderous capitalist rule.

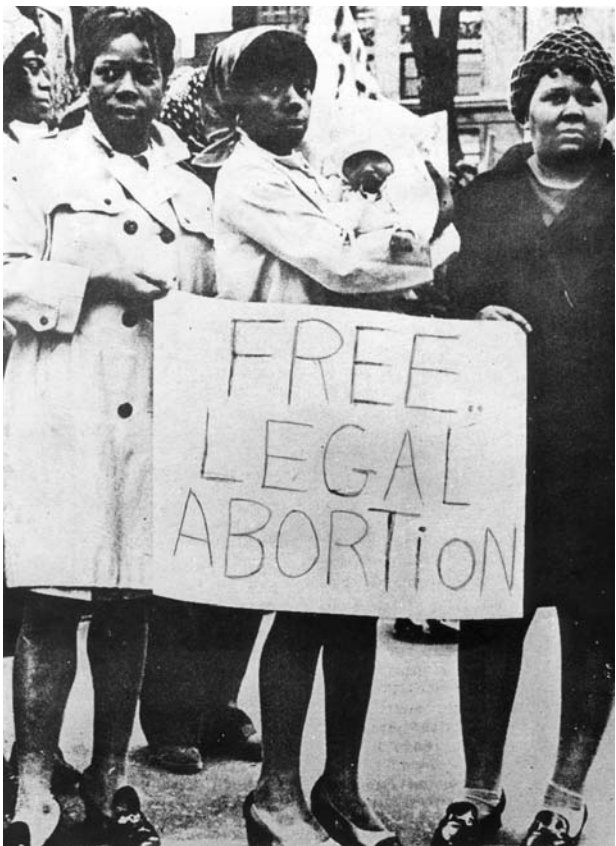
Many militants that couldn’t be co-opted into the capitalist state, especially many of the Black Panthers, were hounded by the FBI or killed outright by the police. The civil rights movement, tied to the Democratic Party and to capitalism, did not and could not alleviate black oppression in any fundamental way. Black oppression is the bedrock of American capitalism. This decaying system cannot meet the promise of black freedom. Poverty, unemployment, police brutality—none of this can be ended via a law or another jobs program.

Some former black activists write nostalgically about the ’60s protests. Rhonda Y. Williams writes in *Black Scholar* (Fall/Winter 2001) about impoverished East Baltimore. Welfare recipients battled for increased grants for rent, food and clothing and organized rent strikes. She praises “Black Power” politics and “Women Empowerment” on a “familial and community-wide level.” But the urban ghettos like East Baltimore in every major city remained hellholes for black people. These courageous but desperate struggles could not have any lasting impact without being linked to the social power of the organized working class.

In the North, there were large, integrated unions such as the UAW that could have wielded their power to ally with and lead the oppressed against the common capitalist enemy. By the late ’60s there were a quarter of a million black auto workers in Detroit. The struggle for racial equality meant directly confronting the capitalist class. The main wing of the AFL-CIO leadership were simply stone racists like George Meany. On the other hand, UAW president Walter Reuther linked arms with the preachers and Democratic Party politicians in pacifist civil rights marches in order to *prevent* the mobilization of labor/black union power, which would have meant going up against the Democratic Party and would have swept away Reuther and the rest of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy.

Welfare started to come seriously under attack in the 1970s with the slowing of economic expansion, the de-industrialization of America and the increasing exploitation of foreign labor. Both real wages and welfare benefits have been declining since the ’70s. Capitalist politicians worked overtime to convince white workers that any gains by black people were at their expense. To lay the basis ideologically for axing welfare and social programs in general, civil rights gains, like the limited affirmative action programs, were labeled “reverse discrimination.” Abortion rights for women and anti-discrimination laws for gays were called threats to “family values.”

In the mid ’70s, those who used to be vilified as “welfare cheats” and “chiselers” were now called “welfare queens.” Black women who sought rights were described as out of control, grasping more than they deserve—the opposite of the self-sacrificing house slaves they



Tripe Jeopardy

Bipartisan “family values” attacks on right to abortion hit poor women hardest. For free abortion on demand!

were supposed to be. The 1977 passage of the Hyde Amendment under Democrat Jimmy Carter, which denied Medicaid funds for abortions, was a watershed that opened up a stampeding reversal of social gains that had been won since the ’30s.

Bourgeois social scientists came up with new jargon for old theories blaming the poor for their poverty, inventing a “culture of poverty” with defective values and deviant behavior. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then an official in the Department of Labor, ranted in his 1965 book *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* about the instability of “black female-headed households” and their “tangle of pathology.” Moynihan was certainly not the first of his school, but he became the grandfather of a new wave of bourgeois apologists who used such rhetoric as that the U.S. had conquered material poverty but not “behavioral poverty.” Today capitalist politicians say that “we are reaping the grim harvest of the ’60s ‘Great Society’ programs,” that social services expanded at that time are the cause of inner-city poverty, the “breakdown of the family structure,” the “cycle of dependency.” The victims are blamed for their own oppression.

In the 1980s, Jesse Jackson performed a valuable service for the racist oppressors by joining the bourgeois moralistic campaign decrying “babies having babies” and chanting “hope not dope.” Cornel West picks up Jackson’s theme, writing about “nihilistic” black youth and “spiritual impoverishment.” He calls for a revival of the church that comforted blacks through slavery! Religion is an escape, and it is used by the ruling class to pacify the oppressed and distract them from fighting now for what they need.

In 1994, Charles Murray, a Reaganite advocate of welfare reform, rendered the racist pseudo-science justifying the elimination of welfare most clearly in his book *The Bell Curve*, which claimed that black people are genetically inferior (see “The ‘Bell Curve’ and Genocide U.S.A.,” *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12). Murray put forward that since black people are genetically inferior, social programs are pointless. This racist garbage is not new. It is in the American tradition of the vulgar Social Darwinism of the late 19th century, which preached “the survival of the fittest” and rationalized racist Jim Crow legislation.

For Workers Revolution!

We oppose the destruction of welfare and other social programs benefiting the working class and the poor. But our program is not the defense of the miserable status quo. Welfare at best relegates mothers and unskilled laborers to poverty and exclusion from social production. We fight for jobs for all, for union jobs at union wages, for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and full cost-of-living escalators, for union-run minority job recruit-

ment and training, for organizing the unorganized, for free 24-hour childcare, and for free abortion on demand as part of free, quality health care for all! There’s plenty of work to be done—For a massive public works program! The capitalists say they can’t do it? They won’t do it. It’s not in their class interests. A planned economy under a workers government can and will.

The greatest obstacle to victorious class struggle is the treacherous labor bureaucracy that continues to shackle the powerful, integrated working class to its class enemies. These labor fakers obediently march in lockstep with the bosses and crow for “national unity” as jobs are

trip to the new Soviet workers state, where he attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. He observed the great leap that the working masses had taken in seizing state power, and he included a story that showed the international solidarity inspired by the communist revolution. Tsarist Russia had been a prison house of peoples, and the revolution opened up the possibility for full national equality as well as equality for women. He wrote:

“The women workers of the great bank in Moscow insisted on hearing about the working conditions of the colored women of America and after a brief outline I was asked the most exacting questions concerning the positions that were most available to colored women, their wages and general relationship with the white women workers. The details I could not give; but when I got through, the Russian women passed a resolution sending greetings to the colored women workers of America, exhorting them to organize their forces and send a woman representative to Russia. I received a similar message from the Propaganda Department of the Petrograd Soviet which is managed by Nicoleva, a very energetic woman.”

The Russian Revolution opened the road to women’s emancipation for the first time in history. The Bolshevik Party set as one of its primary tasks to remove all obstacles to raising women’s material conditions—they immediately took steps to open private hospitals to all, provide childcare, public laundries, kitchens and literacy programs, to break the hold of the church over marriage and divorce, to legalize abortion and abolish the concept of illegitimacy. In an isolated, backward, predominantly rural country, their efforts could only hint at the possibilities for women had socialist revolution spread to the advanced capitalist countries.

The U.S. ruling class has been hailing the supposed victory of the capitalist market ever since the 1991-92 counter-revolution in the Soviet Union. The



WV Photo

Spartacist contingent at March 1994 Bay Area women’s demonstration honoring Dr. David Gunn, murdered by anti-abortion fanatics.

slashed. Despite the savagery of the bipartisan war on the black poor, immigrants and the rest of the working class, and despite the increasing marginalization of the ghetto masses, black workers are a strategic part of the labor movement and will be a key component in a revolutionary workers party.

We seek to build a Leninist vanguard party that fights for proletarian revolution. To win, this party must be a tribune of the people, championing the struggles of all the oppressed, including the fight for the liberation of women. For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! Only a socialist planned economy under a workers government can lay the material basis for the emancipation of women and the integration of black people into American society with full economic, social and political equality. We look to a communist society where women will be freed from the isolation, drudgery and oppression of the bourgeois family. Our program is the Bolshevik program of the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

Claude McKay, black American poet and early supporter of the Russian Revolution, wrote a report in 1922 after his

bloody imperialists, nuclear madmen, feel free to bomb and starve the people of Iraq, carry out mass murder and terror in Afghanistan and threaten large parts of the rest of the world. War, economic crises and poverty are inherent in rotting, decaying capitalism.

We are not powerless in the face of the capitalists’ class war. On February 9 in Oakland, California, we organized a powerful united-front, labor-centered mobilization—initiated by the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee—to defend our immigrant brothers and sisters targeted by the U.S. rulers’ “war on terrorism.” At the core of this demonstration were longshoremen from the heavily black and immigrant International Longshore and Warehouse Union, who joined with transit and utility workers and other unionists as well as immigrant rights activists and youth. This exemplary action shows the way forward. Under revolutionary leadership, the working class as a whole can be made conscious of its potential social power when it is mobilized in its own defense and in championing the rights of the oppressed. Join us! ■

Drop All the Charges!

Mass Arrests of South African Protesters

We print below a 15 April leaflet issued by our comrades of Spartacist South Africa demanding freedom for some 40 demonstrators arrested and held without charges in Johannesburg. The arrests took place during an April 6 protest denouncing the government's cutoff of electricity services in the townships, which has left thousands of households without this basic necessity. Statements in support of the detained protesters have come in from Mauritius and as far away as South Korea and England. Nearly 800 people cheered on the detainees as they were finally released from prison on April 16. They are scheduled to appear in court on May 10.

The government's electricity cutoffs are part of a whole range of attacks against South Africa's militant working class and poor, including widespread privatizations. The government seeks to recoup revenue lost in the 1980s and early '90s, when the African National Congress (ANC) called on township residents to boycott payments of electricity and other services as part of the struggle against the racist apartheid regime. When the ANC took power in 1994, it promised to cancel these "debts." But as *Spartacist South Africa* No. 2 (Summer 2002) noted: "In the 'new' South Africa, yesterday's heroes of the oppressed during township anti-apartheid revolts are today's rent collectors for the white bourgeoisie, signing letters of termination of electricity and other services as administrators in the newfound South African 'nonracial' capitalism."

Nearly a decade after the end of naked apartheid rule, the black masses still suffer mass impoverishment. South Africa is ruled by a neo-apartheid regime—a Tripartite Alliance led by the ANC and including the thoroughly reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the COSATU union federation—which lords it over the South African masses on behalf of the white bourgeoisie. Many of those who cheered the release of the detainees were burning their ANC membership cards. But even as they face repression at the hands of the ANC-led nationalist popular front, many of the groups involved in the protests against government austerity, such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and Keep Left!, which is associated with the British Socialist Workers Party, promote the illusion that the ANC can be pressured to support the interests of the working people and oppressed. During the 1994 and '99 national elections, Keep Left! and its predecessor (the International Socialists of South Africa) supported the ANC.

We fight for the political indepen-

dence of the working class from all bourgeois parties, including the ANC. What is necessary is the building of a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed, mobilizing the working class in struggle against its capitalist exploiters. As our comrades explained in *Spartacist South Africa*:

"Those, like APF, who preach reliance on the 'goodwill' of the ANC bourgeois nationalists are pulling wool over the faces of the masses. The working class is the only motive force for effective struggle against superexploitation and oppres-



Len Kumalo/Sowetan

March 2001: Soweto residents demonstrate against threatened cutoff of electricity. Neo-apartheid ANC rule has meant continued privation for black masses.

sion under capitalism. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself. Those who labor must rule!"

* * *

Spartacist South Africa calls for the immediate release of the remaining 40 activists arrested with several others during a protest at the Johannesburg mayor's house on April 6. At the demonstration, the mayor's armed security guard fired live ammunition into the crowd of demonstrators, injuring three and provoking chaos. The continued jailing of these activists under the pretext of verifying residential addresses is nothing but *detention without trial*. It is the duty of all leftists, union militants and revolutionary youth to defend these protesters against harassment and victimization by the bourgeois state. **Free all detainees! Drop all the charges!**

A few days after bail was denied to 40-odd protesters, the ANC Gauteng provincial office issued a shameful statement in the name of the ANC-led Alliance. It

read in part: "The ANC, SACP, COSATU and SANCO [ANC-led civic organization] in Gauteng wish to condemn, with the strongest terms, vandal attack on the house of Johannesburg Executive Mayor, Amos Masondo." The statement denounces "the lunatic ultra-leftist fringe" and sermonizes on how grievances must be kept "within the confines of the law." The detainees are in jail as an ominous warning that critics of the capitalist ANC regime will face heavy repression. **Hands off the protesters!**

Many of the political prisoners are working-class militants and activists in Keep Left!, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee who fight against electricity cut-offs and the denial of services to the poor and elderly. Amongst those arrested were expelled ANC councillor Trevor Ngwane and SAMWU [municipal workers union] provincial organiser Rob Rees, who was obscenely denied bail because the court refused his union work address! As SAMWU noted in its 8 April statement, "The state is returning to apartheid practices of holding people in prison for little or no reason." The gaoling of demonstra-

tors under extremely onerous conditions is brutal proof that the ANC is no friend of the working class and poor and will stop at nothing to protect the interests of the rich. This capitalist government jails protesters as part of its iron-fisted drive to privatise major public enterprises.

Amidst the attacks on its own members, the reformist South African Communist Party and COSATU bureaucracy continue to chain the working class to the ANC and seek to isolate leftists. Many SAMWU militants want to do something to defend the activists. The unions certainly have the power to do so, as witnessed by the two-day general strike last August. The labour movement should defend those militants victimized for struggling against the government's privatisation drive and also take up the fight for the right to affordable, quality housing and free services.

The hired security thug at the mayor's home was backed up by a gang of policemen who rounded up protesters on their bus as they were leaving. A member of the APF who went to arrange legal assistance for those arrested was subsequently jailed, even though she wasn't at the demonstration! Yet despite the brutality routinely aimed at striking workers, anti-privatisation activists, immigrants and others, there remain illusions in the "democratic" character of the "new" South Africa among some on the left.

Mayor Amos Masondo is an apt symbol of the ANC's anti-working class and anti-poor policies. But he is not alone. The ANC acts as black front men for the same white capitalist class behind the apartheid regime that murdered black demonstrators in Sharpeville in 1960, in Soweto in 1976 and supported counter-revolutionary bandits like UNITA in Angola and RENAMO in Mozambique, to mention only a few of its crimes. At the same time protesters demanding water and electricity spend time in jail, the bourgeois courts let off "Dr. Death"—Wouter Basson—for his diabolical deeds. Apartheid butcher Magnus Malan greeted Basson in the courthouse cheering his freedom! The courts and cops are not neutral but enforce the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

Spartacist South Africa opposes any vote or political support to the ANC, which presides over the continued immiseration of the black and toiling masses. We fight for the political independence of the working class. The illusion that the ANC can be pushed to the left by mass pressure is the obstacle to unchaining labour's power. **Defend labour militants, leftists and activists against the attacks by the capitalist state!** The Gauteng jailings are aimed at intimidating all fighters for the oppressed and anyone who defies the ANC government. **An injury to one is an injury to all!** ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

National Office

Box 1377 GPO,
New York, NY 10116
(212) 732-7860

Boston

Box 390840, Central Sta.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 666-9453

Chicago

Box 6441, Main PO
Chicago, IL 60680
(312) 563-0441

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 380-8239

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
New York, NY 10008
(212) 267-1025

Public Office:

Tues. 6:30-8:30 p.m.
and Sat. 1-5 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland

Box 29497
Oakland, CA 94604
(510) 839-0851

Public Office:

Sat. 1-5 p.m.
1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

San Francisco

Box 77494
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 395-9520

Public Office:

Tues. 6-8 p.m.
564 Market Street
Suite 718

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto

Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, ON M5W 1X8
(416) 593-4138

Vancouver

Box 2717, Main P.O.
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2
(604) 687-0353

Spartacist South Africa

Newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Issue No. 2 \$1 (24 pages)
Subscription: \$4 for 4 issues

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116



WORKERS VANGUARD

The End of Welfare Race, Sex, Class and the Capitalist War on the Poor



D. Michael Cheers

We print below in edited form a presentation by Spartacist League speaker Karen Cole at a forum in New York City on April 6.

For several years, both Republicans and Democrats have been making triumphant announcements that the elimination of welfare has been a big “success.” After all, through the year 2000 the statistics showed the welfare rolls shrinking. State governments had already been scrambling to reroute federal money earmarked for welfare, anticipating that they would no longer have to give anything to destitute women and their children. 2002 was to be the big year: the end of the maximum, 5-year lifetime “drop deadline” for the first wave of welfare recipients. With a job or not, you get dumped permanently.

Bush and the Democrats have exploited to the hilt the criminal attack on the World Trade Center to ram through sweeping curtailments of democratic rights and civil liberties. Now Bush is proposing to make work requirements for welfare recipients even more onerous since, as he said, “too many Americans still have not found work and the purpose it brings.” The rapacious ruling class, which lives off the profits extracted from the labor of the working class, tells the masses to go and find ennoblement in grinding, miserable jobs. They will not say that the real purpose of working for slave wages is to keep the capitalist parasites fat and rich. And what jobs are we talking about, anyway? In

New York City alone, tens of thousands have lost their jobs even as the bourgeoisie proclaims that the recession (which some of them claimed “never happened at all”) is now “over.”

By the end of 2001, as the country plunged deeper into recession, with massive layoffs, not surprisingly welfare caseloads had risen in two-thirds of the states. There were one million jobs lost in 2001. Predictions are for 1.6 million more job losses in 2002, hitting workers in the lowest-paying jobs hardest. At least two million people lost their medical insurance in the last year. Slave-labor “workfare,” where you are conscripted to work for your welfare pittance, was promoted as the road to permanent employment. But the jobs were simply punitive. The program took people *out* of educational programs, into “jobs” that led nowhere, trained workers for nothing and put thousands of people back into despair or on the streets.

Not only has Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—cash assistance to mothers—been given a lifetime cutoff, but food stamps, Medicaid and housing aid have been going through round after round of cutbacks. And what’s the result of all this? Among industrialized countries, America has the distinction of being the only one where childhood is the age of greatest poverty. The term “welfare reform” is a cruel joke. “Reform” is supposed to mean “improvement,” not the opposite. In this case, “reform” means the reversal of

social benefits that have existed to one degree or another for over 60 years. A Connecticut state welfare official put it this way: “We have to remember that the goal of the reform program was not to get people out of *poverty*, but...to get off welfare.” Capitalism is a ruthless system of production for profit, and it will take a socialist revolution to sweep it away with all its poverty and misery.

In 1988, we wrote in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 463, 21 October 1988) about Reagan’s earlier shot at eliminating welfare, “The Family Support Act.” This legislation was crafted by Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was already infamous for saying back in 1965 that the fate of the ghetto masses should be left to “benign neglect.” We wrote:

“Genocide is what this new ‘workfare’ is all about!... This is not welfare reform, it’s a plan to turn the ghettos into vast cemeteries—because *there are no jobs to get*. The aim of this legislation is to see to it that layers of the minority population *die*, because this decrepit capitalist system no longer needs them.”

Racist Oppression and the Profit System

What of the “welfare to work” success stories? Increasing numbers of families with a *working* parent are showing up at homeless shelters and food pantries because they cannot survive on their wages. Seventy-five percent of women off welfare for two years are still living below the government’s official poverty “threshold,” as they call it. The longer women are off welfare, the less likely they are to have any health insurance. Those who have found work discover that the work-associated expenses of child-care, transportation or even a telephone all contribute to sinking further into poverty. A large percentage of those who have dropped off the rolls are not working at all—they left welfare because of increasing restrictions. For example, women convicted of drug-related felonies can get no public assistance for the rest of their lives. In some states, more people left the rolls due to sanctions and new regulations than due to finding a job.

In 1996, Democratic president Clinton finally succeeded in ripping out the last planks of social support for the poor by adding a lifetime limit to cash assistance. Clinton was already starving to death over a million Iraqis, largely children, by means of the U.S./UN blockade. The elimination of aid to dependent children is a domestic reflection of the U.S. imperialists’ murderous role around

the world. Clinton’s election campaigns made appeals to the racist Southern and white suburbanite yuppie vote, the so-called Reagan Democrats. Now in retirement he can look out his window from his Harlem office and see the human wreckage and misery he has caused!

The ’90s Wall Street bubble economy—casino capitalism—was used as a rationalization for eliminating welfare. The ’90s decade was hailed as the biggest boom period in American history, but for whom? Over the last two decades there has been increasing *inequality*, a spectacular concentration of wealth in the hands of the already bloated rich to a level higher than any other industrialized country. Almost **50 percent** of the total real income gain during the last 15 years went to the top **1 percent** of the population. Twelve percent went to the bottom 80 percent.

Because the motor force of capitalism is to maximize profits, there is a continuous drive to increase the rate of exploitation by lowering wages and speeding up work. The unemployed have always been used as a club to drive down wages in general, and “workfare” in particular is a union-busting move to replace union labor with cheap labor. Here in New York, welfare recipients have been put into city and transit jobs that were formerly union, slaving for their meager benefits with no union protection. The bosses are only able to get away with this due to the collaboration of the union tops who knuckle under to them in exchange for some worthless sops.

The exploitation of the working class in America has always been wrapped in the envelope of raw racism. The paltry social welfare programs that have existed throughout American history illustrate how this ruling class has used racism to deny the most basic necessities to the poor. In America today, capitalists and their apologists have turned welfare into a code word for “black chiselers.” The elimination of welfare has been motivated for decades by promoting vicious racist stereotypes of the black urban poor.

Black people are a race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society. By “caste” we mean that even the tiny layer that is able to escape enforced poverty still faces racial oppression in multiple forms every day of their lives. The American capitalist class has used racism, historically rooted in the system of black chattel slavery, to divide and weaken the working class and to turn

continued on page 8



WV Photo

Harlem Hospital workers demonstrate against cutbacks and union-busting attacks, 1998.