

Asylum for Haitian Refugees—Stop the Deportations!

Haiti: U.S./UN Troops Out!

MARCH 2—As we go to press, Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide has been whisked out of Haiti to the Central African Republic under U.S. military escort. U.S. Marines invaded to restore “law and order”—i.e., to repress the desperately poor Haitian masses—and a multinational “peacekeeping” force, spearheaded by the French, is in the works under the aegis of the United Nations. Haiti suffered a brutal U.S.

military occupation for 19 years, from 1915-1934. The U.S. left only after it had trained a new *gendarmerie*, the killer National Guard. Propped up by the U.S., Haitian dictators “Papa Doc” Duvalier and his son “Baby Doc” killed an estimated 50,000 Haitians. The armed rebels rushing to rule Haiti today are bloodthirsty killers with ties to CIA-trained death squads and the hated Tontons Macoutes. We demand: *All*

U.S./UN imperialist troops out of Haiti now!

Aristide claims that he was kidnapped by U.S. forces. The crazed neocons in the Bush administration who trained the death squad leaders returning to power in Haiti today no doubt considered the liberation theologian, Aristide, some kind of “communist.” Aristide rode a wave of popular support to power in 1990-91 and was toppled by U.S.-

trained assassins and Duvalierists. He was then returned to power by a U.S. invasion force of 20,000 in 1994, only now to be removed from power by the U.S. in 2004. Aristide, as well as the butchers who preceded and have succeeded him, are puppets of Wall Street, Washington, Paris, the IMF and World Bank.

For weeks, Haiti has been wracked
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Labor Tops Sell Out Militant Supermarket Workers

UFCW Strike and Class Struggle in America

LOS ANGELES, March 2—After a five-month-long bitter struggle against the supermarket bosses (Vons/Safeway, Albertsons and Ralphs/Kroger), nearly 60,000 strikers in the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) are returning to work with a new contract containing deep concessions. The new contract introduces a two-tier system of wages and benefits, a pernicious scheme to divide union members by pitting them against each other while setting up the existing workforce for victimization by management. One striker expressed a common worry among the majority of grocery workers who are not guaranteed full-time work: “We’re going to start losing hours [to lower-paid new hires].” The *Los Angeles Times* (27 February) predicts, “new, lower-paid hires could be in the majority within a few years.”

Workers hired under the new contract will receive lower wages and will have to pay for health care benefits. Those employed before this new contract may face a \$5 to \$15 per week payment in the third year of the contract. And co-payment will now be required of all workers for medical services. Moreover, “first tier” workers will be knocked down to “second tier” status if they transfer from one department to another, such as if a deli worker becomes a cashier. Additionally, wages are frozen for the duration of the new three-year contract, with workers getting only two paltry lump-sum payments. Workers are also outraged by the requirement that they each submit a grossly insulting “Request to Return to Work” form. Although scabs cannot be retained



UFCW strikers picket El Monte distribution center, November 2003.

Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party!

in place of striking workers, the implication behind this is the threat of layoffs. To add insult to injury, the supermarket chains are blaming the strike for “poor-performing locations” that may get closed down, resulting in potentially thousands being laid off.

The responsibility for this defeat lies squarely at the feet of the trade-union bureaucracy. The workers fought like hell, including several times defying the treachery of the bureaucrats. But as we wrote in “UFCW Strike: A Battle for All

Labor” (WV No. 819, 6 February): “What is most importantly posed for the UFCW to succeed in its struggle against the supermarket bosses is the national extension of the strike.” As a UFCW member at the Pasadena strike vote told *Workers Vanguard*, “It’s like you said, we should have shut everything down and made it a national strike.”

But with tens of thousands of UFCW members working under extended contracts that already expired and with the contracts of more than 280,000 grocery

workers in eleven states expiring in coming months, the labor tops did everything in their power to isolate the Southern California workers by refusing to spread the strike. In Arizona, some 15,000 UFCW members were kept on the job by the bureaucracy under an indefinite contract extension. In Southern California, the 5,700 UFCW workers at 101 Food 4 Less stores (a Kroger subsidiary) should have been out from the beginning. Instead, even though their contract was set to expire February 28 and their health care benefits are determined by the master contract of the UFCW workers on strike, the union tops kept Food 4 Less workers on the job, extending their contract to April 4.

Faced with a long, drawn-out battle and a leadership opposed to doing what’s needed to win, most UFCW members voted for the contract with bitter resignation. As one worker put it, “We’re tired and broke.” Nonetheless, some 14 percent voted no. It is beyond grotesque that having shafted the workers, the president of the UFCW International, Doug Dority, has the audacity to claim that this was “one of the most successful strikes in history.” The reality was captured by a striker who explained, “Just when we’re starting to hurt them, the union caves.”

Despite the betrayals of their leadership, UFCW members can be proud that they stood their ground and remained unified on the picket lines, defiant and unbroken in the face of the grocery bosses’ concerted attacks. The UFCW strike was a powerful display of the social power of the working class and it could have gone the other way. The strike was bolstered by a massive outpouring of labor support from other unions that raised money for the UFCW strike fund and joined in strike support rallies; on November 10, the ILWU longshore union shut down L.A.-area ports for eight hours

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Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

Free Anarchist Sherman Austin!

The Partisan Defense Committee has begun sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoner Sherman Austin, a 20-year-old black anarchist from Los Angeles who was railroaded to a year in prison and three years probation for a thought crime, pure and simple. Austin joins 16 other fighters for the rights of the oppressed in our stipend program, among them death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, coal miner Jerry Dale Lowe and members of the Philadelphia MOVE organization.

The McCarthyite witchhunt of Sherman Austin is an object lesson in how the capitalist rulers, Republicans and Democrats alike, use their “anti-terror” laws to target outspoken opponents of imperialist war, racist oppression, capitalist immiseration and anyone else they don’t like. Austin went to prison last September on the felony charge of “distributing

explosives information with the intent that it be used in furtherance of a violent federal crime.” His conviction was based on a law originally sponsored by California Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein in 1997. The “evidence” against him was that his anarchist Web site (www.raisethefist.com), which hosted postings from others, included a posting called “The Reclaim Guide,” which offered instructions on how to make simple, small incendiary devices. Austin had nothing to do with authoring the piece; it was the creation of a suburban youth from a well-heeled conservative family who was not prosecuted. Such information can be found all over the Web, from Amazon.com to neo-Nazi sites.

Austin wanted to fight the charges and expose the political frame-up at trial. But he was subjected to over two years of state harassment and faced addi-

tional “terrorist enhancement” sentencing guidelines, expanded under Clinton’s 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the 2001 USA-Patriot Act, which could have meant up to 20 years in prison if he went to trial. Austin reluctantly accepted a guilty plea when the Feds initially offered a deal of one month in jail.

But when Austin appeared in court in September 2002, the deal was rejected by Judge Stephen Wilson, a Reagan appointee, as too lenient. Wilson railed at the prosecutor: “What kind of message is a disposition like this” sending? When the prosecutor answered, “The message here is that Mr. Austin is certainly not a terrorist,” Wilson shot back, “Why are you setting the bar so high?”, revealing the breadth of the government’s “anti-terror” web.

In June 2003, Wilson rejected a second plea deal of four months in jail and three years probation, directing the prosecutor to consult with his bosses at the Justice Department and FBI director Robert Mueller. Wilson complained, “You think giving this sentence...is supposed to be a deterrence to some other revolutionary who wants to change the world.” When Austin returned to court in August, the prosecution still recommended four months, but Wilson instead imposed the sentence of one year in prison and three years probation—during which Austin will not be allowed to use a computer without approval of a probation officer and will be subjected to searches and seizures of his computers.

The case of Sherman Austin illustrates how the Democrats have marched in lockstep with the White House in shredding democratic rights. Following Austin’s sentencing, Senator Feinstein wrote Ashcroft, “I was pleased to learn recently that Sherman Austin was sentenced,” but complained, “it is dismaying that there has only been one conviction” under her “anti-terror” law.

From an early age, Sherman Austin has been an active supporter of the struggles of workers and the oppressed, joining Labor Day celebrations, protests against the imperialist slaughter in Iraq and rallies in support of the ILWU longshore union during the contract battles and union-busting lockout in 2002. The government’s vendetta began on May Day 2001 when he and 95 other youthful demonstrators were arrested at gunpoint during a cop riot against an anarchist “Carnival Against Capitalism” march in Long Beach, California.

On 24 January 2002, Austin’s home, where he lived with his mother and sister, was invaded by the L.A. Joint Terrorism Task Force, the FBI, the Secret Service, the LAPD and L.A. sheriffs. The heavily-armed cops had a 29-page search warrant citing Austin’s Web site, which contained “anti-government... anti-capitalism, and militant messages that promoted communism.” The warrant also contained information detailing Austin’s participation in demonstrations dating back to when he was 14 years old. The cops and Feds interrogated Austin about his friends and his politics for over six hours, ransacked his room and confiscated his political literature.

In February 2002, Austin was singled out for arrest by the Feds after attending a protest against the World Economic Forum in New York City. After more than two weeks of detention and interrogation in New York and Oklahoma jails, he was released and all charges dropped due to lack of evidence. Seven months later, despite admitting that they had found nothing on the computers seized in the raid, federal prosecutors told Austin’s attorneys that they didn’t want to “let him off the hook.” So, they charged him under Feinstein’s law. Having no evidence that Austin had “knowledge” or “intent” that the information in the “Guide” would be used for a “violent federal crime,” as required by the law, the government made its case by citing Austin’s criticism of



Fatal Error

Sherman Austin

U.S. government policies, cop brutality and racism.

The vicious persecution of Austin is part and parcel of the phony “war on terror,” a war on civil liberties carried out by the Democrats as well as the reactionary Bush gang. On February 22 Bush’s secretary of education Rod Paige likened the National Education Association teachers union to a “terrorist organization.” This underlines what the “war on terror” is all about; it is a political construct, a political crusade providing the pretext for the government to increase its repressive powers and to restrict the democratic rights of the population. Labor and all defenders of democratic rights have a critical stake in making Austin’s fight their own. **Free Sherman Austin now!**

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. We urge all *Workers Vanguard* readers to contribute to our stipends program—a vital act of solidarity. Earmarked contributions can be sent to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013-0099.

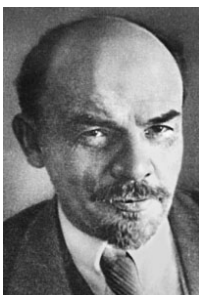
If you wish to correspond with Austin, you can write to: Sherman Austin, #51565-054, FCI Tucson, 8901 South Wilmont Road, Tucson, AZ 85706. ■



TROTSKY

For a Class-Struggle Leadership in the Unions!

Despite waging a militant fight against the supermarket bosses, the UFCW strikers were sold out by the trade-union tops through their allegiance to the capitalist system and its politicians, particularly the Democrats. In a speech given over 100 years ago, American socialist leader Daniel De Leon, who aptly called the trade-union bureaucracy the “labor lieutenants of capital,” described the role of the labor bureaucracy in the workers movement.



LENIN

The profits of the capitalist class represent unpaid labor of the working class. The fleecing of labor implied in the raking in of profits is based upon the existence of a wage-slave class, a working class, in short, a proletariat; and the continuance of the existence of such a class is in turn dependent upon the private ownership of the means of production—of the land on and the machinery and capital with which to work. Given the private ownership of these combined elements of production, the capitalist class will congest ever more into its own hands the wealth of the land, while the working class must sink to ever deeper depths of poverty and dependence, every mechanical improvement only giving fresh impetus to the exaltation of the capitalist and to the degradation of the workingman. The issue between the two classes is one of life and death; there are no two sides to it; there is no compromise possible. Obviously, it is in the interest of the working class that the issue be made and kept clear before the eyes of the rank and file, and that capitalism be held up to their view in all its revolting hideousness....

Obviously, it is in the interest of the working class to arouse it to class-conscious political action. What does the labor leader do? From England, westward over the United States and Canada to Australia, we find the labor leaders solidly arrayed against the very idea. A veritable bulwark of capitalism, they seek to turn the political trend of the labor movement into the channels of capitalist politics, where the head of labor’s lance, its independent, class-conscious political effort, can be safely broken off.

—Daniel De Leon, “Two Pages from Roman History: Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders” (April 1902)

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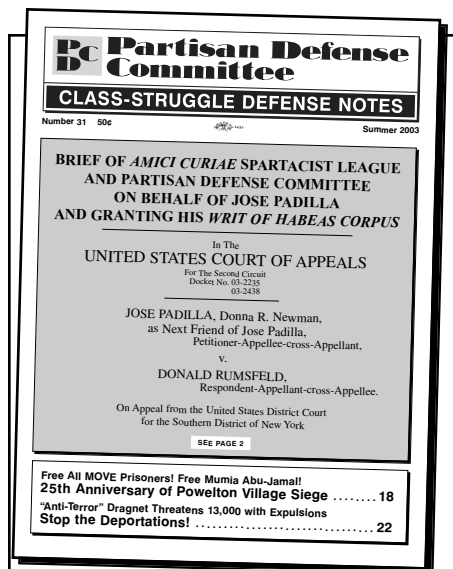
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1954-62

The Algerian War— How French Imperialism Was Defeated

Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 classic, *The Battle of Algiers*, has recently been re-released in American theaters. Originally released during the Vietnam War, global anti-colonial revolts, and the ghetto explosions against racial oppression in America, the film was a must-see for leftists, Black Panthers and fighters for social justice. Curiously, as U.S. imperialism switched from the "shock and awe" aerial bombardment of Iraq to the brutal military occupation of Baghdad and other key cities, the Pentagon organized a private screening of *The Battle of Algiers*, to learn from the bloody French colonial experience in Algeria.

Pontecorvo's film movingly depicts the utter inhumanity of the French colonial forces as they inflicted a devastating defeat on the Algerian independence fighters in the 1957 Battle of Algiers. The film then fast-forwards several years to the mass upsurges that heralded the victory of the Algerian people over French colonial rule. Unanswered by the film is the question: how, in the face of such overwhelming military might, was the Algerian national liberation movement able to prevail?

We reprint below an article by WV Editorial Board member Bruce André which outlines an answer to that question. Comrade André's document was originally written as a contribution to an internal discussion in our party and was published by our French comrades in *Le Bolchévique* No. 152 (Spring 2000). This document debunks the imperialist myth that the Algerian War was a "stalemate" with no victors.

* * *

The idea that France was not defeated in the Algerian War is the almost universally accepted "received wisdom" in France, including by much of the left. Virtually every academic history of the Algerian War explicitly states that French forces won "militarily" and that de Gaulle then "granted" independence to Algeria. Likewise, the Pabloites [the followers of the pseudo-Trotskyist Michel Pablo, whose revisionism destroyed the Fourth International by the early 1950s and is represented today by the United Secretariat (USec)] wrote at the time that the war "is ending with a 'compromise peace' that reflects the relationship of forces on the military terrain" (*Quatrième Internationale*, April 1962). This document summarizes the results of research I did in tracing the origins of that myth and the lies and distortions used by the bourgeoisie and its ideologues to further it.



December 1960: Mass demonstrations under outlawed FLN flag, here in Algiers, shattered French illusion that Algerian people would accept continued colonial rule.

Henissart

The origin of the myth is easy to pinpoint, since it comes straight from Charles de Gaulle himself. The general had already been crucial to the French bourgeoisie's myth that it had "resisted" Nazism when, in fact, it had actively rounded up French Jews to be sent to the gas chambers. Here is how de Gaulle wanted the history of Algerian independence to be told: "It is France, eternal France, who, alone in her strength, in the name of her principles and in accordance with her interests, granted it to the Algerians" (*Mémoires d'Espoir*, Vol. 1 [1970]).

This line has been repeated by virtually every comprehensive history of the Algerian War. The most widely read history of the war in France is journalist Yves Courrière's four-volume *La guerre d'Algérie*. Courrière states that French forces won a "military victory" over the FLN (National Liberation Front), which he describes in the later years of the war as "moribund" and "at the end of its rope." British historian Alistair Horne, in the main English-language history of the Algerian War, writes that the FLN leader-

ship refused to "recognise military defeat and the advantages of sensible compromise" (*A Savage War of Peace* [1977]).

The Pabloites also embraced the myth that the FLN failed to achieve a "military victory." Their French group wrote of the accords by which France recognized Algerian independence: "The Evian accords are...a *compromise* corresponding to the relation of forces and not a total overall victory of the Algerian revolution over French imperialism" (*La Vérité des Travailleurs*, April 1962). When an Algerian Pabloite group was set up in the mid 1970s, its first publication was a pamphlet retailing the bourgeoisie's myths—and adding some of their own. They claimed that, during the Algerian War, there was a "total military failure of the FLN" (*La crise du capitalisme d'Etat et du bonapartisme en Algérie* [April 1978]) and that the Evian accords went so far in guaranteeing "imperialist interests in Algeria" that "the state structures bequeathed by colonialism were not modified in the slightest"! In its entire 62 pages, this pamphlet never hinted that, at the time, the Pabloites, politically capitulating before the Algerian nationalists, had characterized Ben Bella's regime as a "workers and peasants government" and USec leader Michel Pablo had been a member of his government.

Actually, the myth that there was a military "stalemate" and that France then withdrew voluntarily is accepted by many Algerians—a circumstance for which Algerian nationalists are largely responsible. Here is what Ferhat Abbas, a prominent bourgeois politician who became president of the FLN's Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA), wrote of the man who was, more than any other, responsible for the deaths of more than one million Alger-

ians, the carrying out of torture on a mass scale, and the driving of two million people—one quarter of the country's population—into "regroupment centers" (concentration camps):

"By turning his back on 'the spirit of empire,' by breaking the vicious circle of the colonial concept, General de Gaulle was able to impose a solution to a problem which seemed insoluble. His courage, his lucidity, his firm determination, overcame the many obstacles in his path. He recognized our demands and the heroism of our fighters. Thus, he brought an end to the Algerian War."

—Ferhat Abbas, *Autopsie d'une guerre* (1980)

Even FLN supporters who do not revere de Gaulle are blinded by nationalism to the profound social crisis that accompanied the Algerian War. At the Museum of the Army in Algiers, the dominant theme is the overwhelming disparity in firepower between the FLN and the French colonial army. Counterposed to a piece of a downed French plane and an unexploded 700 kg bomb are the FLN's weapons—all light arms, including homemade mortars and grenades. Several displays represent the electrified fences that ran the length of the Tunisian and Moroccan borders, which prevented the FLN from bringing in artillery (which had been key to the 1954 Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu). Large paintings on the wall depict isolated groups of guerrilla fighters being destroyed by French helicopters, tanks, armored cars and artillery. It is a moving testament to those who kept up the struggle under horrendous conditions. But presenting it in this way as a purely military face-off begs the question of how the FLN was able to achieve victory over French colonialism.

Precisely that question came up at a November 1984 historians' conference on the Algerian War sponsored by the Algerian government (see colloquium proceedings, *Le retentissement de la révolution algérienne* [Algiers, 1984]). There, British historian Michael Brett challenged the view that "by 1958 the French were winning, and by the end of 1959 they had effectively won," and that de Gaulle then "withdrew" from Algeria "because he had other ideas of national grandeur." Brett noted that "the sharp contrast" which historians have drawn "between military defeat and political victory for the F.L.N." seemed a "paradox," and he cautiously suggested that the explanation might be "dependent upon the course of events in France set in train by the war." No historian took up the challenge, and none has done so since.

As in most colonial wars, the Algerian people were victorious in large part because *their struggle provoked a deep social crisis in France and crushed the bourgeoisie's will to fight*. Yet that history is almost totally absent from the history books—and both the Stalinists of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Algerian nationalists contribute to the cover-up.

French and Algerian Workers in the Algerian War

The first explosion of class struggle provoked by the war was a wave of mutinies by soldiers refusing to be sent to Algeria, often backed up by workers strikes. Starting in September 1955, less

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Harmony Books

Algiers, 1958: Charles de Gaulle greets General Salan, commander of French forces in Algeria, shortly after taking power.

Algeria...

(continued from page 3)

than one year after the FLN’s first guerilla attacks, and lasting until about June 1956, these protests hit dozens of French cities and towns, often involving hundreds of workers in running battles with the police.

One of the first, and largest, soldiers’ revolts took place in Rouen. On 6 October 1955, 600 soldiers bivouacked at the Richepanse barracks in Petit-Quevilly rebelled as they were to be transported to Algeria. They threw out their officers, ransacked the barracks and barricaded the entrance. The next day, dockers, railway and other workers from neighboring factories, responding to leaflets distributed by PCF youth and CGT trade unionists, struck in support of the soldiers. When riot cops tried to overrun the barracks, several thousand workers surrounded them and showered them with bricks. The fighting continued late into the night. As scores of wounded cops were carried from the scene, 60 busloads of riot police from other cities had to be rushed in as reinforcements.

By the spring of 1956, one-day strikes against the war began to hit entire cities and regions, especially in mining areas, where Algerian workers were an important component of the workforce. On April 30, striking workers demonstrating against the war shut down the mining



no credit

French colonial troops stand over bodies of massacred Algerians.

protests trailed off, but strikes over economic demands continued to skyrocket. By 1957, the number of strikes was greater than at any time since 1936, the year of the general strike (Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France 1830-1968* [1974]). They included heavy participation by Algerian workers, who numbered almost half a million in France by the end of the war and represented a potential human bridge to class struggle in Algeria. Even a PCF newspaper admitted, “Algerian workers are among the most combative in the common struggles” (*L’Algérien en France*, October 1956).

the Casbah lasted for several days and grew into a general strike of the capital. On the 1 November 1956 anniversary of the start of the FLN uprising, a general strike called by the UGTA shut down much of the country (and was joined by Tunisian workers). Then in January 1957, the FLN initiated a catastrophic *one-week* general strike in an illusory (and vain) attempt to influence a scheduled United Nations debate on Algeria. Coming just after Socialist prime minister Guy Mollet had turned over full powers in Algeria to the French army (using the Special Powers Act, which had been passed with PCF support), the strike was brutally smashed. In the months-long wave of terror that followed, known as the Battle of Algiers, thousands of people were arrested, beaten and tortured. The FLN, though temporarily uprooted in the capital, would continue the guerilla struggle in the countryside. But the UGTA was crushed. In the remaining years of the independence struggle, the Algerian working class participated in a number of national strikes called by the FLN, but only as a sector of the “people” under petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership—no longer as a separate class force with its own mass organizations.

By setting up a bonapartist regime under de Gaulle in May-June 1958, the bourgeoisie temporarily checked the social crisis in France. De Gaulle rammed through austerity measures, ripped up collective bargaining agreements, and savagely stepped up the repression in Algeria. By 1959, the French army’s vast military sweeps of the Algerian countryside had forced the FLN to break down into small, isolated units which expended much of their effort just trying to survive. This is the period when the French bourgeoisie claims it achieved “military victory.” But while the general staff constantly repeated that the war was in its “last quarter of an hour,” they denounced any suggestion of withdrawing French soldiers from Algeria as treason.

The Pabloites, adapting to the bourgeoisie’s triumphalism, proposed a “transitional solution” that deserves to be quoted at length:

“Imperialism’s interest in oil and other Saharan riches is now undeniably the basis for its desperate eagerness to keep Algeria under its effective control.

“In order to facilitate its disengagement from this position, the Algerian government could envisage, for an extended period, the setting up of a joint company to exploit the Sahara, with participation by the Algerian state, [and] French capital,...the *sine qua non* being that the Algerian state hold the absolute majority of shares. Furthermore, the profits of this exploitation could cover the foreseeable indemnification of the European agrarians and industrialists to be expropriated in Algeria.”

—*Quatrième Internationale*, May 1959

This was an undisguised proposal for an explicitly capitalist neocolonialist regime in Algeria, serving as compradors for the imperialists’ plunder of the country.

Defeat of the French Bourgeoisie—De Gaulle Calls It a “Victory”

The fact that the French bourgeoisie did not suffer a single crushing defeat on the battlefield as they did at the hands of the Vietnamese in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu was a factor, of course, in allowing it to rewrite history. But that battle was almost unique in the history of anti-colonial struggles. What really gave the bourgeoisie a free hand in its myth-making was, above all, the fact that the Stalinists fully participated in the fraud. When de Gaulle first evoked the possibility of “self-determination” for Algeria in September 1959, the French Stalinists denounced it as “a maneuver” to cover a policy of “all-out war” (at the time, they were calling de Gaulle a “fascist”). But while the Kremlin bureaucracy couldn’t have cared less about the fate of Algeria, it was keenly interested in perpetuating the tensions between de Gaulle and Washington. Khrushchev seized the occasion to dramatically declare his support for de Gaulle’s position and organized an official visit to Paris. The PCF leadership was obliged to make a shamefaced self-criticism of their “error” which had “dis-oriented the party” (quoted in Jean Popperen, *La gauche française* [1972]).

Meanwhile, just as the Gaullist regime was claiming “victory” in late 1959, a wave of defeatism was beginning to engulf the bourgeoisie, as even the unparalleled savagery under de Gaulle showed no signs of bringing the anti-colonial struggle to an end. By 1960, the signs of this shift in bourgeois public opinion were unmistakable. An antiwar student movement had erupted, symbolized by the UNEF (National Union of French Students), the staid, corporatist student association, being transformed into a mass movement dominated by competing left groups. Meanwhile, the liberal intelligentsia began openly siding with the Algerian independence struggle. The September 1960 trial of a group of “suitcase carriers” (those who helped the FLN by transporting money) prompted a support declaration by 121 prominent intellectuals. Signed by an entire cross section of the country’s cultural elite—Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Pierre Boulez, André Breton, Marguerite Duras, François Truffaut, Vercors—it declared that it was “justified” to carry out acts of “insubordination, desertion, as well as protection and aid to the Algerian combatants” (Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Les porteurs de valises* [1979]).



J.-P. Marais

French workers and soldiers defy cops to stop troop transport train at Le Havre during Algerian War, 1956.

city of Firminy for 24 hours. On May 9, 9,000 miners throughout the Loire region struck for one day against the Algerian War and for higher wages. On May 20, Saint-Julien was shut down by a one-day strike against the war. And one week later, some 10,000 miners in the coal fields of Gard in southern France struck for 24 hours, also calling for a “cease-fire” in Algeria in addition to their wage demands.

Almost the only book to even mention that unprecedented movement is the PCF’s three-volume *La guerre d’Algérie* (1981), edited by former Algerian Communist Party leader Henri Alleg. But Alleg cites the protests only to argue that they had nothing more than “a symbolic value,” were “of limited scope,” “often lasted a very limited time,” mobilized “often limited” forces, and were “all told, rather limited” in number. In reality, the Stalinist leaders did everything possible—as part of their support to the Socialist-led popular-front government, which was brutally escalating the war—to keep the soldier-worker revolts against their officers from becoming a conscious fight against the government, which could have opened up a revolutionary situation. The PCF’s daily *L’Humanité* mainly limited itself to publishing a sort of box score on the inside pages containing a terse summary of the previous day’s revolts. PCF members often learned of protests in neighboring towns only by being arrested and meeting comrades in jail.

With the working-class leaders either directly carrying out the war or supporting the government, the soldier-worker

Meanwhile, Algeria was being swept by an unprecedented wave of class struggle, especially by the powerful dockers, which several times shut down the country. (Except for some references by Alleg, this is virtually absent from all histories of the Algerian War—including those written by Algerian nationalists.) In December 1954, six weeks after the FLN’s initial guerilla attacks, dockers in Oran—including a strong minority of workers of European origin—refused to unload arms shipments for the French military. When the Oran dockers were locked out, Algiers dockers struck in solidarity. In June 1955, French police attacked a union meeting in Philippeville (today Skikda) and arrested three union leaders, provoking a national dockers strike that shut down every port in the country for several days. In July 1956, the FLN and the newly formed FLN-led UGTA trade-union federation called a one-day general strike to mark the anniversary of the 1830 French colonial intervention. Despite the terrorist bombing of UGTA headquarters and the arrest of the entire UGTA leadership, it was the biggest strike Algeria had ever seen, clearly demonstrating the social power of that country’s proletariat, despite its relatively small size. Interestingly, this strike also mobilized a significant number of workers of European origin. Thousands of workers were fired for participating in the strike, including scores of Jewish and European-derived workers (*L’Algérien en France*, August 1956).

Powerful working-class struggle in Algeria continued throughout the fall of 1956. An August 10 strike by Algiers dockers against a terrorist bombing in

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In the French army, the growing demoralization of the officer corps paralleled the defeatist mood of the bourgeoisie. As one historian summarized it: “As the year 1960 progressed, certain currents of conviction in the Army were perceptibly changing.... Few officers relished the thought of relinquishing Algeria to the GPRA, but an increasingly large number realized that the end of their adventure was in sight and silently submitted to the imperative” (George Kelly, *Lost Soldiers: The French Army and the Empire in Crisis, 1947-1962* [1965]). A French battalion commander wrote in a November 1960 letter: “The army has had enough! The army wants an end to the war! Of course, this refers to the army of the *djebels* [countryside], the fighting army, that is, the overwhelming majority and not the military bureaucracy of the chiefs-of-staff” (*La Nouvelle Critique*, January 1961).

Yet despite the government’s increasing vulnerability—in fact, because of it—the Stalinists and social democrats persistently sought to head off major working-class battles. The *Wall Street Journal* (22 November 1960) noted: “The country’s labor unions, which have shown unusual patience during the Fifth Republic’s two-and-a-half years of austerity, are preparing to press for long-deferred wage increases as soon as current tension over the Algerian crisis is abated.”

A key turn in the war came in December 1960, when de Gaulle’s tour of Algeria was met by mass demonstrations under the FLN banner. The enormous turnout—surprising even the FLN leadership—shattered de Gaulle’s hopes for a pro-French “third force” with which he

the war exploded when French rank-and-file troops in Algeria mutinied en masse. This was provoked by an attempted putsch by French officers, seeking to head off negotiations with the FLN. French draftees spontaneously revolted within hours of their officers’ putsch; they took over military bases, arrested their officers, sabotaged vehicles, cut communications and refused to carry out orders. Rank-and-file troops seized the country’s main military air base in Blida, arrested the officers and reportedly raised the red flag of revolution. After driving out the paratroopers, the draftees celebrated by singing the French national anthem and the “Internationale.” Defense of the base against French elite paratroopers was assured by propping up the planes so that their machine guns pointed at the entrance gate. Meanwhile, other draftees took over the Orléans barracks in Algiers, blocked the entrance with trucks and faced down the paratroopers with arms at the ready. Units at the Ouar-gla air base set up self-defense committees, blocked the runway with trucks and posted guards on the approach roads.

Here, too, the bourgeoisie—with vital assistance from the Stalinists—has blotted out the historical record by cultivating a mythical version of events. In this myth, rank-and-file soldiers are said to have revolted against their officers because de Gaulle appealed directly to them for support in a radio address. It’s called the “Battle of the Transistors.” But an attentive reading of the chronology of events shows that when de Gaulle delivered his radio speech, rank-and-file troops had already been mutinying for a full *two days*. Journalist Henri Azeau admits this fact: “Truth obliges us to rec-

Algerian dockers on strike against 30 June 1955 arrest of union leaders by French colonial police.



Alger Républicain

cross of Lorraine, the Gaullist symbol, was painted on hangars in the occupied air bases. In France, the PCF called a “strike” (at 5 p.m.!); 12 million workers participated in the mass protests, many of them, like the miners and dockers, striking for a full day. But the Stalinists kept the slogans entirely directed against the “insubordinate generals” in Algiers, so that even the Gaullists supported the demonstrations. The illusions among rank-and-file troops in Algeria—but also the potential for linking the soldiers’ revolt in Algeria with working-class struggle by French and Algerian workers in France—were reflected in a draftee’s letter: “On the evening of Monday 24 April, our transistors were tuned to hear the magnificent protest strike.... Emotion was at its high point when the guys from Renault spoke” (Maurice Vaisse, *Alger le Putsch* [1983]).

The French soldiers’ revolt, coming on top of the officers’ putsch, sharply undermined the ability of the French bourgeoisie to pursue the dirty colonial war. Within a year, almost 2,000 officers were forced out of the armed forces, several elite regiments in Algeria were dissolved, others were shipped to outlying areas and deprived of enough fuel to reach Algiers. Rank-and-file soldiers streamed into police stations, offering to testify against their officers. In units throughout Algeria, soldiers refused to serve if their officers were not replaced. Arrested putsch leader General Maurice Challe declared: “The unity of the Army can now be found only in its hopelessness.”

Alistair Horne concluded: “The breaking of the army in Algeria and its subsequent demoralisation deprived de Gaulle of any tool for ‘enforcement.’... It was abundantly clear that de Gaulle had now no option but to negotiate purposefully to end the war.” Nevertheless, de Gaulle dragged out the war for yet another year, desperately proposing scheme after scheme to avoid conceding full independence—splitting off the oil-rich Sahara, creating a mini-state on the Mediterranean coast for pro-French *colons*—and being forced to abandon each in turn. Yet throughout all these retreats, de Gaulle assiduously cultivated the myth that France had achieved a “military victory” in Algeria. In July 1961, three months after the officers’ putsch and the rank-and-file mutiny, he still proclaimed (*Mémoires*):

“In Algeria, it was necessary for our army to win in the field so that we would have full freedom of our decisions and acts. This result has been attained.... Thus, France accepts without reserve that the Algerian populations institute a completely independent state.”

Lately, there have been a flurry of “balance sheets” by Algerian nationalists, tracing the roots of the regime’s obvious bankruptcy to the fact that from the start it was “bureaucratic” and “undemocratic.” This is basically the position of the Algerian Pabloites, who center their

program on the suicidal illusion of pressuring the army-backed regime to institute “democracy.” But the FLN petty-bourgeois nationalists simply aspired to become the capitalist rulers of “their” country. It is a reactionary utopia to imagine that stable parliamentary democracy—or any significant bourgeois-democratic gains—can be achieved while Algeria is crushed under the boot of imperialist exploitation and plagued by poverty, national antagonisms and medieval sexual oppression. However, it was far from inevitable that the victory of the Algerian people over French colonialism would place power in the hands of the nationalists. The history of the Algerian War is a dramatic confirmation—in the negative—of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, in which the prospect of the proletariat leading all the oppressed in a revolutionary assault on the capitalist order was subverted by one thing: the crisis of proletarian leadership.

The heroic victory of the Algerian people over French colonialism is itself ample refutation of the bourgeoisie’s insolent claims to have achieved “military victory.” Yet as the “memory of the working class,” we Trotskyists of the International Communist League have the responsibility to wage a ceaseless fight against the bourgeoisie’s efforts to bury the history of struggle by the oppressed under a mountain of myths and distortions. The history of the proletariat during the Algerian War is vital because, uniquely, through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, the working class can resolve the bourgeois-democratic tasks in Algeria and provide a living link between socialist revolution in Europe and the African continent. The fight to retrieve that history is part and parcel of the political fight against both the reformist leaders of the working class and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists in the struggle to forge a revolutionary international party. ■



Marxists Internet Archive

Ahmed Ben Bella, left, with Michel Pablo, right, in 1993.

could negotiate a settlement on his terms. French troops joined fascistic *colons* [European-derived population in Algeria] in murderous assaults on the crowds. But as the wave of demonstrations continued, de Gaulle finally ordered the army to halt the massacres. One historian summarized the significance of that order:

“The happenings of December, 1960, presaged the end of the war.... By forbidding the Army to suppress the adversary, the government had chosen to talk with him. Less than six weeks later the first meeting took place between the accredited representatives of the French government and of the provisional government of the Algerian Republic.”

—Paul-Marie de la Gorce, *The French Army, A Military-Political History* (1963)

Military historian George Kelly noted that the mass pro-FLN demonstrations “shook sentiment in the Army badly and dissipated the tenacious dreams of an ‘integrated’ Algeria.... The FLN had won the ‘second battle of Algiers.’”

But de Gaulle put a very different spin on it, one which historians have overwhelmingly repeated. Several days after the December 1960 pro-FLN demonstrations, de Gaulle declared that he would “consent” to Algeria “choosing its own destiny,” but only because of France’s “genius for freeing others when the time comes.” In his memoirs, he adds: “The war was practically finished. Military success had been achieved.” And: “It was not the military results obtained by the FLN which made me speak as I did.”

In April 1961, the tensions building up in French society under the pressure of

ognize that, at the moment when the head of state spoke..., most of the units of the army whose officers had not remained loyal to the republic were in open or latent revolt” (Henri Azeau, *Révolte militaire: Alger, 22 avril 1961* [1962]). De Gaulle’s call on the ranks looks very much like a desperate attempt to regain control of the French army in Algeria—although no historian has stated this obvious fact.

De Gaulle’s speech gave the draftees’ revolt fresh impetus by “legitimizing” it and removing the enormous risk individual soldiers had run of being punished for sedition. Soldiers everywhere refused to go out on military maneuvers or follow orders. In the words of one of the few historians to write about this key event: “It was a time of strikes: strikes against [military] operations, against [radio] transmissions, against driving trucks” (Jean-Pierre Vittori, *Nous, les appelés d’Algérie* [1977]). Across Algeria, soldiers arrested officers who supported the putsch, sometimes beating them and locking them up. As Azeau noted, with the French soldiers’ revolt, “de facto solidarity was established for several days between the draftees and the Muslims” which was “born of the fact that the draftees and the Muslims found themselves for several days ‘on the same side of the barricades.’”

The importance of trade unionists and leftists in leading the soldiers’ revolt has been widely noted. But with de Gaulle’s speech, the pro-capitalist politics of the leaders came to the fore. Leaflets appeared in Algeria with the slogan, “One leader: General de Gaulle.” The

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Young Spartacus

Protest Racist Cop Terror at the University of Chicago!

We reprint the following leaflet issued by the Chicago Spartacus Youth Club on February 23.

It didn't happen in Mississippi, but it sure reads like a story of Southern-style "justice" straight out of the era of Jim Crow marked by the lynching of Emmett Till: Two University of Chicago cops brutally beat a black university student for the "crime" of fraternizing with a white woman! At 3:30 in the morning on January 24, after stopping Clemmie Carthans for a WWB (walking while black), a UCPD cop saw Carthans approach a white student and give her a hug. The cop then ran toward them screaming, "Ma'am, are you all right, are you okay?" Minutes later, Carthans was grabbed by the throat, thrown to the ground, repeatedly kicked, handcuffed, punched in the mouth and slammed headfirst against a squad car three times. The officers eventually released him and he went to the emergency room for treatment for his injuries.

The assault on Carthans is one example of the police violence that is systematically employed against the black population under racist American capitalism, where all black youths are treated as potential criminals under the guise of the "war on drugs." This can only intensify as the so-called "war on terror" is brought home with a vengeance, targeting immigrants, blacks and the whole labor movement. From the bloody U.S. military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan to the cop sieges of Benton Harbor and the Miami anti-FTAA protesters, it is *the capitalists who are carrying out a war of terror*.

In a deliberate attempt to justify their attack, the cops have brought up a previous felony conviction on Carthans' record. It is truly beneath contempt that the *Chicago Maroon*, a shameless lapdog for the racist U of C administration, latched onto this smear in its February 13th headline article as a pre-emptive exoneration of the cops. The real criminals here are the thugs of the UCPD, who commit their atrocities against black students and neighborhood residents alike with the total impunity granted to them by the U of C administration and their capitalist masters. Moreover, as in the recent case of Marcus Dixon, a Georgia

high school student who was sentenced to 10 years without parole for having consensual sex at age 18 with a 15-year-old white woman, the attack on Carthans vividly shows that the "protection of white womanhood" is still a rallying cry for racist state persecution and terror.

A group of university students, rightfully outraged by this blatant attack, are petitioning the UCPD to fire these two cops and issue a formal apology to Carthans, to implement "sensitivity training" for the cops, and to reform their procedures for stopping and interrogating peo-

blacks continue to be a race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of society. Whether you're down and out, or up and coming, black people are targets for cop terror. As we've seen with the 1999 cop killings of Northwestern University student Robert Russ and computer analyst LaTanya Haggerty, neither wealth nor status makes a black person in America immune to state persecution and terror. Robert Russ, LaTanya Haggerty and Clemmie Carthans all share one thing in common: Their perpetrators were all black Chicago cops. Just as your social

Cops off campus! Abolish the racist, union-busting U of C administration! Nationalize the University! The gates of the "ivory tower" should be thrown open to the sons and daughters of the black families who live and work on the South Side. For open admissions, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all students!

The assault on Carthans comes on the heels of the firing of 52 workers at the University of Chicago Hospitals. Ludicrously, the administration smeared these workers as "thieves" for parking in the wrong parking lot. This is simply a union-busting assault on the predominantly black unions during their contract negotiations. Reinstate the UCH workers with no loss of pay!

But the working class is not just a victim of exploitation. Since October, 70,000 supermarket workers in Southern California have been locked in a strike battle against their rapacious bosses. We call for a victory to the United Food and Commercial Workers strike and an extension of this strike nationwide. In solidarity, we have been campaigning to raise money among youth to help the striking workers pay their bills so that they can hold out on the picket lines and win.

The multiracial proletariat holds in its hands both the social power and the historic interest to fight against the exploiters and their state terror, in defense of blacks and immigrants, and indeed, to smash the whole capitalist system through socialist revolution. In America, black workers are a strategic component of the working class and the whole labor movement, providing a living link between the social power of the factories and the anger of the ghettos. The key is to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party infused with the understanding that there can be no end to black oppression without a socialist revolution, and at the same time there can be no socialist revolution unless labor champions the cause of black freedom.

The obstacle to unleashing labor/black power is the misleadership of the trade union bureaucrats, who are tied by a thousand strings to the racist, anti-labor Democratic Party. In this election year, many rank-and-file workers also look to the Democratic Party as the alternative to President Bush and his ghoulish cabal. However, the fact remains that the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are the party of war and racism, 100% committed to upholding the capitalist order on the backs of the working class and oppressed. It was under Clinton's Presidency that the black prison population skyrocketed, under the guise of the "war on drugs," while black Democrats like Jesse Jackson Sr. supported the launching of that campaign. The very thought of the working class taking up the fight for black freedom in America sends a shiver down the spine of the American bourgeoisie—and the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy.

As revolutionary Marxists, we of the Spartacus Youth Club are looking for a few class traitors at the University of Chicago who are repulsed by this racist capitalist society and desire to fight for a socialist egalitarian society dedicated to the liberation of humanity. For black liberation through socialist revolution! ■



WV Photo

June 1999: Racist killings by Chicago cops sparked outrage citywide, protest march of hundreds.

ple. This petition, circulated by Students Organized United with Labor among others, reflects the liberal illusion that the state—the cops, the courts, the prison guards, the military—is essentially a neutral arbiter in society; or worse, that it can actually be a force for good if you just throw out the "bad apples." *The police forces are not neutral and they cannot be reformed.* They are the armed forces of the bourgeois state whose function is "to serve and protect" the rule of the capitalist class, which means enforcing the racial oppression of black people to divide the working class and thus maintain the bosses' class rule. There will be no end to police brutality without getting rid of the capitalist system through socialist revolution.

Carthans' case reveals the raw racist reality that is capitalist America, where

status makes little difference to the cops if you're black, it makes no difference whether the cops themselves are white or black. Regardless of skin color, the cops all enforce the same racist status quo.

Racist cop terror is nothing new in "Segregation City" Chicago nor at U of C, a leading landlord on Chicago's predominantly black South Side. In a city that is 37% black, only 4% of the student population is black. Even this figure is likely to fall in the wake of the announced tuition hikes and the nationwide attacks on affirmative action. Historically, the University has been a bulwark against the black community and is backed by a private army of campus cops who systematically harass and terrorize blacks. Since Carthans made his case public, at least ten students have stepped forward to report similar cases of harassment and attacks.

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

BOSTON

Wednesday, 6 p.m.

March 17: **Bigots in Frenzy over Same-Sex Marriage!**
Full Democratic Rights for Gays!

Boston University,
Room TBA

Information and readings: (617) 666-9453
or e-mail: bostonsyc@yahoo.com

TORONTO

Thursday, 6:30 p.m.

March 18: **Defend the Palestinians!**
For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

York University Student Centre
Room TBA

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail: spartcan@on.aibn.com

CHICAGO

Thursday, 7 p.m.

March 11: **The Struggle for Black Liberation: The Key to Socialist Revolution in America**

University of Chicago
Cobb Hall, 5811 S. Ellis Ave., Room 204
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
or e-mail: spartacist@iname.com

NEW YORK CITY

Tuesday, 8 p.m.

March 30: **Capitalism and Women's Oppression—The Fight for Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

Columbia University
Fayerweather Hall, Room 302
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
or e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, 2 p.m.

March 13: **Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215
(Vermont/Beverly Red Line station)
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239
or e-mail: slsycla@cs.com

BAY AREA

Thursday, 5 p.m.

March 11: **Celebrate International Women's Day! Defend Abortion Rights Through Class Struggle!**

San Francisco State University
Cesar Chavez Student Center
Room C-112, Downstairs
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: sfsyc@sfsu.edu

Columbia...

(continued from page 12)

The attacks against black students on campus are a sign of the times. As the Bush administration, with the Democrats in tow, sends the U.S. military rampaging across the globe and cracks down on immigrants and labor at home in the name of the “war on terror,” black people have seen the onslaught against them worsen. Inner-city public school funding has been slashed, even as voucher programs and charter schools get shoved down the throats of black people and immigrants in the ghettos and barrios. Black and Latino students in New York State today are less likely to graduate on time than anywhere else in the country. Cop violence against black people continues unabated, as the killing of black youth Timothy Stansbury Jr. in Brooklyn earlier this year illustrates. For many black youth, there is no escape from the poverty of the ghettos; nearly half of all black men between the ages of 16 and 64 in New York City are without a job.

In the days following the “bake sale,” the Spartacus Youth Club mobilized for a protest under the demands “Defend Affirmative Action!” and “Protest Racist Provocation by the Columbia College Conservative Club!” Chanting “Defend affirmative action, down with racist reaction!” and carrying placards with such slogans as “Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!”, the SYC led a spirited demonstration on February 12, drawing Columbia students to a protest against the racist offensive.

The Spartacus Youth Clubs defend affirmative action in university education because it has brought gains, albeit terribly inadequate, against the race and class bias that permeates education under capitalism. But the reforms won through the civil rights movement like affirmative action are demonstrably reversible. Today the schools are re-segregating, and the number of black students at elite universities is dwindling, particularly at schools like UCLA and UC Berkeley, where affirmative action was eliminated in 1996. Elsewhere, the racist purge of the universities is driven not so much by admissions policies as by the exorbitant and steeply increasing cost of tuition.

Campus Administration: Tools of the Bourgeoisie

As if the “bake sale” were not enough, the *Federalist*, a campus newspaper better known for its asinine bathroom humor than incisive political commentary, ran a vile cartoon that explicitly treated slavery and all of black oppression as a joke the following week. The cartoon declared, “Black people were invented in the 1700s as a form of cheap labor,” and went on to regurgitate a series of disgusting stereotypes of black people. The editorial board of the paper tacked on a flippant disclaimer, declaring the cartoon “kinda offensive.” The *Fed* later apologized for the cartoon, but the CCCC was not contrite. In a letter to the *Columbia Spectator* (February 26), the CCCC president

and executive director declared: “We stand behind the bake sale and offer no apologies for the principles upon which it stood.”

In response to the *Fed* cartoon, as well as the “bake sale” and the Columbia University Marching Band’s “Orgo Night” in December, in which the band sneered at and insulted black people and women, a newly formed group called Columbia University Concerned Students of Color (CUCSC) initiated a series of silent vigils in front of the administration building. These vigils dominated discussions on campus that week as hundreds of students candidly expressed how minority stu-

No amount of “Multicultural Affairs” administrators or “Committees on Diversity”—prominent demands of the CUCSC—can change the fact that the university is a privileged bastion of racism and an arrogant bully of neighboring Harlem. In 1968, the militant student revolt at Columbia was sparked by the university’s refusal to allow the black community access to a gymnasium Columbia planned to build in Morningside Park. Columbia continues this tradition to this day as a notorious slumlord. More recently, the administration has aided and abetted the government’s anti-immigrant witchhunt, turning over immigrant students’ names

racial equality by pleading with the administration; racism on campus is a reflection of black oppression in capitalist America. Amid the all-sided offensive against black people in recent years, the achievement of full social equality has seemed to many a distant prospect at best. Talk of a “safe space” is both an understandable reaction to the very real prejudices permeating the campus and an accommodation to them. The SYC defends the right of minority students to set up separate housing at various campuses across the country. However, self-segregation only serves to reinforce and legitimize the segregation in American society as a whole.

Further, the CUCSC’s demand for “anti-oppression training” expresses the mistaken belief that racial oppression is the result of “bad ideas.” But black oppression has a material basis in a country built on the backs of black slaves, a country where black people still face segregation and police brutality, a country where racist bigotry is used to divide and repress working people. Instead of accepting racism as a given, all anti-racist students should *fight* for genuine equality for black people and other minorities, which in the end requires a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system itself.

The Problem with Pressure Politics

At one silent vigil, we were repeatedly asked not to hold our own signs, with the slogan “Abolish the Administration! For Student/Faculty/Worker Control of the Universities!” drawing great ire, both from demonstration organizers and student club advisers. At another, we were told that only the leaflets of the vigil organizers could be distributed. Such attempts at censoring us came about because while the CUCSC makes appeals to Bollinger, the SYC intervened in meetings and the February 26 speakout to motivate mobilizing students angered by the racist provocations in protest *against* the administration. Down with censorship!

At the CUCSC speakout, multiple students exhorted the crowd to vote in the upcoming elections as a means of ameliorating the condition of black people and other minorities in this society. The SYC speaker there warned against any illusions in the Democratic Party. At our February 12 protest, SYC spokesman Erica Jones stated that voting for the Democrats “means voting for the party of Jim Crow segregation, massive prison construction, welfare destruction and the party that not only endorsed the war in Iraq and the 12-year sanctions there, but also the party of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba, the war in Vietnam and North Korea.”

Where the liberals seek to sanitize the racist status quo, we Marxists fight to win students to the side of the working class, the only class capable of overturning the capitalist system. As the Boston SYC wrote in a letter to Boston University’s *Daily Free Press* (27 February) about the “bake sale” held there February 18: “Just as it took the Civil War to smash chattel slavery, it will take a workers revolution to sweep away the entire capitalist system and lay the basis for wiping out the centuries-old legacy of racial oppression.”

The International Socialist Organization (ISO), despite their name, devote their efforts to the futile strategy of trying to pressure the capitalist rulers (and their lackeys in the campus administrations) to somehow act in the interests of the exploited and oppressed. The ISO refused to endorse our February 12 protest; like the liberals, the ISO preferred to silently beg the administration to establish the ever-elusive “safe space” rather than seek to mobilize outrage at the racist attacks on campus against the administration. In its first printed statement following the “bake sale,” the ISO *did not condemn it* as racist but rather complained that the CCCC had “trivialized affirmative

continued on page 8



Young Spartacus

SYC mobilized students in speakout against anti-affirmative action “bake sale” at Columbia, February 12.

dents are under siege on the campus. As anger at the racist provocations grew, finally students dispensed with the self-censorship of the silent vigils. Over 100 people participated in a February 26 speakout, chanting “Bollinger just face it, this campus is racist!” and “We are here for education, not to face discrimination!”

During the speakout, a small group of students went inside to present Columbia president Bollinger with a list of demands. Other students were angered at not being shown the demands taken to the administration until a CUCSC meeting three days later. At that meeting, where the organizers disappeared discussion of additional protest, one of the CUCSC leaders involved in the negotiations indicated that students were kept in the dark so as to avoid jeopardizing a working relationship with the administration! Further, the leaflet of eight “Demands Presented by CUCS to Central Administration for a More Diverse Columbia” handed out at this meeting omitted the most controversial point in the CUCSC “Student proposal for a more diverse Columbia” posted on the Web and “submitted” to the administration. This point called for “disciplinary actions and policies to prevent and handle transgressions against marginalized student populations.”

The dangerous view that the administration is a potential ally of minority students on campus is explicit in this and other CUCSC demands. If implemented, the “proposal” would significantly increase the authority of the administration to intrude into and control the political life of Columbia. And the administration has its own class bias—it is the extension of the capitalist state on campus and answerable to the university’s Board of Trustees, a collection of capitalist magnates. To grant the administration the authority to intervene into the political activity of student groups would give it a much freer hand in repressing political dissent by leftists, black people and other minorities. For example, one could well imagine legions of rabid Zionists, as has happened on other campuses, running to the administration with cries of “anti-Semitism” to encourage a crackdown on any pro-Palestinian protest.

to the federal government in 2001 soon after Bush declared his “war on terror.”

Columbia’s main role is to provide the State Department with diplomats, the Pentagon with new missile technology and corporations with a new generation of union-busting lawyers. The 1968 student protests at Columbia, which among other victories drove the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) off campus, explicitly recognized that the university was a warmongering institution directly and intimately linked to racist U.S. imperialism. In that period, a group of black students occupied the ROTC lounge in Columbia’s Hartley Hall and renamed it Malcolm X Lounge, which today serves as the Black Students Organization’s meeting space. It is worth noting that Bollinger’s most recent previous statement against “offensive speech” on campus was a denunciation of professor Nicholas De Genova, who made laudable anti-imperialist remarks at a teach-in during the Iraq war. (See “Down With the Witchhunt Against De Genova!” WV No. 801, 11 April 2003.)

Last week, Bollinger issued a statement that spoke of the administration’s “commitment to a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect” (*Columbia Spectator*, 24 February). Such fraudulent pieties are typically doled out when “liberal” institutions reveal themselves as the bastions of race and class privilege they are. Bollinger, who during his tenure as president at the University of Michigan fought anti-affirmative action lawsuits, has angered many students with his perceived complacency. But behind Bollinger’s defense of affirmative action, like that of much of the ruling class, is the view that such programs provide a gloss of “diversity” to the racist capitalist system by maintaining a layer of middle-class minority professionals (as well as officers in a disproportionately non-white U.S. military). The racist rulers want to have black front men to help bolster their class rule.

The CUCSC looks to the administration to intervene to create a “safe space” for minorities on campus, such as by establishing a “Multicultural Affairs Office.” But it is impossible to transform a small part of Columbia into an island of

YOUNG SPARTACUS CORRECTIONS

In “ISO Reaches Its Nader” (WV No. 818, 23 January), we wrote that “we are still eight months away from the presidential elections.” In fact, Election Day 2004 is November 2, more than nine months from when the article was first printed. In “Trotskyist Youth Intervene in Student Strikes at Berlin Universities” (WV No. 819, 6 February), the caption for the photo of the IG Metall strike support rally at Berlin Technical University on page 6 incorrectly dates the rally as taking place in May 2003 when it actually was held in May 2002.

Columbia...

(continued from page 7)

action,” much like the president of the College Democrats felt the “bake sale” was a “trivialization” (*Columbia Spectator*, February 10). This gutless reaction misses the point—racist provocations make targets of and incite physical attacks on minority students.

The ISO later referred to the “bake sale” as racist in their February 26 protest speech, but only after the liberals were doing so as well. Such abject tailing of liberals is almost instinctive for the ISO. For example, in response to the racist cop killing of Amadou Diallo in New York City in 1999, the ISO pushed a program almost identical to that of black Democrat Al Sharpton, who introduced a whitewash list of empty demands to “reform” the police.

In an article on the right-wing attack on affirmative action in the 27 February issue of *Socialist Worker*, the ISO says, “Affirmative action was a direct result of the civil rights movement’s successful effort to force the federal government to recognize the systematic racism that thrived in U.S. society.” In fact, affirmative action programs were set up as a sop to *defuse* social struggle. The affirmative action programs in education established in response to the protests and upheavals of the ’60s were at best a limited gain for a tiny percentage of minorities and women; in industry the racist rulers initially implemented hiring quotas with the intention of breaking the unions and exacerbating racial divisions in the workforce.

Further, the ISO suggests that the key in the fight for black rights lies in convincing the federal government to acknowledge the existence of racism. Not only is it absurd that anyone can think Bush is unaware of racial disparities—his old nickname, “Governor Death,” comes from the stack of bodies of disproportionately black and Latino men he executed in Texas—but it also flies in the face of history. By preaching reliance on the federal government, black Democrats and reformists demobilized struggles for black equality, straining to keep militant fighters against black oppression within the confines of Democratic Party electoralism. While the liberal-led civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s shattered the Jim Crow system, it did not—and within the confines of capitalism,

could not—get to the root of black oppression. In adapting to the program of the liberals, the ISO has adopted their view of history.

Racist Ideologues on the Offensive

The CCCC has made itself infamous for witchhunting the late Edward Said, sponsoring racist ideologues like David Horowitz on campus, pushing anti-gay bigotry and even protesting the use of Columbia University facilities in the film-

national origin or class.” Appeals for censorship and repression by the administration would play straight into the trap laid by the right-wingers. On several campuses, university administrations have attempted to shut down the reactionaries’ provocations by invoking PC “speech codes”—which is exactly what the conservatives want, so that they, overbred scions and defenders of ruling-class privilege that they are, can bleat about being ostensibly oppressed. Indeed, on such campuses as the University of Colorado

selves as victims.” The “Academic Bill of Rights” is in reality an attempt to provide the basis for a purge of the left from campuses, with demands for “duly authorized authorities” to snoop into tenure and hiring decisions. Such an approach is likely to be about as evenhanded in practice as the jingoistic tirades on Fox News are “fair and balanced.”

The SYC has exposed and protested Horowitz on campuses around the nation in recent years. The ambitions of the likes of David Horowitz, the self-satisfied Ivy League right-wingers and the ruling class, which bases its opulent lifestyle on the suffering and exploitation of others, will not be thwarted through liberal appeals to the class enemy. The capitalist system in the U.S. is buttressed by the special oppression of racial minorities, black people in particular, whether through the grinding poverty and naked repression facing the ghetto masses or even attacks on the precarious positions of the all too few minorities on elite campuses. We fight for free, quality integrated education for all as part of our fight against all of the inequities and iniquities of capitalism. As our leaflet building for our February 12 demonstration noted:

“To provide real access to higher education, we call for nationalizing the private universities and for open admissions and free tuition with a state-paid living stipend for students. Open the gates of Columbia to the people of Harlem! We demand full remedial programs at the universities, an end to the racist ‘tracking’ system in the high schools and genuine integration of the schools, including the aggressive implementation of busing. But lasting gains cannot be achieved through a strategy of pressuring the campus administration, the Supreme Court or other capitalist institutions. Today, as in the past, it will take massive social struggle to gain any improvement in the lives of oppressed minorities in this society.”

Class struggle is the only way forward. Students must take their fight against racism on campus to the multiracial working class of New York City, from campus workers to the hospital workers at St. Luke’s to the transit workers, who have social power that students lack. Labor has the power to stop production, to stop the flow of profits, and the power and organization to restructure society on the basis of a socialist economy. The SYCs, youth/student auxiliaries to the Marxist Spartacist League, seek to win youth to the perspective of building a revolutionary workers party that will lead the proletariat in bringing down this whole rotten, racist capitalist system. ■



Columbia College Today

Columbia, April 1968: Black students and supporters occupying Hamilton Hall. Wave of student protest, building occupations was directed against school administration and its links to racist U.S. imperialism.

ing of the Comedy Central movie, *Porn ’n Chicken*. Though they are an unappetizing, puritanical, bigoted bunch, their provocation was not merely the action of a few yahoos. At our protest, Erica Jones noted that the CCCC’s provocation was not an isolated affront to minorities on campus, as the Conservative Club has “ties to right-wing think tanks and groups such as Campus Watch and those bigots in the White House who are consciously and intentionally pushing to roll back what civil rights gains remain from the ’60s.... To let these racists go unanswered only emboldens them and their racist agenda.”

The CUCSC “proposal” begins, “Nowhere is the freedom of speech an absolute right.” What the CUCSC means is shown in its call for the administration “to reduce the funding for groups that use University monies to verbally and/or physically harass students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion,

and the University of Washington, the right-wing Foundation for Individual Rights in Education has leapt into the fray with lawyers and Fox News camera crews in tow, broadcasting the aggrieved conservatives’ cries of martyrdom. The bible-thumping Alliance Defense Fund and the notorious Center for Individual Rights have also joined in the attack.

The all-purpose racist, pro-imperialist pig, David Horowitz, has recently seized on supposed violations of the “academic freedom” of campus conservatives to launch his campaign for a grossly misnamed “Academic Bill of Rights,” which purports to promote “intellectual diversity” on college campuses. In an interview in the *Columbia Spectator* (25 February), Horowitz touts the myth that conservatives are persecuted at American universities, even implausibly arguing that “Marxists at Columbia are the ruling class, but they like to think of them-

Gay Marriage...

(continued from page 12)

dead people”—a statement seen by many as an incitement to violence against gays and lesbians. Now the governor has declared that he is not opposed to gay marriage if the people want to change the current state law, and announced, “I have no use for a constitutional amendment” (*SF Chronicle*, 2 March). Though California Superior Court judges have refused to halt the marriages, on February 27 Lockyer bypassed the state’s trial courts and asked the state Supreme Court to stop SF officials from issuing same-sex marriage licenses and to invalidate all the weddings that have taken place at City Hall over the past two weeks.

The marriage certificates don’t appear to have much more than sentimental value at this point, notes *The Advocate* (24 February). The National Coalition for Lesbian Rights advises all those who are married in San Francisco to register as domestic partners since there is no guarantee they will receive the rights of heterosexual married couples. And in an act of bureaucratic revenge, so typical of small-minded bigots, the Bush administration has just ordered Social Security administrators nationwide to reject all name changes based on any marriage

license—straight or gay—recently issued by San Francisco!

Bush’s actions have emboldened right-wing reactionaries. On February 19, a group of Christian fundamentalists carrying homophobic banners were ejected from City Hall after attempting to stop the issuance of marriage licenses to gays. The two groups challenging the same-sex marriage licenses in court are the Campaign for California Families and Proposition 22 Legal Defense and Education Fund (represented by the Alliance Defense Fund). Both groups are part of an all-out assault by “family values” bigots against gays, women and abortion rights. The *New York Times* (29 February) carried a full-page ad applauding Bush’s “courage” in putting forward the Federal Marriage Amendment; it was signed by Jerry Falwell and almost 100 of his fellow right-wing Christian fundamentalist bigots.

Legal marriage will do little to stop the prejudice and violence faced by gays and anyone else who steps outside the stifling boundaries of bourgeois morality. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs shows a rise in homicides and assaults against lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual victims in 2002, including a 25 percent increase in the San Francisco area. The vicious beating death of Gwen Araujo, a Latina transgender woman in

the Bay Area that year, is just the tip of a large iceberg.

Same-sex marriage challenges religious values and ingrained social mores among working people and throughout society at large. While there’s a broad layer that empathizes with gays who seek the legal protections marriage offers, there’s also significant opposition. In its extreme, one gets the phenomenon of a black Baptist minister, the Rev. Gregory Daniels, who declared, “If the K.K.K. opposes gay marriage, I would ride with them” (*New York Times*, 1 March). He might saddle up, but it will be a short ride—the first target of this motley collection of nativist, anti-labor fascists is black people.

We have had to argue with workers in the Bay Area that democratic rights are indivisible. The fates of those subjected to special oppression in capitalist society—homosexuals, women, immigrants, blacks—are inextricably intertwined because such oppression helps prop up the capitalist system of exploitation; when even partial gains are won by any sector of the oppressed, it’s a victory for both the workers movement and all others who face discrimination. Marriage laws in particular have been used to enforce discrimination; Alabama only overturned its ban on interracial marriage in 2000!

San Francisco has long been a haven

for mainly white, petty-bourgeois gays. The annual Gay Pride March—once viewed as a political statement against legal and social discrimination—years ago became a mainstream Democratic Party event, where the gay cop contingent is wildly cheered. Long gone are the mildly radical ’70s “gay liberation” days, which at least implicitly challenged bourgeois social morals, including monogamous marriage. Today the rush by gays to get married is part of a quest for legitimacy within the framework of, and explicitly embracing, bourgeois “family values.” Yet “family values” are the ideological bulwark of the institution of the family and the vehicle for gay oppression in this country.

Bigotry against gays flows from entrenched sexual stereotyping decreed by the sexual division of labor in the family, the root of the oppression of women in bourgeois society, and is enforced by religious moral codes against “sin.” Capitalist society needs the family, a conservatizing force and the mechanism by which capitalist private property is passed down from generation to generation; it cannot ultimately ‘legitimize’ those who fundamentally deviate from its restrictions. The family is a key prop of capitalist class rule, which can only be rooted out through the overthrow of this profit-driven system of exploitation. ■

UFCW...

(continued from page 1)

in solidarity with the UFCW strike. In a huge display of labor power, some 20,000 workers turned out on January 31 for a strike rally in Inglewood. However, these numbers were not mobilized *on the picket lines—where it counts—to shut down the stores and grocery distribution centers.* As one striker told WV, “We could have shut down the distribution centers. The Teamsters didn’t have to wait a month to back us. I can’t understand why the picket lines were taken down from Ralphs.”

Dozens of strike militants and their supporters were arrested on the picket lines. The union bureaucracy devised civil disobedience actions involving clergy and politicians as a diversion, but workers endeavored to turn these actions into real displays of union power to close the stores. In mid-January, 15 picketers were arrested at a Vons store in Garden Grove for defending their picket line during a protest rally that drew 1,200 strike supporters. More than three dozen protesters were arrested on February 19 for briefly blocking entrances at four Vons stores in Los Angeles, Santa Monica, San Pedro and Mission Viejo. Many arrested workers still face charges ranging from “trespassing” to allegations of attacks on scabs. The entire labor movement must join the UFCW to demand: ***Drop all the charges! No reprisals against strike militants!***

UFCW Local 770 president Rick Icaza recently said, “I felt that by having that relationship...we had passed the era of a

September 2003: Illinois UFCW protest against Wal-Mart. A UFCW victory could have opened door to organizing nation’s largest private employer.

Peters/UFCW Local 1546



opposition to, the Democratic and Republican parties. Working people need a party that fights for *their* class interests, a workers party committed to overturning this whole system of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression.

PART ONE

After 16 weeks on the picket lines in the longest strike in UFCW history, determined grocery workers are still hanging tough. And working people across the country are closely watching this labor showdown because they know the outcome will shape their future and that of their children. Millions are without health coverage and even more are one paycheck away from a family medical and financial catastrophe. The grocery bosses want to effectively eliminate medical benefits, slash wages and pensions, and smash the

their voice to the government’s patriotic propaganda barrage. Shortly after September 11, AFL-CIO president John Sweeney proclaimed: “We are solidly behind the president and our troops in the field and we will remain so until worldwide terrorism is eradicated” (speech to Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, AFL-CIO Web site, 16 October 2001).

Some local labor leaders, reflecting growing disaffection especially among black and minority unionists, opposed the war in Afghanistan and later Iraq. But they did not do so on a class-struggle basis. Instead, the liberal and reformist leaders of the short-lived antiwar movement proclaimed that “peace is patriotic,” pushed illusions in UN-sanctioned imperialist intervention, and mainly sought to channel popular discontent into an anti-Bush campaign to benefit the Democratic Party of imperialism and war leading up to the 2004 elections. In the antiwar protests we put forward a perspective for working-class struggle against capitalism and its wars, and we told a basic truth: the only way to end imperialist wars is through international socialist revolution. We called for the defense of Afghanistan and Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack. And we called for class struggle against the U.S. capitalist rulers!

For socialists it is a given that those who embrace the aims of imperialist capitalism abroad are incapable of effectively defending the interests of labor and the oppressed at home. The bourgeois triumphalism and capitalist arrogance in the wake of U.S. imperialism’s easy wins in Afghanistan and Iraq set the stage for the bosses today telling grocery workers to drop dead, the continuing attacks on immigrants, the L.A. cop and FBI raids on black housing projects and the police sweeps of downtown L.A. homeless encampments, the threats to shut down King/Drew hospital which serves South Central.

In the case of the grocery strike, the connection is direct: Safeway CEO Steven Burd was appointed by “Homeland Security” czar Tom Ridge to a high-level private sector advisory committee in December, while in the Bay Area, agents from the Contra Costa sheriff’s homeland security detail recently visited a local

union hall to intimidate labor officials planning protests near Burd’s home. That the “war on terror” is a war on workers and the oppressed should be clear.

Pro-imperialist labor bureaucrats like John Sweeney argue that with a Democrat in the White House, there can be both guns *and* butter, imperialist war abroad *and* domestic prosperity at home. Well, with the Clinton administration there was the blockade of Iraq, the invasions of Haiti and Somalia, the terror bombing and destruction of Serbia—so there was plenty of imperialist war. Domestically, the Democrats abolished welfare, built more prisons and more fences on the Mexican-American border, strengthened the death penalty, and put more cops on the street. During the ’90s economic boom, unions still declined, immigrants were used, abused and thrown out of the country, and the conditions for blacks in the ghettos became even more hellish. Sweeney’s “America First” perspective of enlisting unions as minor beneficiaries of imperialist plunder is not only poisonous national chauvinism but a lie. The same capitalist rulers—Democrat and Republican—who are waging war abroad are waging war at home against immigrants, blacks and minorities, and the entire labor movement.

So this is the political context in which the strikes and lockouts are taking place. This talk focuses more on the continuing grocery strike, but our first article in *Workers Vanguard* on the strike wave here in Southern California was titled “L.A. Strike City” (WV No. 812, 24 October 2003). There is a reason why L.A. has over the past several years been called the strike capital of the U.S. It has a very large immigrant workforce and many come to this country with a higher level of political consciousness and more militant traditions of class struggle. Almost 40 percent of the workforce in greater L.A. is Latino, about two-thirds of whom are foreign born. Even with lower rates of unionization among recent arrivals, roughly 14 percent of union members here are Latino immigrants. Moreover, immigrants and ethnic minorities are concentrated in relatively low-wage jobs. These workers do not accept the current state of affairs in which the unions are increasingly job trusts resting on the gains of the past, but expect them to act as instruments of struggle to better their lives.

Back in October the maintenance workers in the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) shut down L.A. transit, striking to defend their medical benefits, and the bus drivers union, also in contract negotiations, was honoring their picket lines. SEIU Local 660—representing 50,000 L.A. and Orange County public workers—was working without a contract and health care benefits were again the main issue in dispute. There was the possibility here for key unions in Southern

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AFL-CIO president John Sweeney announces endorsement of Democratic Party presidential hopeful John Kerry. Labor tops subordinate workers to capitalist Democratic Party.

need for strikes. I thought those days were over.” The union misleaders’ entire strategy rests on a program of class collaboration, a purely electoral and legalistic strategy of lobbying for pro-labor legislation and herding votes for the Democrats. Dority described the strike as “successful” because it “sounded the alarm that the American health care system is ready to collapse”—i.e., the strike was a pressure tactic to “demand that every candidate for office commits to comprehensive, affordable health insurance for every working family” (UFCW press statement, 27 February).

It is important to underscore that the UFCW strikers are going back to work with their union still intact, having persevered against a vicious opponent and fighting with one hand tied behind their backs. But the outcome of this strike is a bitter setback—the labor tops going all the way up to the AFL-CIO leadership not only betrayed the UFCW workers, but all of labor. What is vital is for the working class to draw the lessons of the UFCW strike.

This strike—both the courageous determination of the workers and the venal treachery of the bureaucrats—underlined in the most stark terms the necessity of fighting for a new leadership in the unions. The unions are mass organizations of workers to defend their economic interests against the capitalists; but to consistently fulfill that role they must be led by a class-struggle, anti-capitalist leadership that understands that the interests of the workers and the capitalists are counterposed. We print below part one of a January 31 forum by Spartacist League speaker Steve Henderson. He explains that the road to victory lies in mobilizing labor’s power independently of, and in

union. If they get away with it, it will set the standard for capitalist takebacks and union-busting efforts across the country. But if, on the other hand, the grocery workers win, it could be the springboard for union organizing and a labor offensive against America’s arrogant capitalist rulers. The stakes are high and this strike *can* win. But it will take the mobilization of labor’s power on a national scale.

Despite porous picket lines and the union bureaucrats’ sabotage of efforts to shut down the distribution centers, the strike is having an economic impact on the grocery corporations’ revenues in Southern California. But there must be a fight to spread the strike nationally and to shut down grocery operations in order to make a major dent in the grocery giants’ overall profits. And in order for the strikers to hang on long enough to win, the labor movement has to immediately send money to replenish the strike fund—the strikers can’t live on air. The main political obstacle to waging this kind of class-struggle fight and mobilizing the full resources of labor against the bosses is the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, from the local level on up to the national AFL-CIO leadership of John Sweeney, Richard Trumka and the rest.

The outbreak of widespread and widely popular class struggle is a welcome change and the necessary response to the capitalists’ “war on terror,” which in fact is a war on workers and the oppressed here and internationally. Many here will remember the New Jersey teachers vilified as agents of the Taliban for daring to strike after September 11. But it was not just America’s capitalist rulers and their politicians who used September 11 to push the lie of the bosses’ “national unity.” The top echelons of organized labor loudly added

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:
Sat. 1-4 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

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

UFCW...

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California to link up in strike action, which would have created a serious political problem for the bourgeoisie and could have forced favorable settlements for all the unions.

But the SEIU leadership refused to strike and instead made compromises over wages and health care benefits, avoiding a confrontation with the Democratic Party administrations running local government here. The ATU leadership followed the lead of so-called “friends of labor” Democrats like Antonio Villaraigosa, who simply wanted to diffuse a hot political situation. They scuttled the transit strike after one month and sent the membership back to work with no agreement on health care, leaving it to a pro-company “mediation” committee to decide the fate of the union’s medical benefits. A favorable opportunity for class struggle was thus betrayed on behalf of the Democratic Party.

If unions are to start winning some strikes, a central lesson here is the need for the unconditional independence of labor from the bosses’ government and the bosses’ political parties—both Democratic and Republican. And this includes the bourgeois Green Party, as well. We need our own party, a revolutionary workers party that acts as a tribune of all the oppressed and mobilizes labor’s power in class struggle against capitalism and for a socialist future.

Mobilize the Power of Labor!

Today, striking UFCW workers remain locked in a bitter struggle for the very survival of their union. They are faced with the reality that their enemy is at home in the form of bloodsucking and profit-hungry grocery bosses. However, the UFCW leaders have relied essentially on public sympathy for the strikers, along with Democratic Party-dominated rallies, to sway the bosses—which doesn’t work. As far as these things go, the consumer boycott has been somewhat successful in Southern California, but even that was undermined when the UFCW took down the picket lines at Ralphs. More importantly, appealing to the general public is not a substitute for labor mobilizing its power to shut down production and distribution, and crucially, to spread the strike. Now the strike fund is almost depleted. Strike pay is down to \$100-150 per week, many strikers have had their medical coverage lapse, and all are facing great personal hardship. Although scabbing by UFCW members is not widespread, some demoralized elements have returned to work.

Now Sweeney’s AFL-CIO leadership has announced it’s taking over “national strategy” for the strike. So what’s happened and what is the way forward?

Canada: Auto Workers “Hot Cargo” in Support of Rail Strike

TORONTO, February 29—Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) members in Southern Ontario auto plants showed the kind of militant solidarity that’s needed to win labor’s battles. On February 20, 5,000 mechanics, cargo loaders and clerical workers at Canadian National Railways (CN), who are also organized by the CAW, launched a national strike. Three days into the walkout, workers at three Ford plants in Oakville and St. Thomas refused to handle parts being shipped on CN trains. Production was disrupted for two days until management stopped trying to use the trains.

The “hot cargo” action spread to a

Ford plant in Windsor, where CAW members refused to load finished engines onto CN trains. DaimlerChrysler reported that shipments of truck frames from a Milton parts plant destined for a U.S. assembly facility were also disrupted. In Oshawa, General Motors was forced to store thousands of completed vehicles on company parking lots when it was unable to ship them out. The union’s *Railfax* strike bulletin (February 24) reported how GM “spent most of the day scrambling to find trucks to deliver autos from its three assembly plants in Oshawa because of the rail strike.” It added: “Special thanks go out to CAW

auto workers who placed themselves at risk yesterday in order to support their striking brothers and sisters at CN Rail.”

Ford is estimated to have lost \$18 million from the February 24 shutdown alone. Refusal to handle struck goods, sympathy strikes and other militant actions at the point of production are key weapons in labor’s arsenal because they stop production and cut off the capitalists’ source of profit. Such examples of labor power are a thousand times more effective than all the “corporate campaigns,” consumer boycotts and other no-win tactics typically promoted by the union bureaucracy.

Well, let’s start by telling the truth so that workers can forge a leadership in the unions based on a Marxist understanding and class-struggle program.

According to a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* (22 January), local union leaders said they were blindsided in the negotiations by the depth of the cuts demanded by the supermarket giants and that they subsequently underestimated the ability of the three chains to stay united against the workers. That they underestimated management’s resolve is obvious, but this is largely self-justification and abdicating responsibility for their failed strategies and refusal to wage hard class struggle. A year before this strike began, the national UFCW leaders met with the corporate CEOs in preparation for the contract negotiations that would soon be taking place piecemeal by locals across the country. They walked away from this meeting knowing that the grocery bosses would demand massive concessions. Instead of mobilizing the combined national strength of the union, each region was left to negotiate separately.

When the strike dragged on here in Southern California, the local union tops offered \$500 million in concessions, assuming such a huge giveback would end the strike. But the grocery bosses are out for blood and they rejected it. The basic underlying problem is that the union misleaders accept and defend the capitalist system. They routinely sign “compromise” contracts laden with concessions in order to keep class peace, and then are utterly disarmed when the bosses really decide to play hardball and demand total capitulation—it’s been one-sided class war.

Many strikers are frustrated and angry with the leadership and the way it has run the strike. There is widespread bitterness that the pickets were taken down at

Ralphs, which is sharing its windfall profits with the other chains in an act of capitalist solidarity. Union militants want a solid strike. That the regional food distribution centers, which are mainly organized by the Teamsters, were picketed at all is testament to the pressure from the Teamsters ranks against the resistance of their leadership. They understand that if the UFCW loses, they’ll be targeted next year when their contract expires. But these efforts at union solidarity have been repeatedly sabotaged; the Teamsters tops have again sent their members back to work and the UFCW has dismantled the pickets at Teamsters warehouses. At the El Monte distribution center, where UFCW members worked as meat cutters, strikers have defiantly refused to take down their lines and Teamsters are still honoring them, but that is the exception.

So what are our political opponents on the left saying about all this? The Workers World Party has shamelessly supported the UFCW misleaders’ every move, in particular their decision to take down the pickets at Ralphs. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) also alibis the bureaucrats, calling the decision a “strategic blunder.” In an ISO article titled “How Can the UFCW Win?” (*Socialist Worker* online, 23 January), the author said he “respectfully” asked a UFCW official at a support meeting to “be willing to acknowledge a mistaken strategy and move on to shutting down the stores....” But the decision was not some error; it flowed from the bureaucracy’s class-collaborationist program. And this is what the ISO avoids saying, because at bottom they seek to be “left” advisers to one or another “progressive” wing of the bureaucracy. The ISO even lavishes praise on pro-Democratic Party labor sellouts like Miguel Contreras, who brokered the deal between Antonio Villaraigosa and ATU president Neil Silver to scuttle the transit strike. One UFCW striker who read our paper, *Workers Vanguard*, and the ISO’s *Socialist Worker* told us she liked the ISO because they are “less Marxist.” Well, I’m sorry she doesn’t agree with Marxism and I’d like to convince her otherwise, but she’s certainly correct in her assessment of the ISO.

Now that the UFCW’s back is up against the wall, the AFL-CIO national leadership has stepped in, with secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka running “national strategy.” It’s no accident that the AFL-CIO leadership was all over the FTAA protests in Florida, because that’s where they can push their protectionist program in the guise of opposing sweatshops. Yet for months they completely ignored the class struggle at home with the UFCW strikes. The AFL-CIO tops want to blame foreign labor, but when American workers go on strike the bureaucrats have done virtually nothing.

This strike needs to squeeze the grocery chains’ flow of profit, because Wall Street investors vote with their pocketbook, not their “conscience.” The grocery giants are taking a hit in Southern California, but they have nationwide operations that give them a significant buffer.

The AFL-CIO is planning a few informational pickets at some stores around the country, asking for a consumer boycott, rather than decisively spreading the strike to really hurt business operations nationally. The UFCW has already settled strikes in some regions. It should have been “one out, all out”—until everyone has a contract. But there are still many locals with contracts already expired or in negotiations (Arizona, Indianapolis and Seattle) or coming up in the next few months (Denver, Chicago, Washington, Las Vegas and Northern California). So spreading the strike is both necessary and still possible.

However, instead of class struggle Trumka is heading up a “corporate campaign” to embarrass and morally shame the CEOs, while also trying to convince pension funds with large stock investments in Safeway and the other chains to pressure management to settle. This is a diversion which has served to alibi the union tops after they’ve run a strike into the ground. Many strikers will see *any* action called by the labor movement as an opportunity to press their demands, which can sometimes go beyond what the leaders have in mind. What’s clear is that the union tops are feeling a lot of pressure from the base to do *something*, and that unionists know the strike is not over and they want to fight to win. This provides Marxists with the opportunity to say what needs to be done and *why* the bureaucrats aren’t doing it.

Without money the strikers will become increasingly hard pressed. A recent AFL-CIO strategy session resulted in an initial pledge, according to Trumka, of over \$600,000. Compared to what’s needed, that’s chump change: do the math, \$10 per striker. Millions of unionists across the country would gladly see their dues go to win this strike. Now the L.A. longshore locals alone have donated \$155,000 and promise to raise \$1 million for continued medical benefits, which is a good thing and should be the beginning of much more to come to aid the strikers. But this too is a political question. The national AFL-CIO already has umpteen millions sitting in PAC funds designated for lobbyists and Democratic Party politicians who represent the class enemy. \$56 million went for Gore in 2000. Who knows how much is socked away this year for the Democratic candidate? In California alone, the state federation of labor dumped millions into former governor Gray Davis’ anti-recall campaign. So the money is *already* there—but will it be used for class collaboration and capitalist electoral politics, or will it further the class struggle and help win this strike?

Militant tactics and even a broader national strike strategy are not a guarantee of victory, even if the grocery strike were led by class-struggle Marxists. But class struggle is the only way workers have won—or held on to—significant gains. The problem is that the present union leaders consciously restrict their aims, and therefore their tactics, to what is acceptable to the capitalists—even when they occasionally do win a strike.

International Women’s Day Forum

Stop Bipartisan Attack on Women’s Rights!

Free Abortion on Demand!

Speaker: Karen Cole, Workers Vanguard Editorial Board

Tuesday, March 9, 8 p.m.

Columbia University, Hamilton Hall, Room 603

116th Street and Broadway (Take 1 or 9 train to 116th St. stop)

For more information: (212) 267-1025 or e-mail nysl@compuserve.com

NEW YORK

Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste Forum

South Africa: Workers Struggle Against ANC Neo-Apartheid Rule

Saturday, March 13, 3 p.m.

Britannia Community Centre, 1661 Napier Street (off Commercial Drive)

For more information: (604) 687-0353 or e-mail TLLT@look.ca

VANCOUVER

On the other side of this battle, the super-market owners are *totally* committed to *their* class interests. And the issues in this grocery strike—health care, pensions and the attempt to force two-tier wage take-backs—have important implications for the rest of the bourgeoisie. They will quickly unite to demand strikebreaking intervention by *their* government if faced with hard working-class struggle. So workers need to be *politically prepared* for what they are up against.

The Class Nature of the Capitalist State

A *BusinessWeek* article a few years ago reported that the number of workers who would join a union if they could has doubled since 1984. If even half of those were unionized, organized labor would represent 35 percent of the workforce, the same share as its peak in 1945. This would cost employers *hundreds of billions of dollars* in increased wages and benefits. That’s why union-busting is a billion-dollar industry and it’s what the capitalists are looking to do in this grocery strike.

Trumka, who was one of the main advocates of the “corporate campaign” strategy during a string of losing strikes in the 1980s, said in a recent interview, “We have our work cut out for us, but I predict that three months from now, there will be a whole different attitude out there” (*Los Angeles Times*, 20 January). Well, the real question is: three months from now, what will have happened to the strikers out there? Workers and their allies need to understand the history and real treachery underlying the “corporate campaign.” When Sweeney and Trumka took over the leadership of the AFL-CIO in 1995, they promised to bring back the “militancy” of labor’s past. But in fact what they meant was not the powerful strike struggles that built the unions in the 1930s, but instead civil disobedience tactics and “corporate campaigns” appealing to the capitalists’ “moral conscience”—mass rallies with preachers and Democrats instead of mass picket lines to shut down production, pacifist civil disobedience instead of sit-down strikes, consumer boycotts instead

of secondary labor boycotts by transport workers who declare struck goods “hot cargo.”

Epitomizing this layer of “corporate campaign” bureaucrats is AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka, the former head of the United Mine Workers. What’s his history? Trumka entered the UMW bureaucracy on the coattails of Arnold Miller, who was elected through a Labor Department-supervised election in 1972. As the government’s and Democratic Party’s man in the union, Arnold Miller later betrayed the historic 110-day miners strike of 1978. To distance himself from the despised Miller, who was forced to resign in 1979, Trumka went back to the mines, cultivated a machine, and was elected president of the UMWA in 1982. He went on to perfect the art of keeping his historically militant membership hogtied by bowing to every rule in the bosses’ strikebreaking arsenal. With a lawyer’s flair, he worked his way up the AFL-CIO bureaucracy by mouthing support for “civil disobedience” while calling off mine occupations, like at Pittston’s Moss No. 3 Plant in 1989, and letting strike militants like Jerry Dale Lowe be jailed. (See “An Injury to One Is an Injury to All!” WV No. 814, 21 November 2003.) After two decades of such government-orchestrated “democracy,” the Mine Workers are now a shadow of a once-powerful union.

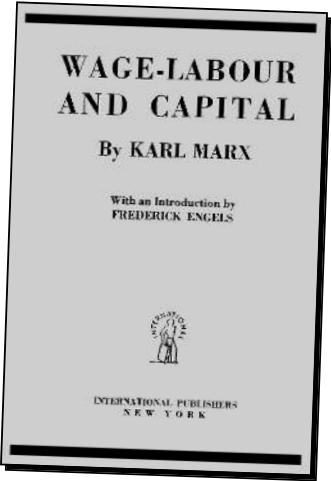
“Corporate campaigns” have been the death knell for hard-fought strikes ranging from the Hormel strike of UFCW meatpackers in 1985-86 to the Detroit newspaper strike in 1995. One Detroit strike activist at the time pointedly asked: Why do strike leaders think it’s OK to illegally sit in the roadway and get arrested but not to illegally build mass pickets and stop the scabs? (See WV No. 632, “Labor: Stop Playing by the Bosses’ Rules!”.) It’s not about legality per se—there’s a political reason the bureaucrats bow to the bosses’ laws against effective strike tactics.

Civil disobedience is particularly suited to their aims because it is an impotent moral appeal to the capitalists and respectable “public opinion” which



Beard

Karl Marx, founder of scientific socialism, explained nature of capitalist exploitation in his 1849 work, *Wage-Labour and Capital*.



avoids any working-class threat to the capitalists’ property rights and prerogatives. The pro-capitalist union bureaucrats do not want to unleash labor’s social power, for fear that in the course of struggle the working class might challenge the framework of capitalism. For example, writing about the explosive sit-down strikes of the 1930s, the Bolshevik revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky noted in the 1938 Transitional Program: “*Sit-down strikes*...go beyond the limits of ‘normal’ capitalist procedure. Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary seizure of factories deals a blow to the idol, capitalist property. Every sit-down strike poses in a practical manner the question of who is boss of the factory: the capitalist or the workers?” This is the question writ large that the trade-union bureaucrats, who now consider strikes passé, want to avoid. It’s ultimately the question of capitalist reform vs. workers revolution.

The turn of the century American socialist and labor leader Daniel De Leon described the conservative trade-union leaders as the “labor lieutenants of capital.” Their aim is not the elimination of capitalism, but to “make capitalism work”—which is a common liberal view in America. If certain capitalists just weren’t so greedy, we could all get along. The capitalists are typically divided into “good” and “bad” actors: whether it’s parasitic financiers vs. productive indus-

trialists, or the 1980s version of Wall Street raiders vs. “warm-hearted” factory owners fighting off hostile takeovers, or the current “socially responsible” local companies vs. supposedly all-powerful international corporations beholden to no one. Or, in this strike, the “good” Kroger CEO vs. the “bad” Safeway CEO. In all these cases, the proponents of reforming capitalism make a qualitative distinction between different capitalists that doesn’t really exist. Capitalism is based on a system of production in which maximizing profit, through the exploitation of labor, is the goal. Since profit is derived by paying workers less in wages than the value they add to a product or a service through their labor, with the “surplus value” being pocketed by the capitalist, the most basic way to increase profits is by lowering wages.

The trade-union tops demand a “fair” wage, but wages are not determined by fairness. Capitalists seek to drive wages toward the minimum amount needed to keep the workers physically and mentally able to do the work, as well as raise the next generation. Workers inevitably resist and seek better terms of exploitation, which is why they form unions. The terms of capitalist exploitation—also known as wages, benefits and working conditions—are ultimately determined by the class struggle, which is what today’s union leaders wish to avoid.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Haiti...

(continued from page 1)

by the violent advance of a motley opposition comprised of former supporters and former opponents of Aristide. When Aristide was ousted in 1991 by Raoul Cédras (a graduate of the infamous U.S. military “School of the Americas” a/k/a “School of the Assassins”), some 70,000 desperate Haitians fled in rickety boats, while several thousand left behind were killed in the streets. The refugees were arrested by the U.S. Coast Guard, imprisoned for *years* at the U.S. military base in Guantánamo, Cuba and detention centers in the U.S., and then deported back to political repression and poverty in Haiti.

Clinton re-installed Aristide at the point of bayonets in 1994 in large part to stop the flow of Haitian refugees. Today’s invasion by the U.S. Marines is again mainly motivated by the domestic agenda, that is, racist anti-immigration policies. No huddled, desperate black masses yearning to be free will be permitted to come ashore Bush’s America. The prison camp in Guantánamo has been readied in anticipation of countless Haitians the U.S. will intercept on the high seas and throw in jail. The U.S. invasion of Haiti is also a danger to the Cuban deformed workers state, as well as to the militant proletariat of the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. We demand: *U.S. out of Guantánamo! Defend Cuba! Asylum for the Haitian refugees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

While the White House hesitated, it was the Democrats of the Congressional Black Caucus who demanded that U.S. Marines be sent to Haiti. Thus, these black front men for U.S. imperialism prove themselves to be the enemy of the



AP

U.S. military policeman brutalizing man during 1994 occupation of Haiti, ordered by Clinton White House, that restored Aristide to power.

black masses—here in the U.S. and in Haiti—by fostering illusions that this government, which viciously oppresses labor, black people and immigrants, can act in the interests of the downtrodden anywhere. *Break with the Democrats! Build a workers party!*

When Aristide took power in 1991, we warned: “Aristide will either play the role of groveling instrument of the Haitian bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialist overlords or he will be swept away in a reactionary crackdown aimed at decisively disciplining the pitilessly oppressed population” (“Haiti: Election Avalanche for Radical Priest,” WV No. 517, 4 January 1991). Aristide did *both*.

Initially, Aristide irked the U.S. by resisting their economic diktats and establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. Then, after he was toppled in 1991, Aristide proved his reliability to his U.S. overseers by agreeing in advance of his return to power to a drastic austerity pro-

gram, privatization of state-owned industry, massive layoffs in the public sector and the virtual abolition of import tariffs. The latter induced the collapse of the indigenous economy as the market was flooded with, for example, American rice at prices cheaper than the Haitian-grown product. Having dissolved the army (a center of his opposition) in 1995, Aristide propped up his rule with a brutal police force and gang terror.

The Bush administration, citing election fraud in Haiti in 2000 (which takes *chutzpah*—remember the Florida “chads” of 2000?) drastically slashed foreign aid to Haiti, even blocking previously approved loans from the Inter-American Development Bank for improvements in education, roads, health care and the water supply. In short, the Bush administration plunged what was already the poorest country in the Western hemisphere and one of the most malnourished populations in the world into a living hell. Yet Aristide demonstrated to the workers and the poor that his loyalty was not to them but to the White House and IMF. One of the few benefits from the Aristide regime was that his diplomatic ties to Cuba meant that over 500 Cuban doctors and nurses have been working in Haiti. As a letter to the *New York Times* (2 March) points out, “In the provinces, where most Haitians reside, Cuban doctors and nurses outnumber the Haitian medical personnel.” These crucial medical teams will most likely be thrown out of the country by whoever the U.S. installs to run Haiti.

For 200 years, the Haitian masses have been paying in blood for the successful slave revolt and the defeat of Napoleon’s army. A perceptive article by Gary Younge, “Throttled by History,” (London *Guardian*, 23 February) notes:

“‘Men make their own history,’ wrote Karl Marx. ‘But they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it

under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under given circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past.’ From the outset Haiti inherited the wrath of the colonial powers, which knew what a disastrous example a Haitian success story would be. In the words of Napoleon Bonaparte: ‘The freedom of the negroes, if recognised in St Domingue [as Haiti was then known] and legalised by France, would at all times be a rallying point for freedom-seekers of the New World’.”

In return for international recognition and to compensate France’s former slave-owners, Haiti was compelled to pay 150 million gold francs—approximately 18 billion dollars at today’s prices. By the end of the 19th century, 80 percent of Haiti’s national budget was going to pay off its former exploiters, and the country remains a hideously impoverished debtor nation today. The French imperialists, who first enslaved the Haitian people, gave asylum to the hated Duvaliers, and demanded the ouster of Aristide, have the gall to posture as “saviors” of Haiti today. *Le Monde*’s lead editorial on 1 March, headlined “Help Haiti,” concludes with a pious chastisement of failed American policy, and ominously intones, “What is necessary is a continuous presence under a renewed UN mandate.”

The bitter truth is that the desperate conditions of Haiti today cannot be adequately resolved *within* Haiti, where the economy is so destitute that there is barely a working class. Social power lies in the hands of the North American proletariat, including its important Haitian component in Miami, New York and Montreal, as well as their class brothers and sisters throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. To put an end to the cycle of puppet dictators in Haiti, it is necessary to defeat the imperialist puppet masters and sweep away capitalist rule from Port-au-Prince to Wall Street!■

WORKERS VANGUARD



Young Spartacus

Outrage Against Racist “Bake Sale” at Columbia U.

Campus Right-Wingers Target Black Students

NEW YORK, March 1—In a calculated racist provocation during Black History Month, the Columbia College Conservative Club (CCCC) staged an anti-affirmative action “bake sale” in Lerner Hall, the student center, on February 5. This “bake sale,” which peddled baked goods to Jewish, white, Asian and male students at higher prices than to black,

Young Spartacus

Latino and female students, was a sneering message to minority students that in the eyes of these right-wingers, they do not belong. Underlining the insult, the CCCC’s “bake sale” coincided with the Columbia Center for Career Education’s Diversity Recruiting Conference, a jobs

Above: SYC speaker at February 26 protest organized by Columbia University Concerned Students of Color against racist provocations on campus.

fair for minority students. This provocation sparked outrage among hundreds of minority and anti-racist students who have organized silent vigils, overflowing meetings and speakout protests on campus. Nearly four weeks after the “bake sale,” the campus remains a hotbed of justified anger. A militant, mass, integrated protest on campus would make the racist yahoos think twice about spewing their filth.

Racist provocations like that of the CCCC are part of a crusade to dismantle those gains of the civil rights movement that remain. A February 11 Spartacus

Youth Club statement on the “bake sale” noted:

“At Columbia University, where the black population is fairly small, the CCCC attempted to heighten racial divisions between students by promoting the lie that black students in this country are given a free ride.... While black students are under siege nationwide, the CCCC aims to drive black students off campus at Columbia.”

There has been a right-wing onslaught on campuses nationwide, both at state schools and elite private ones. Since the beginning of 2003, College Republicans

and other conservative groups have held racist anti-affirmative action “bake sales” at schools across the country, including UCLA, UC Berkeley, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Texas at Austin, Northwestern University and Boston University. The “bake sales” have grown in number following the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling last year, which did not go far enough for the right-wingers in gutting such affirmative action programs as still exist. In mid-February, the College Republicans at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island took this racist offensive a step further by presenting a \$250 “student of non-color, caucasian descent (white)”-only scholarship at a lecture they sponsored on “How the Civil Rights Movement Destroyed the Black Community.”

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Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals! For the Right to Gay Marriage!

SAN FRANCISCO—The newly elected Democratic Party mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, set off a political firestorm when he ordered the county clerk to begin issuing same-sex marriage licenses on February 12. In search of a symbolic recognition of equality and the ability to partake in the multiple entitlements currently only granted to heterosexuals who marry—from pension benefits to hospital visitation rights—3,400 gay and lesbian couples married in the last two weeks. The first license was issued to Del Martin, 83, and Phyllis Lyon, 79, partners for 51 years and the founders of the first national lesbian organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, in 1955.

The marriages defy a state initiative (Proposition 22) passed in 2000 that states: “Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.” Newsom, who barely defeated Green Party candidate Matt Gonzalez last December, has now cleverly co-opted much of Gonzalez’ liberal base. So while

the religious right howls in outrage, marriage mania has gripped San Francisco City Hall.

We communists are committed to full democratic rights for gays, and we welcome any legal advances that can be wrested from this cruelly bigoted society, including the right to marry. In a recent editorial “Civil Right or Regressive Politics?” a gay, black Oakland man wrote: “The fight is not about church weddings. It is for legal recognition—specifically, laws involving property rights.” A person’s marital status should be genuinely irrelevant and every individual should have the same rights and protections regarding health, home and children.

Days after Newsom’s proclamation, President Bush said he was “troubled” by San Francisco’s act of municipal disobedience. Spoofing Bush, a local comic strip (“Bad Reporter” by Dan Asmussen) ran a humorous and bogus *SF Chronicle* headline: “‘Weddings of Mass Destruction’ Found in San Francisco—Bush Targets

Newsom as Critics Predict ‘Queermire’.” Bush is now calling for a constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union of a man and a woman, asserting that same-sex marriages defy “more than two centuries of American jurisprudence and millennia of human experience” (*SF Chronicle*, 25 February).

Among younger gays and lesbians, Bush’s opposition to this basic democratic right has driven some to white hot rage and many to jump on the Democratic bandwagon. But they should remember that it was Democrat Bill Clinton who signed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, which enshrined marriage as the union between one man and one woman and blocked access to federal benefits for gay partners indefinitely. Both major Democratic presidential contenders, Senator John Kerry and Senator John Edwards, oppose same-sex marriage while also opposing a constitutional amendment to ban it.

Newsom’s action comes on the heels

of the Massachusetts court ruling last November sanctioning gay marriage. Together with Bush’s proposed constitutional amendment, this issue is polarizing the country in the lead-up to the 2004 elections, much to the Democrats’ dismay. Meanwhile, the Green Party mayor of New Paltz, a small college town in upstate New York, began performing same-sex marriage ceremonies on February 27; the Democratic state attorney general refused the request by Republican governor George Pataki to intervene to stop them.

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s first response came on February 20 when he ordered the Attorney General Bill Lockyer to take action against the SF city administration. Then on NBC’s *Meet the Press* (February 22), Schwarzenegger conjured up the fantasy that “All of a sudden, we see riots, we see protests, we see people clashing. The next thing we know, there is injured or there is

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