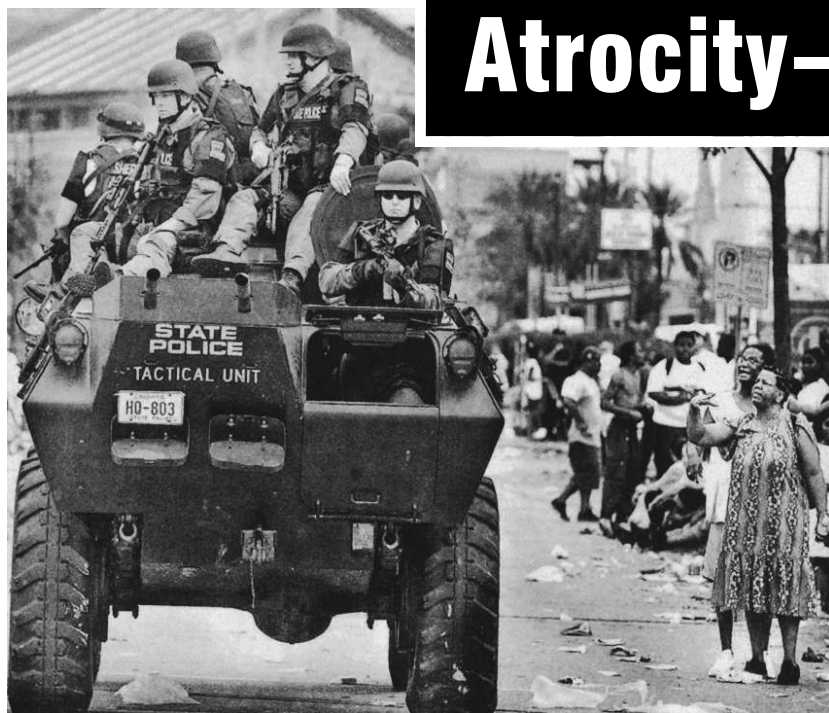


## New Orleans Racist Atrocity—One Year After



AP



Laforet/NY Times

# Race, Class and the Fight for a Workers America

We print below two presentations, edited for publication, given at a New York Spartacist League forum held September 16. The talks are by guest speaker Ruth, a New Orleans resident who was working as a nurse at the time of Hurricane Katrina, and Barry James, a longtime cadre of the Spartacist League.

**Ruth:** New Orleans and New York have both just passed anniversaries of our respective urban tragedies and lives lost. There was a ton of books, movies, documentaries out, including Spike Lee's, on New Orleans. I read and watched as many of them as I could stand to. They were all very good in conveying the visuals and the voices of the tragedy in New Orleans.

One thing that was missing completely, or was only touched on, I would like to drive home. You might have had the impression that the Feds were dithering and doing nothing for those four days that the people were on the rooftops. The Feds were not "dithering." Well, maybe Bush and Brown were dithering. The Army was cordoning off New Orleans. The National Guard, the cops—every level of law enforcement that wasn't themselves deserting or out looting—was putting up a blockade around the city.

It seems the first thing they teach in Law Enforcement 101 is to get control of the situation. This means preventing civilians from rescuing anybody. So people should die rather than be rescued by civilians. If you remember the Oakland, California, pancaking of the expressway many years ago by an earthquake, the people from the neighborhood, being human beings, who are just naturally

## Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

**Left: In wake of Hurricane Katrina, SWAT teams roll past New Orleans Convention Center as desperate survivors wait for transportation out of city. Right: One year later, the Ninth Ward remains devastated, part of rulers' drive to keep black New Orleanians from returning.**

inclined to help others in distress, came out and began pulling people out of cars. The first thing the cops did when they got there was to put a stop to this. The same thing that happened in New Orleans.

What happened was that the press, which I like to call the prostitute press, had repeated and spread these lies that New Orleans had broken down into chaos after the storm, that looters and killers were out raping women and children, slitting throats, murdering, pillaging, shooting down helicopters that were there to help them, breaking into hospitals for drugs. You didn't have to ask what color these supposed rapists and killers were. It was assumed they were black. Nobody had to confirm if in fact any of this was actually going on. It became the reason for not going to the rescue: "You can't go in there to rescue people, they're just a bunch of murderers and rapists."

After it was all over and these were all found to be vicious, racist, murderous lies, nobody stepped up and took it back. Nobody retracted it. Everybody just went on about his way. There's a black Demo-

cratic mayor, Ray Nagin, and his police chief, who had assisted in spreading this panic. After the fact, the mayor fired the police chief for making him look so bad by spreading these stories. Another reason for the firing was the police chief was apparently bent on prosecuting or pursuing the police who had done a massive amount of looting.

One of the more notorious examples was that they emptied Sewell Cadillac of every last Cadillac, and also the vintage Corvette collection. When we got back to town in October there were still cops driving around in these Cadillacs. And this issue has been so thoroughly white-washed, there had to have been very high-level people involved, because it's been completely laid to rest. And now Sewell Cadillac makes a joke about it. They have billboards around town advertising their Cadillacs that say: "Driven by New Orleans' Finest." I'm not kidding. I couldn't make this stuff up.

And by the way, the looting trials have come up. They're handing out 12- to 15-year sentences to looters. Let me tell you

who the "looters" were. The 20,000 people you saw sweltering in the Convention Center, the reason they didn't die of thirst in the three, four, five days they were standing there was, the way one person put it, "because of the young people with their cars." "Young people with their cars" went off to the Wal-Mart, competed with the local police forces for the goods and brought back water to the people who were waiting. Those were the "looters." Obviously there were a few people running around with televisions; nothing on the order of what the cops did.

### FEMA, Cops Block Rescue Efforts

Back to the blockade. As soon as the hurricane hit, from all over the country came armadas, caravans, flotillas, people to the rescue. People towing boats, private helicopter companies, medical mobile vans, crews of doctors, crews of nurses, fleets of ambulances, ice trucks, Red Cross vehicles, food, water, blankets, cots. Humane Society people with vans full of cages. More than you can imagine, pouring in from all over the country. Stopped at the border. Not allowed to get in.

When one of the Memorial Hospital physicians managed to get out after his horrific few days in the hospital, bringing some patients out with him, he found on the causeway fleets of ambulances lined up, just sitting there. And he says, "What are you doing here?" "We're here to rescue patients." "How long have you been

*continued on page 8*



## THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1917

### FROM THE KORNILOV COUP TO THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

#### SEE PAGE 4

# Defend Striking Teachers in Oaxaca, Mexico!

NEW YORK CITY—The Spartacist League joined a September 21 picket line protest of some 125 people outside the Mexican Consulate in New York City, which was called under the slogans “Protest Repression in Oaxaca, Mexico—Defend the Striking Teachers!” The teachers, joined by workers, students and activists, have occupied large parts of Oaxaca City, including government buildings, since June 14, when tens of thousands of workers forced 3,000 police to flee the city center. In addition to demanding better wages, the teachers and their supporters have demanded the ousting of the governor of Oaxaca state, Ulises Ruiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

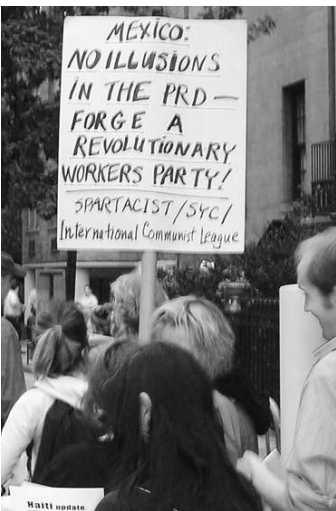
The threat is posed of a bloody military crackdown to oust the strikers. A spokesman for Felipe Calderón of the right-wing National Action Party (PAN), who was named the winner of the recent presidential elections by a dubious “electoral institute,” has declared that the “challenge to authority” posed by the teachers and their supporters in Oaxaca is the country’s “main problem.” The PAN and the PRI have called for the federal government to put an end to the Oaxacan teachers’ *plantón* (encampment). As for the bourgeois-populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), while its national leadership has called for negotiations, a Oaxaca PRD leader has backed repression.

The main organizer of the New York protest was the centrist Internationalist Group (IG). Endorsers included teachers



NYC, September 21: Spartacists join rally for striking Oaxaca teachers outside Mexican consulate.

and professors at the City University of New York organized in the Professional Staff Congress union, some CUNY student groups and several left organizations, ranging from the International Socialist Organization to Progressive Labor Party to the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP). The Spartacist League endorsed the protest and carried such placards as: “For Workers Revolution in Mexico and the U.S.!” and “No Illusions in the Capitalist PRD—For a Revolutionary Workers Party!” Our comrades chanted, “Capitalism means strikebreaking and war—Workers revolution is what we’re for!” and “Stop the anti-immigrant attacks! Down



WV Photos

with the Republicans and Democrats!” Speakers from the various reformist and centrist organizations used plenty of leftist rhetoric while taking pains not to differentiate themselves programmatically from each other. Walter Daum of the LRP and Jan Norden of the IG, both pseudo-Trotskyist organizations, denounced the PRD and gave lip service to the need for a revolutionary workers party in Mexico and for socialist revolution. But the Spartacist League speaker was the only one who put forward the strategic perspective for workers revolution in Mexico—Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution—and raised some crucial questions pertaining to the workers’ struggles. Our speaker began by stating:

“The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, stands with the teachers and other workers and oppressed of Oaxaca against murderous state repression. This is part of widespread social and class struggle in Mexico. The ICL salutes the victory last month of the militant four-month strike against government union-busting,

a strike by the miners and steel workers union in Lázaro Cárdenas. Our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México have intervened in these struggles, and in the protests over the presidential elections, putting forward a program of permanent revolution. For Mexico, to achieve national liberation from the yoke of U.S. imperialism, to achieve the liberation of the oppressed women, indigenous peoples and the peasantry, capitalist rule must be smashed through workers revolution, part of international socialist revolution.”

Our spokesman took out the IG for its refusal to defend corporatist unions in Mexico—i.e., those historically affiliated to the former ruling PRI—against the bosses and state repression. While these unions are run by a corrupt, gangster-ridden bureaucracy, they have increasingly come into conflict with the capitalists and their state, as seen for example, in the strike in Lázaro Cárdenas by the SNTMMSRM union (see “Mexico in Turmoil,” WV No. 876, 15 September). Yet the IG denounces these unions as “the class enemy” of the workers. Our comrade noted, “The only unions that they defend in Mexico are the unions which support the PRD.” Thus does the IG conciliate the bourgeois-nationalist PRD, serving to reinforce the nationalist consciousness that ideologically chains the Mexican proletariat to the bourgeoisie.

As in the U.S., the struggle to forge a revolutionary internationalist workers party in Mexico demands a fight for the political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois state and *all* bourgeois parties. The SL speaker noted, “Our comrades of the GEM fight to *break* the workers, including the Oaxacan teachers, from their illusions in the bourgeois-nationalist PRD, in the populist López Obrador.” He concluded with the call: “For workers revolution in Mexico and the U.S.! Down with state repression in Oaxaca! Victory to the teachers strike!” ■



TROTSKY

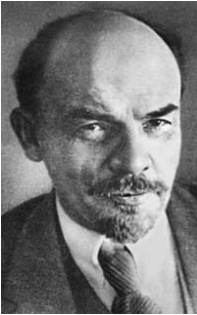
## Capitalism: Wages Falling, Profits Rising

*Today in the U.S., the share of wages and salaries in total economic output is at the lowest level since the government began collecting data in the late 1940s, while the share of corporate profits is at the highest level in four decades. While liberal Democrats and reformist leftists put the onus for the deterioration in workers’ living standards on the economic policies of the Bush White House, Karl Marx explained that both the ever-increasing concentration of produc-*

*tion and the immiseration of the laboring masses are inherent in the capitalist system itself. This brutally exploitative and irrationally destructive system must be overthrown through workers revolution and replaced by a planned, socialist world economy.*

Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic régime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.

—Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (1867)



LENIN

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either at the time of publication or at a later point. In order to facilitate the printing of letters, which we do not edit, please keep them to 500 words or less. Letters can be sent to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 or e-mailed to [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net).

## Letter

# On Global Warming

2 September 2006

I have been a long time supporter of the policies and program of the International Communist League and reader of *Workers Vanguard* and *Australasian Spartacist*. I know on occasions WV has over the years mentioned even written quite at length about global warming and environmental issues but given the prominence of green movements around the world and their not inconsiderable political influence in governments and exposure in the corporate media, I feel more critique is warranted sometimes in WV. In today’s Australian Newspaper (a prominent mouth piece of Australian corporate capitalism)

there is a long article on Al Gore’s opinions on global warming and his belief in its authenticity. I would like to make the following points, both questions and statements. Why has a section of the capitalist class and the corporate media become converts to some degree of GW? To what degree is GW some form of latterday malthusianism? Scientific evidence from drilling in Greenland ice caps and other geological evidence has shown enormous climate change in the past (the ice ages, etc) and even in historic time there was a warm period from about the seventh to the eleventh century and also the mini ice

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# September 15 Oakland Rally



WV Photos

Left: Jack Heyman, chair of united-front rally for Mumia Abu-Jamal at Alameda Courthouse. Right: Partisan Defense Committee contingent.

## PDC: For a Class-Struggle Fight to Free Mumia!

OAKLAND—On September 15, some 100 people rallied outside the Alameda County Courthouse in downtown Oakland in support of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. The protest was called by the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal (LAC) under the slogans, “Mumia Abu-Jamal Is Innocent! For Labor Action to Free Mumia! End the Racist Death Penalty!” The Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—endorsed the rally on the basis of these slogans, for which we have historically struggled. We fought to make this rally a genuine united-front action: bringing together diverse organizations in the urgent fight to free Mumia, with full debate over contending strategies and political programs.

A Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, an outspoken journalist known as “the voice of the voiceless” and a supporter of the MOVE organization, Mumia was convicted in a political, racist frame-up on demonstrably false charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner on 9 December 1981. More than five years ago, Mumia submitted to court the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. But court after court has refused to even consider the Beverly confession and the mountains of supporting evidence of Mumia’s innocence (see the July 2006 PDC pamphlet, *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!*).

As Mumia’s legal appeals reach their final stages, the PDC is fighting to revitalize mass protest centered on the labor movement, understanding that the only pressure that will have an impact on the capitalist rulers and their courts is the fear

rally’s first speaker, stressed that “the racist capitalist rulers—both Democrats and Republicans—are united in their determination to see Mumia dead because they see in him the spectre of black revolution. It’s a warning to all who challenge

opposition to the capitalist state—its courts, its cops, its military. The ‘new trial’ slogan builds illusions in the very justice of the courts that have upheld the racist frame-up for 24 years. It means giving up the fight to mobilize the social power of labor to free Mumia!”

### Reformists, Labor Fakers Demobilized Support for Mumia

Ikegami noted that the LAC “called this rally calling to ‘Free Mumia’ though they have marched in lockstep with those calling for a ‘new trial’ since their inception in 1999. They obscure the class nature of the capitalist state, they deep-six any critical mention of the Democratic Party, they provide a ‘labor’ face to the political program of seeking ‘justice’ from the capitalist state enemy.” Most subsequent speakers took umbrage at our exposure of the liberal-reformist strategy of reliance on the capitalist state. The LAC’s Carole Seligman, a supporter of Socialist Viewpoint, complained, “Our job is not to denounce each other, not to split hairs, not to polemicize against each other at a public rally for Mumia.” On the contrary, political debate is crucial to reversing the demobilization of mass support for Mumia and raising the consciousness of those fighting for his freedom.

In his speech, Jeff Mackler, national secretary of SA and a coordinator of the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, launched a demagogic attack on the PDC. Equating our opposition to the “new trial” slogan with opposing Mumia’s

*continued on page 14*

## “Labor Action Committee”: No Labor, No Action

of the social consequences of executing this innocent man or entombing him for life. On campuses and at union workplaces, the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club distributed the PDC flyer mobilizing for the rally (see “For Class-Struggle Defense to Free Mumia Now!” WV No. 875, 1 September). Based on the slogans, “There is no justice in the capitalist courts! For class-struggle defense to free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!”, the PDC contingent made up about a third of the rally. Despite the urgency of Mumia’s cause, it is painfully clear that the LAC, along with Socialist Action (SA) and its Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, as well as other endorsers, did virtually nothing to build this rally.

PDC representative Kathy Ikegami, the

U.S. imperialism at home and abroad.” She continued:

“The fight to free this innocent man has reached a critical juncture. Since the PDC and Spartacist League took up Mumia’s case in 1987, we have fought for class-struggle defense to free Mumia. We have advocated pursuing all possible legal proceedings in his case but place no faith whatsoever in the so-called justice of the courts.

“In 1995 millions marched for Mumia and stopped his execution. So where is that movement today? It was demobilized and demoralized by reformist leftists who deliberately subordinated the call to *free* Mumia to the calls for a ‘new trial’ appealing to bourgeois liberals who see Mumia’s case as an isolated ‘miscarriage of justice’ rather than the conscious political frame-up it is. *These are counterposed strategies*. The fight to *free* Mumia means a class-struggle fight in

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# THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1917

## FROM THE KORNILOV COUP TO THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

We print below, edited for publication, the first part of a class given by comrade Diana Coleman as part of a series of educationals on Leon Trotsky's *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1932), which was held in January of this year as a Spartacist League young cadre school. The class covering the period from the February Revolution through the July Days, given by comrade T. Marlow, appeared in WV Nos. 874 (4 August) and 875 (1 September).

### PART ONE

The first chapter of Trotsky's *Lessons of October* (1924) is called "We Must Study the October Revolution," and the opening line is: "We met with success in the October Revolution, but the October Revolution has met with little success in our press." Well, we have an even bigger problem in these years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as our left-wing opponents who cheered capitalist counterrevolution have effectively renounced any claim to the heritage of October, our contacts have never heard of the Russian Revolution, and our own young members have been heard to say, "We are the party of the Russian Revolution—but I don't know much about it myself." We can rectify the last part of that, anyhow. So as comrade Marlow told me, he got the bad part where the Bolsheviks are having all this trouble and I got the good part where they win. The two things I have found most useful to read in addition to Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* are Lenin's *Collected Works*, Volumes 24, 25, and 26, as well as Alexander Rabinowitch. He is an honest guy who, to his own surprise, came to the conclusion that the Bolsheviks actually inter-



Petrograd, 1917: Meeting at railway station to encourage formation of Red Guard detachments.

dependency as, in essence, "such a training, tempering and organization of the proletarian vanguard as enables the latter to seize power, arms in hand" and the social-democratic (Menshevik) tendency as "the acceptance of reformist oppositional activity within the framework of bourgeois society and an adaptation to its legality—i.e., the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state." The struggle between these tendencies makes itself most strongly felt on the eve of revolution. Trotsky further made the point that there is an intimate connection

ally, I think Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* is very helpful in understanding dialectical materialism and contradictions.

### The Bolsheviks and the World War

In terms of the interimperialist war, the Bolshevik position of revolutionary defeatism was absolutely crucial to bringing off the October Revolution. The political battles Lenin waged from 4 August 1914, when German Social Democratic parliamentary deputies voted in favor of war credits, to his struggle against the centrists elements, led by German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, that participated in the international antiwar conferences in Zimmerwald and Kienthal were critical. What Lenin hammered on was the imperialist nature of the war and the revolutionary tasks it demanded; that is, to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war against the bourgeoisie and for socialism.

Another key point was that the greatest danger to the proletariat and to the chances of revolution was the centrists with all their phrases about "peace campaigns" and "peace without annexations" and, as Lenin said, their real program: "peace with the social-chauvinists" (see "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," 10 April 1917). So it was the call for a total break with the Second International and for the formation of a Third International that was the most controversial aspect of Lenin's program.

With Lenin's return to Petrograd in April of 1917, the Bolsheviks reaffirmed their intransigent opposition to the imperialist war now being waged by the new "democratic" capitalist government in Russia. Lenin denounced "revolutionary" defensism as "the worst enemy of the further progress and success of the Russian revolution." Certainly the Bolsheviks attempted to find a "bridge" to the defensist sentiments of the masses. Lenin worked hard to patiently explain the Bolshevik position to the working masses (honest defensists, he called them), who in reality had nothing to gain from the imperialist war, contrasting them with

the bourgeoisie, intellectuals and social-patriots, who knew quite well that it is impossible to give up annexations without giving up the rule of capital.

However, there was a bigger question at issue here—dual power. The working masses had overthrown the tsar and created the soviets: incipient organs of proletarian state power. So the proletariat had in hand a conquest worth defending. In Russia there was dual power and a class war was raging; the Bolsheviks had to have a tactical approach that took into account the very real possibility of the seizure of state power by the working class.

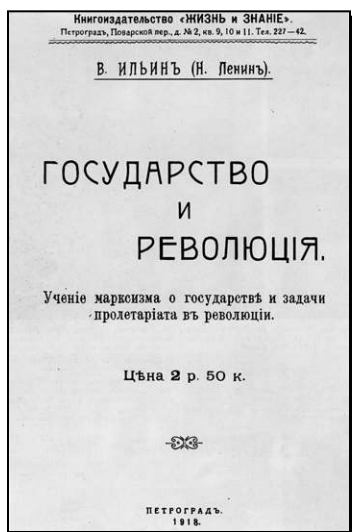
### The Aftermath of the July Days

I'll take up where comrade Marlow left off. The period following the July Days was what Trotsky called "the month of the great slander." Lenin and Zinoviev went into hiding; Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Kamenev, Raskolnikov (a Bolshevik sailors' leader and author of *Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917*) and many others were jailed. In *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (1976), Alexander Rabinowitch quotes a Left Menshevik who described the streets of Petrograd on July 5 as "a counterrevolutionary orgy" and said that it was one of the saddest days of his life (a very Menshevik comment). Nevertheless, it was the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionary (SR) soviet leaders who were leading the charge in the anti-Bolshevik repression. The Bolsheviks were also blamed for the collapse of the military offensive, a ridiculous charge.

The ever-present Sukhanov, a Left Menshevik often quoted by Trotsky in his *History*, couldn't understand why Lenin wouldn't present himself for a government inquiry into who was responsible for the July unrest. There was some sentiment to this effect in the Bolshevik Party too, but a look at the fate of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, who were murdered in the counterrevolutionary terror unleashed by the Social Democratic government in Berlin in 1919, makes clear exactly what Lenin was worried about. However, the repression following the July Days was shallow and temporary. In *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, Rabinowitch has a chapter called "The Ineffectiveness of Repression." He writes: "Kerensky's flaming hard-line rhetoric notwithstanding, almost none of the major repressive measures adopted by the cabinet during this period either was fully implemented or successfully achieved its objectives."

Disarming the workers and the Petrograd garrison units loyal to the Bolsheviks wasn't very successful. Some army personnel were transferred to the front, but contrary to plan, the units were not dissolved. Although many Bolshevik leaders were arrested, many were released during the Kornilov days and none were ever brought to trial because the revolution intervened. In any case, there were still some 32,000 Bolsheviks loose in Petrograd. Raskolnikov says:

"The events of July 3-5 and the campaign of savage repression which followed them thoroughly exposed the counterrevolutionary and anti-democratic position of the bourgeois government of Kerensky. The Mensheviks and SRs, tangled in the nets of the coalition, discredited themselves finally and irreparably. "But our persecuted Party, surrounded by



Above: Fake papers used by Lenin to evade arrest after July Days. While in hiding, Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*, first published in 1918 (left).

acted with the masses and went in for lively debate.

In *Lessons of October* Trotsky tried to grapple with the underlying political reasons for the failure of the 1923 German Revolution. He compared the German events and the Russian October. Trotsky details the fights that Lenin waged after February of 1917 in order to rearm the party. It was only these fights that made the victory in October possible. In speaking of the differences in the Bolshevik Party, Trotsky says: "The fundamental controversial question around which everything else centered was this: whether or not we should struggle for power; whether or not we should assume power."

Trotsky defined the Bolshevik ten-

between the question of power and the question of war.

So these are the questions I kept in mind for this class: the seizure of power, the interimperialist war, and, of course, the party, the party and again the party. Miliukov, the leading representative of the Russian bourgeoisie such as it was, recognized the role of the Bolsheviks as a party when he said: "They knew where they were going, and they went in the direction which they had chosen once for all, toward a goal which came nearer and nearer with every new, unsuccessful experiment of compromise" (quoted in Trotsky's *History*). Yes, but it took struggle, external and internal, because, as Trotsky says, the party is a living organism that develops in contradictions. Actu-

the aureole of martyrdom, emerged from these trials even better steeled than before, with its influence and the number of its supporters increased to an unprecedented degree.”

—Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917 (1925)

In his *History*, Trotsky comments that in October many local Bolshevik leaders would look at the workers they were leading, remember how they held up in July, and assign tasks accordingly. Lenin’s April Theses gave the party a correct, principled orientation, and the July Days and their aftermath steeled the party, but neither of these resolved the disagreements among the party tops, which reached their sharpest expression during the most decisive moment of the revolution—in the days of October.

## Kornilov’s Attempted Coup

The Kornilov events signaled an abrupt shift in the situation to the benefit of the Bolsheviks and the working class. Kornilov: the man with the heart of a lion and the brains of a sheep. Kornilov had been a monarchist of the “Black Hundred” (pogromist) type. Eisenstein’s movie *October*, which is good despite its anti-Trotsky slander, depicts the previously dismantled statue of the tsar repeatedly leaping back into place during the Kornilov insurrection: a quite apt image. Kornilov was a monarchist, but Miliukov, the epitome of the liberal bourgeoisie, wanted some version of the monarchy, too. One thing that interested me in Trotsky’s *History* was the two successive chapters titled “Kerensky’s Plot” and “Kornilov’s Insurrection.” I guess the first time I read the book I didn’t understand how much Kerensky was plotting with



VAAP photos

**Above: Counter-revolutionary General Kornilov. Left: Kornilov’s troops being disarmed.**

shevik Tseretelli, but the living tie between the bourgeoisie and the democracy: the “personal incarnation of the Coalition itself.” Kornilov was a different kind of bonapartist.

Meanwhile, Lenin was arguing against the right-wing deviation in the Bolshevik Party, which manifested itself in drawing closer to the Menshevik and SR soviet majority and, in part, to “defense of the fatherland.” Lenin said: “*Even now* we must not support Kerensky’s government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren’t we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise” (“To the Central Committee of the RSDLP,” 30 August 1917).

So here we see military defense of, but not political support to, the Provisional

them the Military Revolutionary Committee was impotent; without them it could only have passed the time with makeshift proclamations and flabby speeches by orators who had long since lost all authority. With the Bolsheviks, however, the Military Revolutionary Committee had at its disposal the full power of all organized worker-soldier strength, of whatever kind.”

—N. N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution 1917* (1955)

That’s right: if you want to fight right-wing reaction you need Bolsheviks!

## Kornilov’s Defeat and the Rise of Bolshevism

Alexander Rabinowitch, sort of puzzled, says of Kerensky:

“One might have expected that at this point, having suffered so badly at the hands of the right and having witnessed the enormous power of the left, the prime minister would have taken pains to retain the support of the latter. Yet, obsessed more than ever by fear of the extreme left and still intent on somehow strengthening the war effort, Kerensky now behaved almost as if the Kornilov affair had not happened.... Kerensky began laying plans to form an authoritarian government oriented toward law and order—a right-socialist-liberal coalition cabinet in which the influence of the Kadets would be stronger than ever.”

—*The Bolsheviks Come to Power*

Rabinowitch thinks Kerensky was stupid, but what were Kerensky’s choices? Lenin put it clearly when he said, “Kerensky is a *Kornilovite*; by sheer *accident* he has had a quarrel with Kornilov himself, but he remains in the most intimate alliance with other Kornilovites” (“Heroes of Fraud and the Mistakes of the Bolsheviks,” September 1917). In any case, by this time the masses were fed up not only with Kornilov, the Kadets and Kerensky, coalitionism in general was discredited too.

Everything was shifting to the left, and the situation of the country was getting worse by the minute: famine was threatening, capitalists were deliberately sabotaging industry, soldiers were starving, Riga had been fairly deliberately abandoned to German imperialism and Petrograd was threatened. Even the Menshevik and SR compromisers were saying that a coalition with the Kadets was no longer thinkable. Of course, the Kadets hadn’t changed any, so why had it been thinkable before?

Lenin had withdrawn the slogan “All Power to the Soviets” in the aftermath of the July Days as Bolsheviks were being hounded and jailed, not least by the Menshevik and SR soviet majority. He now began to think it was necessary to

look to the factory committees, instead of the soviets, as the organs of workers power. But between September 1 and 3 he wrote “On Compromises.” Seeing the soviets revitalized by the struggle against Kornilov and the Menshevik and SR compromisers at least talking about “no coalition,” he offered this compromise to them:

“The compromise on our part is our return to the pre-July demand of all power to the Soviets and a government of S.R.s and Mensheviks responsible to the Soviets.

“Now, and only now, perhaps *during only a few days* or a week or two, such a government could be set up and consolidated in a perfectly peaceful way....

“The Bolsheviks, without making any claim to participate in the government (which is impossible for the internationalists unless a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasants has been realised), would refrain from demanding the immediate transfer of power to the proletariat and the poor peasants and from employing revolutionary methods of fighting for this demand.”

Instead, with new elections to the soviets and full freedom of propaganda the Bolsheviks would peaceably fight for their ideas. Not surprisingly, the Menshevik and SR compromisers made clear that they were not up for this, which was an important lesson for some Bolsheviks and many workers. The slogan “All Power to the Soviets” was again suspended, but in the next few days the Bolsheviks won a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, and, following that, in a number of other soviets also. The slogan therefore received a new meaning: all power to the Bolshevik soviets. So now the soviets really represented the interests of the working class, as the proletariat was becoming not merely a class in itself, but a class for itself. In this situation the slogan had decisively ceased to be a slogan of peaceful development. The party was launched on the road of armed insurrection through the soviets and in the name of the soviets.

## Lenin’s Struggles with the Central Committee

The seizure of power was clearly on the order of the day, or I should say, it *should* have been on the order of the day. From mid-September onwards, Lenin began pounding away at this: that the Bolsheviks should get on with it and do it! In “The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power,” written between September 12 and 14, Lenin says: “The point is to make the *task* clear to the Party. The present task must be an *armed uprising* in Petrograd and Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and the overthrow of the government. We must consider *how* to agitate for this without expressly saying as much in the press.”

Let me touch on other things before I get into the political debates over the seizure of power. The April Theses called for a break with the centrists of Zimmerwald and the formation of a Third International. This was not accepted at the April Bolshevik Party conference, where Lenin cast the only vote against participation in a projected Zimmerwald anti-war conference in May. In “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution,” he wrote: “It is not as yet known in Russia that the Zimmerwald majority *are nothing but Kautskyites*.” Lenin went on: “The Zimmerwald bog can no longer be tolerated. We must not, for the sake of

*continued on page 7*



Dietz Verlag Berlin

**Peasants demonstrate in Siberia, 1917. Banners call to open the way for women, hail the democratic republic and demand confiscation of church land for use of starving peasants.**

Kornilov. It was clear that, had the Bolsheviks not mobilized the workers, Kerensky would have just sat there paralyzed as Petrograd was invaded as part of a coup plot that Kerensky had originally thought was going to make him dictator. The Bolsheviks and the workers would have been slaughtered.

During the Kornilov events, Trotsky relates how sailors from the revolutionary Kronstadt garrison asked, “Isn’t it time to arrest the government?” Trotsky’s answer was: “No, not yet.... Use Kerensky as a gun-rest to shoot Kornilov. Afterward we will settle with Kerensky.” The fact that the Kronstadt sailors now listened more carefully to the Bolsheviks than in the July Days showed the maturing of the workers’ and soldiers’ political understanding. Trotsky said the same thing in another way when he said that Kerensky and Kornilov were “two variants of one and the same danger...the one chronic and the other acute” and that you had to “ward off the acute danger first, in order afterwards to settle with the chronic one.”

Trotsky makes some thought-provoking remarks when he talks about aspects of bonapartism in the Russian Revolution. He says that Kerensky was not the representative of the soviets in the government like the SR leader Chernov or the Men-

Government. In the same letter, Lenin explained how this was to be used like an effective united front: “We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, *just as* Kerensky’s *troops do*, but we do not support Kerensky. *On the contrary*, we expose his weakness.” Lenin continues: “It would be wrong to think that we have moved farther away from the task of the proletariat winning power. No. We have come very close to it, *not directly*, but from the side.” Lenin kept the proletarian seizure of power in mind at all times.

By August 30, the Kornilov insurrection disintegrated: the railroad workers wouldn’t move him, his troops were won over by Bolshevik agitators, workers tore up the train tracks, etc. Throughout this whole period all these right-wingers were always saying, “If only I had one good regiment!” Except that they never did. The Bolsheviks gained greatly from these events. In his 1922 memoir, Sukhanov spoke candidly about the role of the Bolsheviks in the Soviet “Committee for Struggle Against the Counterrevolution” which included SRs, Mensheviks, as well as Bolsheviks:

“At that time theirs [the Bolsheviks’] was the only organization that was large, welded together by elementary discipline, and united with the democratic rank-and-file of the capital. *Without*

## The Russian Revolution of 1917 From the February Revolution to the July Days

Two-part article from *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 874, 875 4 August and 1 September 2006

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# For Free Abortion on Demand, Including for Teens! Coming of Age in the U.S.A.— Sex, Fear and Religious Reaction

As if going through adolescence weren't already difficult enough, the capitalist class and its state continue to make things worse by intervening in the most intimate and fraught part of coming of age: sex. From repressive legislation to "abstinence only" moralism masquerading as sex education, the church and the state seek to instill fear and loathing about sex in young people. Attacks on the rights of youth to engage in sex and to have access to contraception and abortion serve as a spearhead for broader anti-woman and anti-sex assaults.

In July, the U.S. Senate passed the Child Custody Protection Act. If it becomes law, a person who helps a minor escape parental notification laws by taking her across state lines to obtain an abortion will face federal charges for, according to George W. Bush, "jeopardiz[ing] the lives of young women" (*New York Times*, 26 July). The law would intensify the witchhunting climate and increase the powers of the state to go after young women and abortion providers, who already face anti-abortion harassment and murderous terror.

The Spartacus Youth Clubs oppose this law and all laws restricting abortion rights for women, including teenagers. As we wrote in "Defend Abortion Rights! Free Abortion on Demand!" (WV No. 750, 19 January 2001):

"Abortion is a politically explosive issue because it raises the question of the equality of women. This simple and safe medical procedure provides women with some control over whether or not to have children. For this reason it is viewed as a threat to the institution of the family which is a crucial prop for the system of capitalist exploitation."

In California, Proposition 85, an amended version of the Proposition 73

"squeal rule" law that was defeated at the polls last year, is on the ballot for November. It would mandate that parents be notified 48 hours in advance of a minor having an abortion. These squeal rules not only violate a young woman's privacy, but also give parents control over life-shaping decisions that young women should be allowed to make on their own. The SYCs uphold the right to abortion as a neces-

sary measure for women's health and well-being. It is only by the twisted logic of the church and state that a teenager is better off being forced to have a baby.



SYC raises call for free abortion on demand at March 2004 antiwar demonstration in San Francisco.

A 7 May article in the *New York Times Magazine* by Russell Shorto called "Contra-Contraception" details the campaign against contraception not only by

means of birth control, which should be made freely accessible through the fight for free, quality health care for all.

The morning-after pill (Plan B), highly effective in preventing pregnancy for up to 72 hours after unprotected sex, has been declared safe by scientists across the board. Yet its approval for over-the-counter sales by the Food and Drug Administration was blocked for *three years* under pressure from religious and political forces. Even now, women under 18, who have the hardest time getting contraception, will not be able to get the morning-after pill without a prescription!

## The Holy Trinity: Family, Church and State

The very important development of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which would protect women from a virus that is the primary cause of cervical cancer, was accompanied by an outcry from Christian right-wingers like Bridget Maher of the Family Research Council who howled: "Giving the HPV vaccine to young women could be potentially harmful, because they may see it as a licence [sic] to engage in premarital sex." In other words, these "pro-life" reactionaries would rather see young women die than have sex. Similar to religious nuts who say that AIDS is a "punishment" for promiscuity or homosexuality, most of what passes for sex education these days presents pregnancy or some loathsome disease as the punishment for teenagers who "disobey" the no-sex-before-marriage rule. Using fear and ignorance to try to prevent youth from acting on the biological urge to experience sexual pleasure is as old as the claim that masturbation causes blindness.

Why is the ruling class so worried about what we do in our bedrooms? Because they seek to strengthen the institution of the family, a key prop for capi-

talism. This institution is also the main source of the oppression of women and youth. The institution of the family arose with the advent of private property as a mechanism for transmitting wealth to "legitimate" offspring through inheritance. Guaranteeing the paternity of the heir required that the *woman*, not the man, be chaste before marriage and monogamous during it. The oppression of women is rooted in this social subordination, which is also expressed in the foisting of the burden of child-rearing and housework onto women in individual family units.

The institution of the family also serves as the bedrock of social conservatism, which the bourgeoisie uses to instill obedience to authority. This is why it is upheld as the norm even for the working class, which has little or no property to hand down. Together with religion, the family promotes a puritanical morality based on the repression of anything that deviates from the family ideal—from premarital to gay sex. Adults are driven to be fearful and docile, and children obedient and often guilt-ridden. This helps ensure that the capitalists have pliant workers to exploit and youth willing to die for "God and country" in imperialist wars.

## Birds Do It, Bees Do It, Teens Do It

One cannot deny that teenagers have sex, just as one cannot deny the obvious changes that a person's body goes through during puberty. Despite centuries of church- and state-imposed deterrents, from the threat of burning eternally in hell to hellish punishments on earth like death by stoning, promiscuous and gay sex have been prevalent throughout the ages.

Abstinence until marriage, then one partner for life is a "norm" that is at odds with the makeup of the human animal: just look at the themes of the most popular TV shows, hit songs, novels, movies and Web sites, not to mention the fact that prostitution is a thriving business. In a very insightful chapter of the book *Why Is Sex Fun? The Evolution of Human Sexuality*, Jared Diamond (author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*) uses a comparison between humans and other animals to make the point that sex among humans has a social purpose other than procreation. As opposed to most other group-living mammals who engage in sex *only* during the females' blatantly advertised period of ovulation:

"In fact, we humans are the ones whose scarcely detectable ovulations make us members of a small minority in the animal world...."

"We're also bizarre in our nearly continuous practice of sex, a behavior that is a direct consequence of our concealed ovulations. Most other animal species confine sex to a brief estrous period around the advertised time of ovulation."

What people choose to do for fun with their own bodies, with or without the aim of procreation, should be no business of the capitalist state. As we say in the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.: "We oppose all laws which enable the bourgeois state to regulate the consensual sexual activity of youth and to exercise social control under the guise of 'protecting children.'" The SYCs take no position on what age a person should or should not have sex. We are opposed

## Spartacus Youth Club Events

### BAY AREA

**Thursday, October 5, 6 p.m.**  
**Imperialism and War**

San Francisco State University  
Cesar Chavez Student Center, Room T-153

**Thursday, October 12, 6 p.m.**  
**Video Showing:**

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!**  
**Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!**

San Francisco State University  
Cesar Chavez Student Center, Rosa Parks D  
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851  
or e-mail: sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

### CHICAGO

**Wednesday, October 4, 7 p.m.**  
**Meet the Marxists**

University of Chicago, Room TBA  
Information: (312) 563-0441  
or e-mail: chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

### LOS ANGELES

**Saturday, September 30, 7 p.m.**  
**Video Showing:**

**From Death Row,**  
**This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal**  
Tia Chucha's Café Cultural Bookstore  
12737 Glenoaks Blvd., #22, Sylmar

**Thursday, October 12, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Meet the Marxists**

UCLA, Ackerman Union  
Meeting Room 2410  
Information: (213) 380-8239  
or e-mail: slsycla@sbcglobal.net

### NEW YORK CITY

**Thursday, September 28, 7:30 p.m.**  
**The State and Revolution**

Columbia University  
Kent Hall, Room 522A  
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
or e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

### TORONTO

**Wednesday, October 4, 6:30 p.m.**  
**The Capitalist State: Instrument of**  
**Terror and Oppression**  
**Down With the Racist "War on Terror"!**

University of Toronto  
Sidney Smith Bldg., Room 2115  
100 St. George Street  
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
or e-mail: spartcan@on.aibn.com

### VANCOUVER

**Wednesday, October 4, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Marxism**  
**and the Scientific Worldview:**  
**Defend Science Against**  
**Superstition and Mysticism!**

University of British Columbia  
Student Union Building, Room 215  
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
or e-mail: trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

**Visit the ICL Web Site:**  
**www.icl-fi.org**

## 1917...

(continued from page 5)

the Zimmerwald ‘Kautskyites,’ continue the semi-alliance with the chauvinist International of the Plekhanovs and Scheidemanns.”

In May the Bolshevik Central Committee passed a motion that they would walk out of Zimmerwald if the Zimmerwaldists called for any discussion with Second International social-patriots. This battle continued; in August Lenin was denouncing Kamenev for speaking out in public in favor of going to a proposed Stockholm antiwar conference, which was to be a nasty mélange of Russian compromisers, Kautskyites and outright social-patriots. This demonstrated that everything Lenin said as to why they should get out of Zimmerwald was true. Trotsky said the road to Stockholm was the road to the Second International. It is important to remember that in the very heat of the struggle, Lenin did not for a single moment forget the task of creating a new Communist International. It wasn’t until after the October Revolution that the Third International was founded.

Let me talk a little about the Democratic Conference, which went on from September 14-22, and the Pre-Parliament that followed on October 7. I won’t go into all the ins and outs of the Democratic Conference, since it’s kind of boring. This was a totally rigged conference in which the Mensheviks and SRs saw to it that conservative and outright bourgeois forces were preponderant. Through the channel of the Democratic Conference and the Pre-Parliament, the political awareness of the masses was to be directed away from the soviets, as “temporary” and dying institutions, to the Constituent Assembly and a bourgeois republic. Lenin was still in hiding, chafing at the refusal of the Bolshevik Central Committee to get on with the insurrection. In his spare time he was writing *The State and Revolution*, which he made Kamenev promise to complete and print if he were to be assassinated.

Just as the Democratic Conference closed, Lenin wrote for the Bolshevik

newspaper an article referring to it as a “hideous fraud” and a “pigsty” and comparing it to the Duma (Russian parliament under the tsar). The second part of Lenin’s article took on the errors of the Bolsheviks and argued that when the nature of the conference became clear, the Bolsheviks should have walked out in protest. In a comradely but direct way, the article specifically takes up Kamenev and Zinoviev, their enthusiasm for the conference and their weak speeches. Lenin stated that 99 percent of the Bolshevik delegation should have left the Democratic Conference and gone to the factories and barracks to discuss with the

Trotsky. They were not immediately successful. The majority of the large fraction who had gone to the Democratic Conference was in favor of going to the Pre-Parliament—you have to keep your eye on those parliamentary fractions, something that comrades used to remind me of when I ran for office. Lenin demanded to know: Who was the parliamentary fraction to decide these questions in any case? He was on the war-path, despite the comparatively narrow scope of the question, because it was another attempt by the rightist leaders in the party to turn the party onto the road of “completing the democratic revo-

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First session of Petrograd Soviet after Bolsheviks won a majority in early September 1917.

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### Toward the Proletarian Conquest of Power

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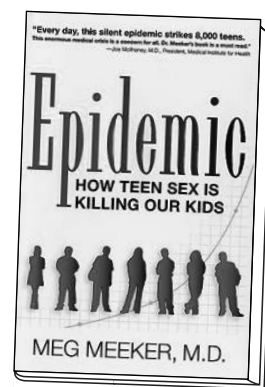
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### Democrats Pander to Anti-Abortion Reaction

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Lincoln Journal Star

February 7: Convicted of “sexual assault” for sleeping with his teenage wife, Matthew Koso says goodbye to her before being imprisoned.

# New Orleans...

(continued from page 1)

here?” “Three days.” The Feds wouldn’t let them in.

Methodist Hospital in New Orleans East—a primarily, maybe 90 percent black area—is part of a nationwide chain of for-profit hospitals. The nationwide chain sent in helicopters, sent in buses to evacuate their patients. FEMA confiscated the helicopters. Ochsner Hospital had its own helicopter and was making plans to get their sickest patients out by helicopter. FEMA confiscated their helicopter. Methodist Hospital went out and got another fleet of helicopters after their first ones were stolen by the Feds, and managed this time to evade them. (The first time they didn’t understand that they had to evade them to get into town.) And they evacuated their own patients.

So the Feds weren’t just “dithering.” They weren’t doing nothing. They were doing something. They were doing what they do.

Things were pretty chaotic, and as it turned out there was a way into the city—across the causeway and down River Road to uptown New Orleans. That is the way that the few rescuers who did get in managed to make it, along with Sean Penn the movie star, the Wal-Mart trucks, the television crews, news cameras and the subsequent footage that wound up turning the tide when the rest of the world saw the plight that people were in.

Memorial Hospital, owned by Tenet Corporation, is the hospital uptown where a doctor and two nurses have been arrested for murder. I get questions about this. A lot of patients died at Memorial Hospital, and they were indeed killed. Not by their heroic caregivers—killed by the Feds. Killed by the bourgeois state. A recent series in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* interviews a bunch of the people who stayed throughout, and the stories they tell are hair-raising. There was a fellow whose mother was a patient. He had hired a sitter to stay with her, he was evacuating. “You stay with her, hell or high water.” The last cell-phone message the sitter got out to the son was, “Come and get us, people are dying, the nurses are scared, help us.”

So this guy, who’s just an ordinary guy, manages to join up on the causeway with a flotilla of other average, ordinary guys who came with their boats of every description—you name it, rowboats, canoes, motorboats, yachts. He told them what he knew about his mother and Memorial Hospital. They teamed up and they managed to get through and begin evacuating people from two points at Memorial Hospital, the front door and the back door.

Before long, the cops—I use this generically, a lot of the law enforcement agencies were working together, borrowing each others’ forces—came to the front door and spoke to the doctor in charge and said, “You have to shut down this rescue operation. The sun is going down, it’s getting dark, and we can’t guarantee your safety.” “*We can’t guarantee your safety!*” The doctor tells the story: “I stood at the front door and I



**Abandoned by racist rulers, some Hurricane Katrina survivors were rescued through heroic efforts of individuals.**

talked to the cops and I agreed with them and I engaged them and we went on in a long conversation, while quietly out the back door the rescue operation continued.” Five hundred people were evacuated from that hospital by private means, private citizens. By the time the Feds finally came in there was a very small number left to be rescued. That’s a private hospital.

Charity Hospital, downtown, didn’t have any rescuers coming. They were farther into the city, and nobody was there but poor black patients without means. The doctor in charge there—his name was Ben Deboisblanc, a good New Orleans name—told the story. Patients were dying after the power failure, as they were at Memorial. Temperatures outside were 95 degrees, inside the building they were easily 105. He had one unreliable telephone line out and a battery-powered radio that worked some of the time. That was it for contact with the outside world. At one point he heard over his radio, “Charity Hospital has been evacuated.” The staff were crushed. They thought, “Oh my god, they think we’re evacuated, they’re never going to come for us.”

So they managed to get hold of some national news organization and explained their plight: “We’re here, nobody’s rescuing us.” This national news organization lines up a private helicopter company to go to Charity Hospital. They never made it. We can only assume they met the same fate as the other helicopters that were sent in. So the staff at Charity had to evacuate their patients in anything that would float, across the street, one by one to Tulane Hospital, up to their roof to wait for rescue. More people died on the roof.

Yet another physician was interviewed by the Discovery Channel. He’d been at the Superdome and he’d been at the Convention Center, treating patients as best as he could, having no water, no food, no medications, no supplies. He was asked by the interviewer, “Did you treat or see any gunshot wounds?” “No.” “Any stab-bings?” “No.” “Any trauma of any kind?” “No.” I think you remember the stories. There was one suicide, some people died in their wheelchairs. But basically the hysteria was nothing but hysteria.

When the National Guard finally came

—this would have been Friday or Saturday, after the hurricane hit on Monday—they finally came to save the people at the Convention Center. What is the first thing that they did? Well, what is the first thing that you would do if you were a bourgeois state going to save people who’ve not had water or food, who are dying in their wheelchairs? Well, of course, you would search them for weapons. They searched **19,000** people at the Convention Center and came up with 16 weapons. At the Superdome, they searched **39,000** people and confis-

**April 4: Demonstrators push past security guards in effort to reclaim their homes at St. Bernard public housing project.**



cated 50 weapons. Can you imagine the time it took to search those people? Shaking them down?

The tide was turned when the national news coverage embarrassed the bourgeois state into doing something.

## Rulers to Black People: Stay Out

I’d like to fast-forward to the present time to make the one other point that I would like to drive home, about the recovery. A lot of people have asked me, why are you rebuilding? I’ve got this T-shirt I made up, “We’re Rebuilding and Don’t Try to Stop Us.” A lot of people and forces and entities are trying to stop us.

I wrote several letters to *Workers Vanguard* over the past year about the extraordinary, naked lengths to which the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces have gone to keep black people from returning. This was an unprecedented situation. It’s never happened before that a modern city got completely evacuated. There was nobody there but law enforcement. At this moment, a light bulb went on over the head of the bourgeoisie. Rubbing its hands, it said, “Oh boy, this is our chance. We can keep the black people from coming back.” “Black people/criminals”—all the same in their minds.

Well, I’m happy to report a year later that these forces have lost some ground. By hook and by crook and willy-nilly, people have come back. Over half the population is back, and a lot more are nearby, poised to come home. People love New Orleans. You know how people love New York, you can’t get them to live anywhere else? They just love New York? Well, New Orleans is another city like that.

So there are people living, like in my neighborhood, where there’s a bunch of FEMA trailers that are not hooked up to electricity. There are people staying with their brother in St. Charles Parish, they’re staying with their cousin in Slidell, they’re staying on the West Bank with friends, they’re staying part-time in their FEMA trailer and part-time somewhere else. They’re nearby, they voted in the April election. They want to find a way home, so they’re positioning themselves to come back.

The position of the racist powers that be originally was, “Okay, we don’t want anything repopulated” in New Orleans East, Gentilly, Mid-City, Central City, certainly the Ninth Ward, Gert Town—all but basically the unflooded and wealthy 20 percent along the river. “We don’t want any of it repopulated, it’s too low. Take it for a given that we’re not going to fix the canal walls.” And that was the line they drew and where they wanted it. Nagin, the mayor, is kind of a weather vane. He blows whichever way the weather is, but basically, he’ll tell you, he’s the candidate of capital. He dithered, and the dithering was to the benefit of people like me. It was a big struggle but we finally got electricity—took us five months. It took us ten months and we finally got mail.

But now, I think the bottom line is, the ruling class has kind of drawn a line, saying, “Okay, those people are already here, we can’t stop them, they’re already

rebuilding, they’re grandfathered in, they got their apartments. But we’re really drawing the line in these few places: people are not coming back to the projects, people are not coming back to the Ninth Ward, and we are not rebuilding Charity Hospital.” So that’s their line in the sand that they have drawn, and they are going to fight to the death—not their own death, somebody else’s death. So, the line has moved.

## The Ninth Ward

I’ve got to say something about the Ninth Ward, because people do ask me, “Well, isn’t it just going to flood again?” Well, why *should* it? Fix the canal walls! An article in *Time* magazine [28 August] that criticizes New Orleanians for not getting their act together and conforming to the “smaller footprint” that is being dictated, says, “91% of Americans live in places at a moderate-to-high risk of earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, flooding, high-winds damage or terrorism, according to an estimate calculated for *Time* by the Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute at the University of South Carolina.”

Sure, New Orleans is below or at sea level. All the ports in the world are—that’s why they are built there [laughter]. But who is it who just decided, “We’re not going to let people back in New Orleans”? The urban planners are furious that the rebuilding is going on willy-nilly and that their plans have not been put into effect yet. Here’s *Time* magazine: “Worst of all, Mayor Ray Nagin and the city council are still not talking honestly about the fact that New Orleans will have to occupy a much smaller footprint in the future. It simply can’t provide city services

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**MSNBC's Countdown video caught New Orleans cops looting at Wal-Mart after hurricane. Sewell car dealership billboard jokes about suspected police theft of some 200 cars.**

across its old boundaries, and its old boundaries cannot realistically be defended against a major storm anytime soon." Who accepts this? Who decided this?

Everybody except the black people in the Ninth Ward, and a few others of us, accepts that "you can't rebuild the Ninth Ward." Nobody is saying that you can't rebuild Lakeview. Lakeview was flooded just as badly as the Ninth Ward, just as deep, washed away just as many homes. But there's a few differences. Everybody's kids in Lakeview are in private schools, they've got money. The Ninth Ward is the working poor. They are two-thirds of the workers at Harrah's Casino, which has benefits. They are the dock workers, they are the schoolteachers, they are the bus drivers, they are the chefs, the cooks, the musicians.

But they're poor—they're the working poor. But here's the interesting point: the Ninth Ward has a higher elevation than Lakeview. More of its houses are already built up on piers. People who have been to New Orleans have seen these shotgun houses built up on piers because of historic flooding. The Ninth Ward has a higher rate of home ownership and a higher rate of home insurance. The difference is, Lakeview is 99-point-something percent white, and the Ninth Ward is

99-point-something percent black. So, for all the forces like Nagin, etc. who say that this is not a race issue—you do the math. Charity Hospital clientele is overwhelmingly black. Projects, maybe 98 percent black. Bus ridership is being slashed. Who rides the buses? Ninety-five percent black.

The Ninth Ward is the only place that has been totally denied electricity and, for the most part, water. So they can't even gut and rebuild. They're just totally denied the means to do so. So that's the Ninth Ward that "everybody" agrees—everybody in the bourgeoisie agrees—should not be rebuilt.

### Crony Capitalism

The Democratic and Republican politicians have had the same program on this. They're behind the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the "Bring New Orleans Back Commission," which are holding up the billions of dollars of aid that were voted finally by Congress. Congressional trips come down and say, "What happened to all the billions of dollars we sent you? We still see miles of devastation." Well, the money is in the hands of FEMA. And it's now in the hands of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, and their conditions for releasing it to the homeowners

and the people who want to rebuild is, "You have to come up with a plan." Each and every neighborhood has to come up with a plan that is acceptable to the Louisiana Recovery Authority. And urban planning basically means, "What part of your territory do you agree will not be repopulated?" That is the question, the condition and the premise of the urban plan.

The head of the Louisiana Recovery Authority is Norman Francis. I think he's a Democrat. He's president of Xavier University and the black cover for all of this. Some of the Spartacist comrades were in the room at an NAACP meeting in New Orleans not long ago where Norman Francis got up and said, "You can't just be handing out this money willy-nilly to these people." And people were getting up from the audience saying, "Well, wait a minute—you're putting up way too many obstacles. Have you tried to go through the application process to get this money? Do you know how hard it is?" And Norman Francis stood there and told them, "You can't just be giving it out—if you went to a bank and you wanted a lot of money, you wouldn't expect to get all that money without a lot of paperwork, now would you?"

Bush came to town shortly thereafter.

And Norman Francis got a private audience with him. This is Norman Francis's account: "We've got to quicken up the pace on the money, but I told the president directly, that if we're putting \$10.2 billion out on the street, then we'd better make sure we do it right. There are plenty of hustlers out there that will be ready to take it" [*Times-Picayune*, 29 August]. This is a variation on an old theme. Remember when welfare recipients were given coupons and food stamps, because "if you give them cash, they'll go out and spend it on liquor and fast cars and lottery tickets. So you can't just be handing money out to people."

Well, where is the money going? They already handed out the money in Mississippi. Louisianans are saying, "How come we can't have ours?" It went to Northrop Grumman, it went to Belfor, it went to Halliburton's sub-sub-sub-sub-subcontractors who, by the way, disappear on payday when the Mexican and migrant workers show up for their pay. So that money's already been passed out.

The Spartacist League has been coming down, talking to people. Barry interviewed the longshoreman, if you remember the article in *Workers Vanguard* [No. 868, 12 April]. The longshoremen who rescued people by boat also told the story of having to duck and hide from the cops who were trying to prevent him from doing so. The comrades have been going to the hiring halls, have been getting out on the campuses and selling *Workers Vanguard*, putting out the only program, putting out the only words that are correctly characterizing this situation and calling it what it is: a racist atrocity. And the SL is the only group putting forward a program that would make any difference and have the chance to change this situation. Because band-aids aren't going to work. Democrats and Republicans—not a dime's worth of difference. So thanks to the Spartacist League for making it an issue, not only in New Orleans, but everywhere else. This word has to be spread all over the place. And the SL is doing it.

## —Break with the Democrats! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!—

**Barry James, Spartacist League:** The continuing racist atrocity that is New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina exposes the naked class- and race-hatred of the American ruling class for the working class and dispossessed. It is truly repugnant that Bush, one year later, could return to New Orleans and call for the return of "soul" and for the "saints to come marching back," along with his tone-deaf nostalgia, to once again sit on the racist patrician Mississippi Senator Trent Lott's porch and look out over the Gulf. Not for nothing did Nina Simone sing and rage against the Jim Crow South—"Mississippi Goddam"! If Katrina has removed the fig leaf of Bush's last shred of credibility, it's the task of the revolutionary Marxists of the Spartacist League to place the blame no less squarely on the Democratic Party and the capitalist system itself.

Nothing that happened then or since was an accident or acts of some isolated criminals, though criminals they are. The forced displacement and dispersal of black New Orleanians must be reversed. In many cases, the displaced do not have the means to return. There are no jobs, no housing, no schools and no health care. By every measure—police brutality, incarceration rates, education, hospital care—New Orleans before the storm was a place of brutal exploitation and oppression, worse statistically but not dissimilar to other American cities with large black populations.

We place no faith in illusory appeals to the capitalist state or any capitalist party to change the priorities of the capitalist system. An urgent necessity is a class-conscious and combative labor movement. Such a movement requires the ouster of the pro-Democratic Party labor tops. The reality of black oppression will not change short of proletarian socialist

revolution. We are for black liberation through socialist revolution and a socialist planned economy.

The response to Katrina by the government at all levels was profoundly racist and anti-working-class. To the extent working-class and poor whites got the shaft—and they did—it only underscores that attacks on the working class are wrapped in the envelope of raw racism. This is how this racist ruling class treats what it deems a surplus population. It was not an idle rant of a neocon when a Louisiana Congressman said that Katrina and God had done what the New Orleans ruling elite could not: drive out the residents of New Orleans housing projects.

Business and real estate interests and politicians of both parties saw in Katrina an opportunity to shrink the city to an adult Disneyland on the Mississippi. The government's deadly delay and downright obstruction in assisting the victims of the hurricane is in stark contrast to the speed with which the crony capitalist looters of

Iraq infamy have swooped in to extract massive profits in New Orleans. And the black Democratic political layer in New Orleans, very often drawn from the Creoles, are widely viewed as the junior partners of New Orleans business interests and in full accord with the plan to push out poor black people. Our job is to fan the flames of class hatred and sear into the consciousness of the working class the horrific magnitude of racist oppression and the desperate necessity for class struggle against capitalism and its ultimate overthrow.

Here's what a black longshoreman involved in rescue work in the immediate aftermath told me. He said rescuers in helicopters were "passing over the poor, black people that they left stranded on rooftops, in attics, on streets.... It was common citizens who did the right thing. They commandeered some boats, went out there and started gallantly and frantically rescuing people." He added, "At the time of a tragedy, there was segregation.... 'All for

one and one for all'? That didn't exist here" [see "We All Gave, but We Received Nothing," WV No. 868, 14 April].

Recall the two pictures, virtually the same yet with distinctly different captions. In one instance, a black person is supposedly "looting"; in the other, a white is availing himself of life's necessities in harsh conditions. When I asked this longshoreman about media reports of looting, here's what he told me. He said that he spent 24 hours straight rescuing people, seeing floating bodies of babies, children and adults. A producer for the *Oprah* show sticks a mike in his face and asks him what he's been doing. Longshoreman: I commandeered some boats to rescue people. Producer: What do you mean commandeered? Longshoreman: I stole them.

FEMA and the federal, city and state governments ignored, created and exacerbated by their prevarication a beyond-desperate situation. For two days, water from broken levees poured into the city before any significant action was taken to stem that tide, while tens of thousands of poor and black people were trapped without any means of escape. Then they blamed the victims, heaping scorn and demonizing an entire population that could not evacuate.

The big players in the white elite are determining how to rebuild the city. These are dominated by real estate interests who are widely viewed as having decisive influence over Mayor Ray Nagin, who was re-elected with the white vote and supported Bush's election in 2000. One of these real estate investors is James Reiss, the chair of the Regional Transit Authority and responsible for the buses that were *not* used to evacuate stranded residents. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was more attentive

*continued on page 10*



**In midst of flood, white couple was described by Agence France-Presse photographer as "finding food," while young black man was described by AP photographer as "looting."**

# New Orleans...

(continued from page 9)

to animals than any government agencies were to people.

## The Prelude and the Storm

It has long been the plan to rid the city of public housing projects and poor residents. The plan is to abandon whole parts of the city and justify it in terms of ecology and science. Low-lying poor neighborhoods, known as the backswamps, would be returned to parks or retention ponds to protect the property holdings of the rich. The view of the ruling elite is that they want the black entertainers but not the black working or plebeian class.

The whole tack of the “Bring New Orleans Back” commission is to rebuild the city “with better services and fewer poor people.” Because of vocal opposition to the plan that called for a moratorium on rebuilding in certain areas, Nagin initially backed off supporting the proposal. The real estate developers are counting on capitalist market forces—no insurance coverage, racist redlining and refusal to refinance mortgages, aided by new FEMA flood maps—to make the dispersal irreversible. Likewise, the Louisiana Recovery Authority believes that economic factors will shrink the city. Governor [Kathleen Babineaux] Blanco, a Democrat, who’s reflecting the ambient racist hostility of the rest of Louisiana toward New Orleans, has engineered a state takeover of the schools, most of which remain closed. The bulk of the rest have been made into restricted charter schools. Like Bush, she has sponsored tax breaks for the oil companies in the name of economic recovery.

It would be naive not to assume a crass political motive for Washington’s rejection of funds for Louisiana. New Orleans was a black majority, Democratic stronghold that often decided the balance of power in statewide elections. With the dispersal of so much of the black population, Louisiana as a whole might well shift to the Republican column. The attack on black voting rights has been a sustained theme of the Bush administration.

A model for gentrification may be River Garden, a supposed public/private, mixed-income, Clinton-era development, which replaced the demolished St. Thomas housing project. Again, Katrina was a perfect storm to enable the real estate interests to acquire prime real estate near the central business district and adjacent to the French Quarter. On June 14, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Housing Authority of New Orleans approved a plan to demolish four public housing projects within three years. Of the 49,000 public housing residents before Katrina, only 1,000 are

back in New Orleans. Ominously, New Orleans passed an ordinance requiring the gutting, mold remediation and boarding up of houses by August 29. If owners didn’t comply, the city threatened to perform the job and place a lien on the property. Remember that 80 percent of New Orleans, or some 250,000 dwellings, were flooded. In this way the city may accomplish, using eminent domain, what the New Orleans commission wanted to do all along.

Thousands of unionized jobs have been lost with the closure of Charity Hospital, the virtual elimination of the public school system and the gutting of the large United Teachers of New Orleans, and the shrinking of bus routes driven by members of the Amalgamated Transit Union. Katrina has become a pretext for government-supported union-busting. FEMA originated under Jimmy Carter and was planned by Reagan as an agency that would run concentration camps for government-designated “undesirables” in the event of a so-called national emergency. Thus it should come as no surprise that, at a nearly empty FEMA trailer park in Morgan City, residents were prohibited from talking to the

hundreds. So the technology and pumping systems exist. The racist American ruling class does not have the intention or the will to do it. Contrast this to the tiny Cuban deformed workers state and its meager resources exacerbated by imperialist blockade. Though located in hurricane alley, it manages, through social organization, to spare its population the tribulations visited upon the black population of New Orleans. In the storm’s aftermath, Bush rejected the offer of aid from Cuba—hurricane-hardened medical doctors and rescue teams.

## “Doing Katrina Time”

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) National Prison Project has issued a report on the inhuman abuse meted out to prisoners in the hurricane at Orleans Parish Prison (OPP). It is a devastating window on the capitalist system of injustice. The ACLU believes that the prisons can be reformed, even as they demonstrate in this report that all attempts at reform have been rebuffed in practice. This flows from their (and our reformist opponents’) view of the capitalist state as a neutral body that can be pressured to serve the interests of the working

defecate over the sides of their beds. Prisoners spent days in toxic waters as the prison guards left them to die. Detainees then opened the jail gates. Some prisoners managed to pound their way out to a rooftop, where they hung a banner: “HELP NO FOOD DYING.” There were three boats to evacuate 7,000 people. Waiting for evacuation, the prisoners were bunched together like cattle and forced to stand in water up to their necks.

When the prisoners finally made it to the I-10 overpass, their ordeal was not over. They were placed in rows and seated back to back. The guards used taser guns on them if they stretched. They were forced to urinate and defecate on their clothes where they sat while SWAT teams called them racist epithets, crackheads, whores and bitches. Juvenile detainees were maced for asking for water in the broiling sun. So hellish were the conditions that some detainees were relieved to arrive at the notorious Angola state prison, a former slave plantation—not so former.

The flooded OPP opened quickly after the storm despite health concerns. The OPP was too profitable an enterprise to be out of commission long. The city of New Orleans was paying the OPP roughly \$100,000 per day for housing prisoners. Federal prisoners, including so-called illegal immigrants, are even more profitable and were returned to the prison quickly. The prompt return of the prison population was a source not only of income for the prison but also of prison labor, really akin to the pervasive prison labor system that flourished in the South after Reconstruction. The current sheriff wants to make prisoners available for work ordinarily done by city workers. The prisoners personally receive effectively no wages. Many prisoners await trial to this day for minor offenses. It’s called doing Katrina time.

This penal servitude is both an affront and another threat to labor in the South. The return of the chain gang shows the link between black and labor rights. The need to organize and unionize the South will be a monumental battle. Prisoners are powerless. ILA longshoremen and Avondale shipyard workers are not. Unlocking that power through the fight for a class-struggle opposition to the pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats, advancing the consciousness of the working class, is the task of the revolutionary party. Either the South will be organized through social struggle—which can only be achieved if the labor movement consciously addresses black oppression—or the features of the South will become increasingly dominant across the land.

## “End of Racism” Mythology

Katrina’s aftermath did not generate massive nationwide social protest at all, and certainly not the necessary protest by the labor movement, due to the accommodation of its leadership to the racist, capitalist status quo. Even as Katrina exposed the realities of race and class and their inevitable intertwining in capitalist America, there is in the air the so-called “end of racism” ideology that seeks to blunt the hard truth of racist oppression. In a CNN poll after the hurricane, only 12 percent of whites thought race was a factor in the government’s virtually nonexistent response in the immediate aftermath of Katrina. Five times that many blacks thought race was decisive. This split reflects a similar gulf in consciousness evident after the O. J. Simpson verdict in 1995.

Mayor Nagin can be heard on the radio fulminating that the mistreatment by the government was due to being poor, not to being black. This is also the line of the NAACP, one of whose youthful supporters told us that racism was not the main issue, class was. While Nagin is simply toeing the line out of Washington, there clearly is an adaptation to it from mainstream black organizations, local politicians and ostensible leftists. The question of class is fundamental in capitalist America; this is not in contradic-

**Thousands of Mexican workers flocked to Gulf Coast following Katrina for cleanup and construction work, laboring under brutal conditions.**



Gauthier/LA Times

press without the presence of a FEMA representative!

If you visited New Orleans today, you’d be struck by how utterly destroyed and without city services whole swaths of the city are. The failure to rebuild, or make it possible for people to rebuild, in this lost year is part of the mechanism by which black people have been kept out of the city. As Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Great Deluge* [2006], put it: “The crucial point is that the inaction is deliberate—the inaction is the action.”

Capitalism is a profit-driven system. From the standpoint of meeting human need, it’s irrational. The Netherlands’ complex of flood-control levees was strengthened in 1953 after a storm killed

class and oppressed. For Marxists, the capitalist state—which at its core consists of the cops, the military, the prison system and the courts—is the instrument for organized violence to ensure the rule of the capitalists over the proletariat. Down through history, it has been shown that the working class cannot reform the bourgeois state and use it in its own interests but must smash it and create its own state.

Before Katrina, the OPP held 6,500 prisoners. In the U.S., a country with the highest national incarceration rate in the world and where 12 percent of all black males in their late 20s are in prison, New Orleans had the highest incarceration rate of any large city. Orleans Parish is almost 67 percent black, but 90 percent of the inmates are black. Sixty percent of the OPP detainees were men and women who were jailed for traffic or parking violations, public drunkenness or failure to pay a fine. Most of the detainees were *pre-trial*, meaning they had never been convicted of anything. Moreover, at the time of the storm some significant number were enrolled in school, drug or alcohol treatment or GED programs as a condition of probation. Immigrant prisoners who had been rounded up in *la migra* raids faced the same hellish conditions. One attorney for them said: “It’s easier to visit my clients on death row than it is to visit an INS detainee at Orleans Parish Prison.”

The brutality before the storm in this place was legend. Women shackled during labor, juveniles punched and kicked in the face, mental patients in five-point restraints dying of dehydration. The daily racist brutality and dehumanization generated many lawsuits. Here you have the proper analog for the notorious American-run facility in Iraq, Abu Ghraib.

When the levees broke, the prisoners were put in lockdown and maced for asking to be let out of their cells. Women had to climb to the third level of bunks to escape the water. They had to urinate and

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tion to the centrality of black oppression to American capitalism.

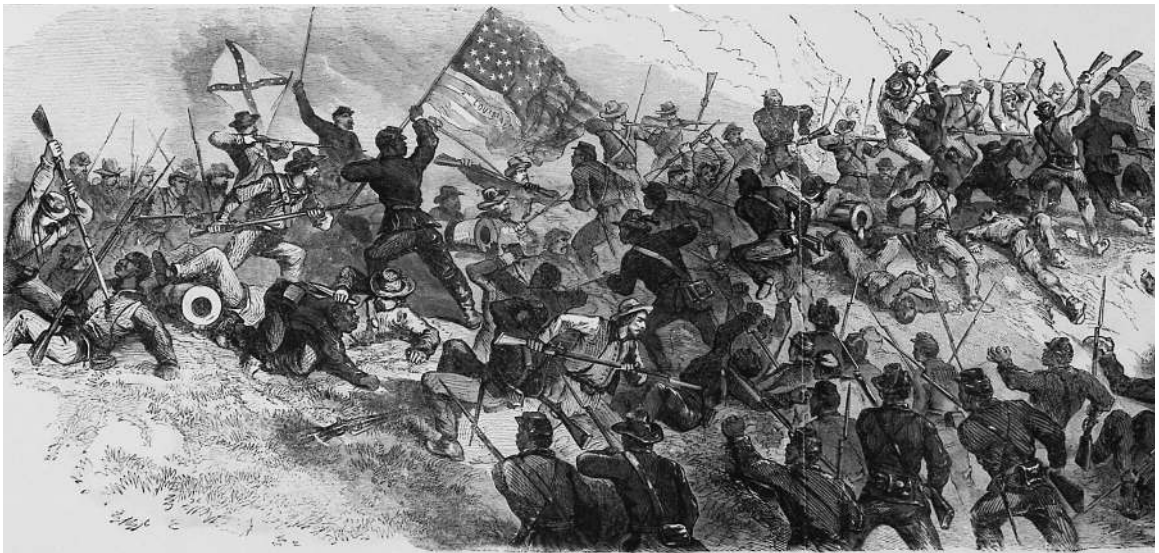
At a New Orleans AFL-CIO Labor Day picnic, on the other hand, we found that black workers were more clear-eyed and vocal about the treatment meted out to black New Orleanians. This may be because not a few of them spent days on the roofs of their flooded homes waiting to be rescued. One black longshoreman told us, “They wouldn’t have done this to any other city.” In fact, the attacks on the working class and the population as a whole are presaged and “justified” by the gutting of advances and the diminution of the rights of black people.

The demise of the Soviet Union has spawned bourgeois triumphalism. The destruction of the USSR was a historic defeat for the proletariat that has thrown back consciousness and allowed the imperialist bourgeoisies to step up attacks domestically and internationally. The pernicious false consciousness that the “playing field has been leveled” must be combatted at every turn.

It’s a sign of the times that we are obliged to make the case for the strategic centrality of the black question in the struggle for workers revolution in this country. One measure of how bad things are in America is that former President Clinton was dubbed the first black president, though he had ostentatiously returned to Little Rock during his 1992 campaign to oversee the execution of a brain-damaged black man and proudly ended “welfare as we know it.” The rise of a mealy-mouthed black Democratic politician, Barack Obama, is seen to be representative of a “color-blind” America.

This so-called end of racism is related to and intimately linked to the bourgeois triumphalism attendant on the demise of the Soviet Union that was supposed to mean the “end of history” and the “death of communism.” This points to the relationship between black oppression and

**Assault of the Louisiana Colored Volunteers on the Confederate breastworks at Port Hudson, Louisiana, 27 May 1863, the first major battle in which black troops took part.**



F. B. Schell/New York Historical Society

fundamental to capitalist society and to head off united working-class struggle. The special oppression of black people as a race-color caste is a cornerstone of American capitalism. The mass of the black population is kept at the bottom of this capitalist society. At the same time, doubly oppressed black workers form a strategic component of the American proletariat. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will play a leading role in the struggle to emancipate the black masses and all working people by sweeping away the entire system of capitalist exploitation.

We fight for revolutionary integration. We understand that the struggle for integration of black people into American society on the basis of full economic, social and political equality can only be realized through a proletarian revolution that uproots the capitalist system and ushers in an egalitarian socialist society.

We seek to mobilize the labor movement to fight every manifestation of racist rollback without defending the miserable status quo. We fight for open admissions and free higher education for all. We

Crucially, there has been skyrocketing incarceration of young black (and Hispanic) men carried out largely through the “war on drugs.” This war on the ghetto masses, which we see being played out by the National Guard occupation in New Orleans right now, is part of an all-sided intensification of state repression, capped by the speedup on death row (“legal lynching”) and by “extralegal” street executions in the ghettos and barrios by the cops. After the drive to eliminate welfare picked up speed in the 1980s, we called this “Genocide U.S.A.” These ominous developments make all the more urgent what we said in “Black and Red”:

“The fight for full employment at decent wages is not just the key to better housing, schools, etc., but a fundamental and necessary defense. If Black people are forced out of any economic role and become lumpenized as a group they will be in a position to be used as a scapegoat and could be totally wiped out during a future social crisis—just as the Jews in Germany were—without affecting the economy. The fight must be fought *now* to maintain Negroes as part of the working class.”

### Katrina and the Democratic Party Vultures

The one-year anniversary events in New Orleans saw the Democratic Party politicians descending like vultures. The Democratic Party is giving voice to concerns that Katrina, evoking scenes of a Third World country, is injurious to America’s international reputation. This is not to say the Democrats will do one whit more for black people. Katrina was a public relations debacle for a superpower seeking to project its military might in the service of “freedom.”

Democratic governor Blanco is best remembered for her callous response to the survivors of the flooding. Promoting the false image of wanton marauding and “looting,” she warned that the National Guard troops being deployed were battle-hardened veterans of the war in Iraq, whose weapons were “locked and loaded,” and said they would be prepared to “shoot and kill.”

The shell game through which the Democratic Party—the historic party of the Confederate slavocracy—is portrayed as the “friend” of blacks and labor has

been essential to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. The U.S. is ruled by the dictatorship of a single class, the bourgeoisie, alternately administered by the Democrats and Republicans, two wings of the same property party. It was U.S. imperialism’s Democratic Party that first prosecuted the bloody counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam and initially oversaw the capitalist state’s physical annihilation of the Black Panther Party. The Democratic Party supported the invasion of Afghanistan and the “war on terror,” which they maintain they can conduct more effectively and vigorously than the Republicans. This “war on terror” national unity is a deadly threat to immigrants, blacks and labor and means the shredding of democratic rights domestically and the projection of imperialist military might abroad. If some Democrats today are opposing the Iraq war (like ex-Marine Congressman Jack Murtha), it is for the express purpose of deploying U.S. forces elsewhere in the “war on terror.” Actually, it is because the Democrats sell themselves as the friends of labor and blacks that they are in many cases the preferred party for the bourgeoisie to use to mobilize for war.

On certain social questions like abortion and gay marriage, some Democrats meekly support more enlightened positions. The main difference between them and the Republicans is that while the Republicans unabashedly enforce the interests of big business, the Democrats lie and do the same thing. When the Transport Workers Union [TWU] struck in December, one of the most important unions in the country waged some much-needed class struggle. Gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer got the injunctions to criminalize them. Hillary Clinton is a proponent of the union-busting Taylor Law. Yet both these Democratic pols are supported by the TWU’s Toussaint leadership and are considered “friends of labor.”

Some of you may have seen the powerful documentary by Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*. The interviews and footage are an indelible record of a racist travesty. Lee is quoted as saying that “what happened

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Pelican

**Battle of Liberty Place, New Orleans, 1874: Klan-like White League defeated Radical Reconstruction governor’s forces, including black militia. Obelisk commemorating race-terrorists’ victory stands in New Orleans to this day.**

the Russian question. Put another way, the achievement of substantial legal equality for black people, beginning after World War II, was also heavily motivated by U.S. imperialism’s felt need to look good internationally—not least in its competition with the Soviet Union in the Third World.

The civil rights movement represented a major social upheaval which broke up the reactionary Cold War consensus. Struggles against women’s oppression and anti-gay bigotry were able to exploit openings created by the civil rights movement, which broke the back of Jim Crow in the American South. The civil rights struggles fed burgeoning protest against the Vietnam War and opened the door to some significant labor struggles in the U.S. The civil rights movement is not a distant, remote factor. Not least, today’s “culture wars” are being fought against some holdovers from this period. And the ruling class is intent on reversing the gains of the civil rights movement, however minimal they may be now, to widen and deepen the wedge of attack against the working class.

### Black and Red

America’s rulers foster racial divisions in the North and South in order to obscure the divisions between the classes that are

demand a massive public works program in New Orleans at union wages with union protection. We fight for quality integrated housing and schools and for free, quality health care for all.

When the civil rights movement swept into the North, the bankruptcy of the liberal perspective of its leaders was quickly revealed as it collided head on with the cold, hard realities of American capitalism. The pro-Democratic Party pressure politics of the civil rights leaders meant inevitably an acceptance of the terms of oppression. As we said in one of our founding documents [“Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom” (1966)]:

“The vast majority of black people—both North and South—are today workers who, along with the rest of the American working class, must sell their labor power in order to secure the necessities of life to those who buy labor power in order to make a profit.... Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society.”

The loss of unionized industrial jobs, which was accelerated by the deindustrialization of the Northeast and Midwest beginning in the 1970s, has been accompanied by a massive increase in homelessness and disease in the inner cities.

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29 SEPTEMBER 2006

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# New Orleans...

(continued from page 11)

in New Orleans was a criminal act...the levees were a Band-Aid here.... Somebody needs to go to jail.” Though Lee is not heard in the documentary, his point of view emerges in the steady parade of black politicians (Ray Nagin, former mayor of New Orleans Marc Morial and Al Sharpton among them) who are given a pass and allowed to preen as crusaders for justice for black people.

During “Giuliani time,” the New York police pumped 41 rounds at Amadou Diallo in the vestibule of his own apartment building. Sharpton channeled indignation at this police terror into the false hope of using the “independent” Civilian Complaint Review Board to right police misconduct. Such boards make cosmetic changes in order to perpetuate what is a police state in the ghettos and barrios.

Ray Nagin is in the line of black Democratic mayors that includes former Philadelphia mayor Wilson Goode. On 13 May 1985, Goode and his administration in collaboration with Reagan’s federal government burned to death eleven members of the black MOVE commune, including five children. Nagin, at the behest of New Orleans’ business interests, delayed evacuation. He knew from the very beginning that at least one-fifth of the population would not be able to leave. He isolated himself away from his command center during the storm and hid in a hotel, in a bunker, when a small group of people stranded at the Superdome marched to his hotel to ask for pro-

serious union organizing drive must be the understanding that this capitalist society is divided between two hostile classes—the workers who have to sell their labor power and the capitalists who own the means of production—whose interests are irreconcilably opposed. The labor bureaucracy openly supports the capitalist system and is duly rewarded for this with certain social and political privileges. The union tops stand for collaboration with the bosses, not class struggle against them.

The harsh anti-labor laws and practices in the South today are rooted in the black chattel slavery of the Old South before the Civil War. The re-establishment of legalized racial segregation following the betrayal of Radical Reconstruction by the Northern bourgeoisie in league with the Southern landed aristocracy entailed the suppression of any attempt to organize labor, white as well as black. The anti-union “right to work” laws, which are extant all across the South, were passed after the Second World War and have perpetuated the South as the main regional bastion of social and political reaction in the United States. These laws are an outgrowth of an entrenched apparatus of oppression—the post-Civil War “Black Codes,” “anti-vagrancy laws,” the sharecropping system of debt peonage and prison chain gangs.

In the 1990s, New Orleans Avondale shipyard workers were thwarted in their attempt to form a union for six years by repeated management appeals to the bosses’ courts. Unions can only be built and defended and unionization extended across the South in class struggle against



Bettmann

**Bogalusa, Louisiana, 1966: Charles Sims of Deacons for Defense and Justice, which organized armed self-defense against racist nightriders.**

ing non-union workers from out of state. The answer to non-union labor is to unionize *all* workers regardless of where they are from.

It is particularly important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism in the working class and especially among black workers, while the immigrant-derived proletariat must grasp that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social reaction in this country. Our team at the AFL-CIO picnic reported the following: “An older black woman jumped into my argument with a white woman who argued that racism wasn’t really an issue in what had happened; we convinced her to back down and say we had a point. However, then the white woman *and* the black woman agreed that the problem facing them now is that immigrants are coming in and taking all the jobs, and I had to argue hard with both of them.”

A number of lawsuits have been filed on behalf of these mainly Hispanic workers fighting against the contractors’ refusal to pay overtime or any wages at all. These piecemeal efforts, however admirable and supportable, only underscore the necessity for labor to fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. This is a crucial part of mobilizing the power of labor in struggle to organize the South. Effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people requires unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black, Hispanic and Asian poor.

The role of a Leninist vanguard party must be to advance the consciousness of the working class. There is another tradition in Louisiana, one of black and labor power. The largest slave revolt in U.S. history, inspired by the Haitian revolution, took place in Louisiana in 1811. Some of the first black troops to fight on the side of the Union in the Civil War were raised from the free black population of New Orleans. During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the Deacons for Defense and Justice organized a group of black veterans in Bogalusa and Jonesboro and used armed self-defense to protect CORE voter registration workers. The Spartacist League publicized the Deacons’ critical role in defending black rights against the racist nightriders.

And there is the strategic port of New Orleans which, while heavily impacted by containerization, is a reservoir of union strength with an important history. When the longshore union locals first affiliated to the International Longshoremen’s Association [ILA], there was a segregated union structure, which was maintained. The ILA locals on the Gulf were not integrated until 1983. However, on the Southern waterfront the primarily black unions are dominant. In 1968, when Martin Luther King was assassinated, the black ILA in New Orleans called a three-day protest strike and the white longshoremen announced they weren’t going to work without their black brothers. In 1972, Louisiana students demanded an anti-racist boycott of Rhodesian chrome and ILA dock workers refused to unload

a ship. Several years later, in 1977, black and white longshoremen in New Orleans staged a militant wildcat strike that shut down all shipping in the port, while the ILA international struck only containerized cargo.

## Finish the Civil War!

It’s been noted that to this day Haiti and Haitians have never been forgiven by the imperialist ruling classes for the slave revolt led by Toussaint L’Ouverture. The past is not really past in the U.S. either when it comes to the struggle for black freedom and the Civil War. There is in Katrina’s aftermath—in the racist contempt and dispersal of its black working class and dispossessed—more than an echo of the racist Redemption campaign of the former slave aristocracy against Radical Reconstruction.

Reconstruction went through several phases in Louisiana, and it’s a rich and intricate history. I want to highlight the last period. One historian of the period, Ted Tunnell, put it: “The history of New Orleans was the story of its strategic location near the mouth of the greatest river system on the North American continent” [*Crucible of Reconstruction*, 1984]. Thus it was that in April of 1862 Union warships slipped past Confederate forts and fought the Confederate fleet guarding the city. The Union Army advanced overland and took over New Orleans on May 1. The North controlled the South’s largest city from that day forward and Reconstruction was underway.

New Orleans was a metropolis in the midst of a Louisiana plantation and village culture. There was a modest base of immigrants and yeoman farmers (with no slaves), the largest free black population in the South, if not the country, and some sugar planters who came to believe their profit interests might be better served by the North. The Union Army under the leadership of Generals Banks and Butler were the armed force that made it possible for Reconstruction to unfold. Within this mix there was an intense and volatile contention of ideas and clash of forces about the extent and meaning of black freedom and, importantly, black suffrage. Moreover, these forces profoundly influenced Lincoln himself.

The free blacks, or *gens de couleur*, were not of one mind, reflecting their intermediate position in society. They were light-skinned descendants of French settlers or wealthy mulatto immigrants from Haiti. They were bricklayers, cigar makers, carpenters and shoemakers. They were markedly better off than the slave, but their rights were constricted. But from this layer came some of the first black soldiers to fight for the Union Army, a fact related to their (uniquely) already having had their own militia. At the time, some held the view that their fate was “indissolubly bound up with that of the Negro race,” and that “we have no rights which we can reckon safe while the same are denied to the field hands on the sugar plantations.” Because Reconstruc-



WV Photo

**May 1983: ILA mobilized as part of 10,000-strong march in Norfolk, Virginia, in defense of school busing.**

visions. And that’s not the half of it. Now he has the unmitigated chutzpah to say:

“I think the opportunity has presented itself for me to kind of go down in history as the mayor that guided the city of New Orleans through an incredible rebuild cycle, and really eliminated a lot of the pre-Katrina problems that we had with blight, with crime, with the public-school system.”

## Organize the South!

With their legalistic, pro-Democratic policies, the AFL-CIO leaders are incapable of undertaking the kind of militant mass organizing drive needed to unionize workers throughout the South, where the racist cops and KKK lynchers have been instrumental in keeping unions out. The AFL-CIO is investing \$700 million of its pension fund for affordable housing and hospitals in New Orleans. Change to Win, the other coalition, is assisting with workers’ centers. All well and good—but the purpose of unions is to mobilize the workers in struggle against the capitalists. It’s necessary to unleash the social power of the working class, beginning with existing beachheads of integrated union power in the South—from the mainly black longshoremen in the southeastern and Gulf ports to shipyard workers and Teamsters truckers.

The fundamental starting point for a

the employer and the apparatus of the capitalist state. Given the heavy weight of “right to work” laws across the South, making a dent even in one locale will be difficult. What will break the back of these laws will be generalized social struggle across the region, if not the country.

Some 30,000 immigrants have moved into the Gulf Coast since the storm, and they are subject to frequent ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] raids that are called “Operation Community Shield.” Much of the gutting of houses and clearing of trees has been performed by immigrant Mexican laborers who sleep in tents or in the moldy structures they work in daily. They have no access to health care and their health and safety is of no concern to their employers. In October 2005, Nagin ranted that New Orleans was being “overrun by Mexican workers.” Similarly, in a January statement calling for a spring Katrina protest for the “right of return,” Jesse Jackson echoed this chauvinist sentiment: “Why must people here look at people coming in from out of the country to do the work? That is humiliating. There are no jobs that cannot be done by the people who once lived here.” Feeding off this, in early October the NAACP and the AFL-CIO held a joint press conference to denounce business owners who were hir-

Letter...

(continued from page 2)

age in Europe in the seventeenth century. Many factors cause climate change such as the elliptical orbit of the earth around the sun, the wobbling of the earth on its axis and others such as volcanic and sun-spot activity. I am well aware as you are of the vast increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since the industrial revolution which is the cause of the phenomenon called the greenhouse effect. WV has in the past run excellent articles supporting evolution and debunking creationism and intelligent design and often defending the gains of the enlightenment so why not a similar critique of environmentalism.

I know it is the view of the ICL (and mine too) that untrammelled capitalism is the main cause of the despoliation of the earth. Engels first noted this when he wrote about the working class in England in the nineteenth century. The difference between creationism and evolution is that the latter is absolutely scientifically valid and creationism is just religious cant and superstition but global warming does have an element of scientific truth. The fact that so many well meaning people today believe that the number one issue today is to save the planet and their solution to it is to pressure capitalist governments to solve the problem and that we should return to a more technically simple existence may be because of this. WV could occasionally publish articles (or an article) highlighting the marxist position on this issue. To me much of environmentalism is secular apocalypticism and can be easily manipulated by the ruling class for its own ends when it suits them.

Comradely regards  
D.B.

WV replies:

Reader D.B. raises a number of important issues that deserve fuller treat-

ment than can be given in this immediate response. For a summary of our Marxist position on the general topic of environmentalism, we direct our readers to our most recent extensive article on the subject, “In Defense of Science and Technology—An Exchange on Eco-Radicals and HIV Denialists” (WV No. 843, 4 March 2005), which is available on our Web site. Our fundamental difference with the environmentalist movement is our view that overcoming ecological problems such as air and water pollution, or dealing with the problem of global warming, fundamentally raises the need to get rid of the irrational, profit-driven capitalist system and set up an internationally planned, socialist economy. This in turn requires workers revolutions to expropriate the means of production which today are owned by the capitalist class.

Because environmentalists accept the capitalist system as inevitable, they are reduced, *at best*, to impotent appeals to the capitalists to stop degrading the environment. More often than not, the policies advocated by environmentalists to supposedly protect the environment and conserve energy by discouraging “over-consumption” dovetail with capitalist austerity policies. In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq, we wrote an article on the world oil market, which stated: “The ecology activists are right in one important respect: the massive burning of hydrocarbons—whether oil or coal—is in the long term bad for the earth’s atmosphere. The answer, however, is not to save oil by cutting the living standards of North American and European working people” (“The World Oil Racket,” WV No. 535, 27 September 1991).

A collectivized economy based on international planning would make possible a qualitative development of the world’s productive forces, doing away with economic scarcity and laying the basis for the elimination of classes and for the withering away of the state. It

would also permit the development and full utilization of renewable sources of energy and other industrial technologies.

There is broad agreement today among scientists that human beings contribute significantly to global warming, especially through the burning of fossil fuels. Still debated—understandably, given the complex nature of the issue—are the questions of how grave the consequences of global warming will be and how rapidly they might manifest themselves. The possible consequences evoked by a number of scientists are extremely serious: rising sea levels and coastal flooding, climate shifts causing populated areas to become arid or inundated, destruction of forests, extinction of many animal and plant species. An extreme projection is that if the oceans warmed sufficiently, huge amounts of methane now frozen under the sea could be released, possibly causing mass extinctions.

That some capitalist spokesmen like Al Gore have expressed alarm about global warming is hardly surprising given the possible economic and social disruption it threatens. Yet much bourgeois hand-wringing over this issue is pure cynicism. British Petroleum, which is under criminal investigation for a major oil spill on Alaska’s North Slope this March, earlier won plaudits from environmentalists for its vague promise to limit emissions of so-called greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide from its installations around the world.

Regarding the question of Malthusianism—that is, the idea that much of mankind is condemned to perpetual poverty because the earth is permanently overpopulated compared to its resources—we noted in the article referenced above:

“Moreover, the development of communism will be accompanied by a corollary downward drift in the present population hypertrophy. Evidence of this can already be seen under capitalism in the industrially advanced countries of the world—e.g., Japan, North America and Western

Europe—where economic and technological advancement has effected, not through fiat, a substantial reduction in the birthrate. Under communism, both the division between town and country and economic dependence on the family will virtually disappear. No longer will poor peasants or agricultural workers be compelled to have more children in order to ensure enough manpower to work the land. Human beings will have far greater mastery over both their natural and social environments.

“Additionally, communist society will be based on a thoroughly different set of social values from those that exist today. The liberation of women from patriarchal domination will mean complete and unhindered access to birth control and contraception. Communism will elevate the standard of life for everyone to the highest possible level. By eliminating scarcity, poverty and want, communism will also eliminate the greatest driving force for the prevalence of religion and superstition—and the attendant backwardness, which defines the role of women as the producers of the next generation of working masses to be exploited. A prolonged, mild population shrinkage based on increasing material abundance and progressive social ideals will go a long way toward ensuring that there are enough resources to guarantee the well-being of all.”

The organization of industrial production under capitalism necessarily leads to degradation of the environment because capitalist firms are motivated solely by the need to maximize profits. Environmentalists, through their promotion of schemes to “save the environment” under capitalism, help perpetuate the very system that is at the heart of the problem.

Readers particularly interested in these questions may wish to consult our pamphlet *Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism* as well as the following articles: “Eco-Radicalism and Bourgeois Politics” (WV Nos. 695 and 696, 28 August and 11 September 1998) and “The Evolution Wars: Religious Reaction and Racist Oppression—Hail Charles Darwin!” (WV No. 854, 16 September 2005).■

tion began early and the slaves were given their freedom, it came to pass that black men were in the uniform of the Union Army. And as one black New Orleanian paper put it at the time: “From the day that bayonets were placed in the hands of the blacks.... This war has broken the chains of the slave, and it is written in the heavens that from this war shall grow the seeds of the political enfranchisement of the oppressed race.”

The radical unionists and the unity of free blacks and freed slaves placed enormous pressure on Lincoln to grant suffrage to the freedmen. The emancipated slave had entered the political arena. The Radical Reconstruction Louisiana constitution abolished slavery and led to black suffrage and blacks holding office.

The planter aristocracy refused to make their peace with this state of affairs. In September 1874, the (Klan-like) White League routed the Metropolitan Police and black militia of the Reconstruction governor. In 1891 an obelisk monument to this race terror was built to honor the Battle of Canal Street, later the Battle of Liberty Place. There was affixed an inscription in praise of the victory of white supremacy. This incident couldn’t have more contemporary relevance. It speaks to what we call the unfinished business of the Civil War. And to this day, the American South is a low-wage bastion and a reservoir of social backwardness to the detriment of the entire working class.

The period known as Radical Reconstruction (of course it was not limited to Louisiana) was the most egalitarian period in U.S. history. It was finally brought to a close when the Northern capitalists looked at the devastated South and saw an opportunity—not for building a radical democracy but for exploiting Southern resources, and the freedmen, profitably. The Compromise of 1877 sealed this betrayal of black freedom and, with the withdrawal of the Union Army from the South, a new system of racist exploitation

was established by restricting the rights of freedmen across the board. In 1896, the Supreme Court codified “separate but equal” segregation as the law of the land in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Plessy was a black New Orleanian who refused to vacate his seat on a railway car. The Jim Crow system thus came to infect the whole country.

America has evolved tumultuously from a slave republic, through the Civil War and the abolition of chattel slavery. Yet we live with that legacy of slavery. The struggle against black oppression and for

working-class liberation will go forward together in this country or not at all. For the working class to become an instrumentality of its own liberation, it must become a class-for-itself. It must oppose every manifestation of oppression and consciously fight the special oppression of black people. To quote Marx at the time of the Civil War: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” The ultimate reconstruction in this county will come with a socialist revolution led by

the multiracial proletariat.

The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, seeks to impart the consciousness of this black centrality to the working class. We seek to forge in struggle the revolutionary workers party that will lead the American workers revolution, which alone can provide a decent life for all through a socialist planned economy. If you want a future without imperialist war, racist oppression and capitalist exploitation, we would ask you to join us. Finish the Civil War!■

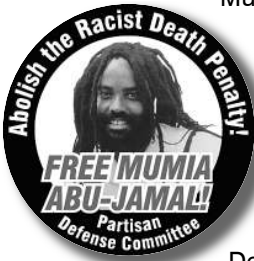
JOIN THE CAMPAIGN!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

Make a contribution today, payable to “National Lawyers Guild Foundation” (earmarked for “Mumia”) and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.

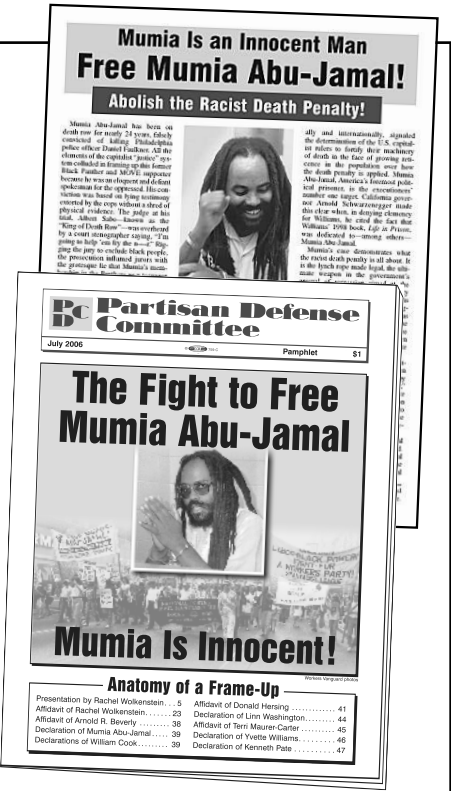
Organize protest! Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organizations demanding Mumia’s freedom. Get your union or organization to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicize Mumia’s case in your union or organization’s newsletter.

Spread the word! Contact the PDC for copies of *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!* This pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia’s freedom by presenting the political basis of the state vendetta against



Mumia and the explosive evidence which completely destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom. It is available for \$1. Get the PDC button: “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!”—\$1 each. Order the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 for DVD, \$15 for VHS. Bundles of the 4-page brochure, *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies. Order from/make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.

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# Oakland...

(continued from page 3)

legal efforts, Mackler ranted, “If there is a single person out here who is against the motion that had been brought to the court by Mumia Abu-Jamal and by his legal team...if you are against the new trial, you are a goddamned fool.”

This tirade by Mackler, who has for years been a prime mover of rallies calling for a “new trial,” willfully and ignorantly conflated political demands around which to mobilize mass support for Mumia and legal actions pursued by Mumia in the courts. Since he is quite familiar with the PDC’s legal work on Mumia’s behalf extending back to the late 1980s, including years spent on his legal team, Mackler’s charge against the PDC is both absurd and cynical. Our legal assistance included tracking down a mountain of evidence that Mumia is innocent, notably the Beverly evidence, which makes it clear that Mumia’s case consists of a conscious, racist political frame-up of an innocent man. Since this doesn’t sit well with liberals, Mackler and SA have all but disappeared the Beverly evidence.

Even as the PDC’s Rachel Wolkenstein and Jonathan Piper served on the legal team, we fought against illusions in or reliance on the capitalist courts. At the Oakland rally, Mackler said that he holds “no illusions in the criminal justice system.” Utterly belying that claim, Mackler hailed the December U.S. Court of Appeals ruling that Mumia’s appeal could go forward on only three of the more than two dozen legal issues Mumia raised as a “major court victory” that would “stun the Pennsylvania legal establishment” (*Socialist Action*, December 2005). Mackler’s article called the possibility that the court would reinstate Mumia’s death penalty, which is what the prosecution is gunning for, “the worst—but least expected—scenario.” That same month the state of California executed Tookie Williams in the face of a massive public outcry! In denying clemency to Williams, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger pointed to Williams’ praise of Mumia, among others, in his book *Life in Prison*. Tookie Williams’ execution was a real signal that the state intends to see Mumia dead.

Mackler’s speech captured in a nutshell SA’s deeply reformist outlook. But in run-

ning Mackler for U.S. Senate in explicit opposition to both the capitalist Democrats and the bourgeois Greens, whose candidate is Todd Chretien of the International Socialist Organization, SA has drawn a crude class line, and on that basis the Spartacist League has extended Mackler critical support (see WV No. 876, 15 September). As Mackler ended his speech, our contingent chanted: “Vote for Jeff Mackler against Democrats and Greens!” But when presented with the SL’s statement of support, Mackler turned green around the gills and vociferously declared that he rejected the support of our revolutionary Marxist organization. Well, if Mackler drops his opposition to the Greens, we’ll drop our critical support to him.

The LAC barely distributed its own rally flyer, which was not even posted on the LAC Web site (which hasn’t been updated since February 2005!). LAC rally chair Jack Heyman, a longtime member and former official of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, provided some thin labor veneer for the “labor action” rally. Heyman mobilized no union presence. For his part, Mackler thanked the LAC for calling “this important rally at this important time”—for which Mackler’s two organizations mobilized all of two people. Meanwhile, Todd Chretien did not even bother to show up to the rally that he had endorsed.

In his remarks as rally chair, Heyman echoed recent WV polemics, declaring, “It’s dangerous to say Mumia is just one legal decision from a new trial and freedom.” And Jason Wright, the speaker from the International Bolshevik Tendency (BT), which along with Heyman has been a key player in the LAC since its inception, criticized “comrade Mackler” over the call for a “new trial.” But these comments were just window-dressing for Heyman and the BT’s years of building protests, committees and coalitions in which “unity” means a nonaggression pact with those who call for a new trial. It also means charging the PDC and SL with “sectarianism” for our fight against the liberal illusions codified in that call. But as Trotsky once quipped about Stalin’s venomous lies, even slander should make some sense. Just a week after the PDC endorsed the Oakland rally, the BT Web site featured a brazenly lying and pathetic piece titled “On Recent Spartacist League Polemics” that denounced the

SL’s purported “desire to avoid working with us in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal”!

Heyman and his BT friends have long insisted in the face of our criticisms that they oppose the call for a “new trial.” But the LAC was born waving the “new trial” banner. This bogus outfit was launched in January 1999 in explicit “solidarity with the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal,” one of the most persistent proponents of the “new trial” slogan. Among the LAC’s first acts was to issue an international appeal to build rallies in April 1999 around two central demands: “Stop the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal” and “A new and fair trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal.”

On September 15, Heyman spoke of the 24 April 1999 West Coast port shutdown by the ILWU and underlined that the ILWU “marched in 1999 with 25,000 other people.” As the PDC spokesman at the rally noted, the port shutdown in support of Mumia was a powerful example of “the kind of social power that must be mobilized in a class-struggle fight to free Mumia,” but “Heyman himself undermined this action by tying it to appeals for a ‘new trial’”—the demand pushed by the organizers of the rally that same day. While drawing large numbers, the April 1999 rallies were a crucial point in the demobilization of Mumia’s supporters. Tailoring their demands to what would be acceptable to bourgeois liberals, who viewed Mumia’s case as an aberration in an otherwise fair and impartial justice system, meant rejecting the very reasons millions internationally had rallied behind Mumia: revulsion against the injustices inherent in capitalism—poverty, racial oppression, war.

The LAC initiated a May 2000 “Labor Conference for Mumia” that appealed to the Clinton Justice Department to “launch an official investigation into Mumia’s case” and resolved to lobby delegates to the Democratic National Convention to pass a motion calling for a new trial. This groveling appeal to the “Democratic” Party of U.S. imperialism could not be a clearer example of the irreconcilable gulf between the strategy of mobilizing the independent power of the working class and that of reliance on the agencies of the capitalist class enemy. The labor fakers and reformist socialists at that conference also adopted a motion calling for “A Broad Labor Campaign to Win Justice for Mumia.” The puny efforts they put into building their own September 15 rally expose their “broad labor campaign”—and the LAC itself—as the frauds they are.

## The BT and the Fight Against Black Oppression

While in recent years the BT has made a show of taking up Mumia’s cause, a defining feature of this dubious organization since its inception in the early 1980s by embittered ex-SL members has been its contempt for the fight for black liberation. While the BT has always pursued an unnatural obsession with our organization, it had not one article about Mumia in its journal *1917* until 1996, and published next to nothing on the black question in the U.S., the strategic question of the American socialist revolution, for the first six years of its existence. These were the Reagan years of rampant cop terror in the ghettos and an upsurge in racist mob attacks and KKK/Nazi terror.

The BT did, however, sneer at SL-initiated labor/black mobilizations against Klan/Nazi fascists in the 1980s, our launching of Labor Black Leagues and our declared aspiration to become a 70 percent black party as “community organizing,” a “retreat from the working class” and as “accommodating backward consciousness.” And there was the bombing of the Philadelphia MOVE commune in May 1985—eleven black men, women and children burned to death. While much of the reformist left cringed from the elementary duty to defend MOVE, we sought to sear this atrocity into the memory of the working class and to that end held a rally in New York City in solidarity with MOVE.

The BT’s response was not to protest the MOVE bombing but to ridicule our rally in solidarity with the victims! In *1917* (Winter 1986), published more than half a year after the MOVE massacre, the BT wrote, “In its capacity as convenor of a memorial meeting for the MOVE victims the SL thought it impolitic to differ with its guests. Accordingly SL speakers confined their remarks to denouncing the authors of the hideous massacre on Osage Avenue and advocating the struggle for socialism via construction of a mass-based Spartacist League.” The BT saw the occasion as the time to denounce a spokesman for the victims of racist government slaughter and to attack the SL for not turning the *memorial* meeting into a political free-for-all against MOVE!

Before it had ever published an article on Mumia, the BT did make a press splash at the height of the emergency protests during the summer of 1995—in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. On 16 June 1995 this capitalist mouthpiece ran an article titled, “Not Much Left: ‘The Movement’ Is Pretty Still Nowadays,” smearing all the organizations defending Mumia. First and foremost, the *WSJ* went after the PDC and SL, picking up the BT’s slanders of the SL as a deranged “cult.” It is striking that the reporter located materials of the organization that had written the least about Mumia in order to attack the organization that had made his case an international cause. The PDC flyer for the September 15 rally commented, “The intent of the *Wall Street Journal* in smearing Mumia’s supporters was transparent enough. How and why the minuscule BT was so readily wielded as a tool for the *WSJ* is not.”

With the fight for Mumia’s life and freedom at a critical hour, mass protests based on labor’s social power are urgently needed. Unions representing millions of workers worldwide are on record in support of Mumia. But those millions need to be mobilized in *class-struggle action* to demand Mumia’s freedom. That they have not been mobilized is centrally the responsibility of the pro-capitalist union misleaders, aided and abetted by such pseudo-socialists and labor fakers as make up the LAC. As the PDC speaker at the September 15 rally emphasized: “What is required is *political struggle* to unchain labor’s power. This struggle is totally linked to the fight to forge a Leninist vanguard party to lead the working class in socialist revolution. Such a party must act as the champion of all the exploited and oppressed, recognizing that the fight for black liberation is key to the struggle for workers revolution. Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!”■

# Sex...

(continued from page 7)

and the maintenance of the institution of the family as a key prop for capitalism.

Democrats and Republicans alike have led the onslaught against many of the gains won for working people and the oppressed through the massive social struggles that began with the civil rights movement and continued with the mass radicalization of youth against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and ’70s. The first significant assault on abortion following *Roe v. Wade* took place under the administration of Democrat Jimmy Carter, the country’s first “born again Christian” president. In 1977 he signed into law the Hyde Amendment, which eliminated abortion coverage from the Medicaid health plans of 23 million poor women.

Liberals and feminists look to the racist, repressive capitalist state to “protect” women. We Marxists understand that it requires class and social struggle not only to defend abortion rights, but to make abortion free and accessible to *anyone* in need, including poor or working-class women. Bourgeois women will generally have the means to get safe abortions regardless of legality. The Spartacist League and the SYCs advocate a strategy of mass, labor-backed mobilizations to defend clinics against the anti-abortion bigots and terrorists. We call on the working class to fight for abortion rights. This is because the fight for free abortion on demand, free health care and childcare is part of

the fight against the state, family and religious institutions that keep the working class shackled to capitalist exploitation. This is part of our fight for socialist revolution to destroy this rotten and reactionary class-divided society.

The SYCs call for women’s liberation through socialist revolution. We understand that women’s liberation is a material act, requiring the destruction of the capitalist system and the establishment of a socialist, planned economy. As noted in “The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women,” *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 59 (Spring 2006): “One of the tasks of the socialist revolution is the full replacement of the institution of the family with communal childcare, dining halls and laundries, and paid maternity leave, free health care and special efforts to draw women fully into social and political life.”

Technology and modern medicine enable humanity to increasingly control the forces of nature and use them to the advantage of human beings. Abortion and birth control give women greater control over their own reproduction, and there are simple measures that greatly reduce the risk of STDs. While these advances allow sex to be a safe and enjoyable act for both men and women, it is only with the destruction of capitalism that humanity will be able to fully avail itself of these advances and be freed from state repression and religious bigotry. And only then will youth be able to do what they please sexually, with whom they please, free of state and parental control.■

## Trotskyist League/Spartacus Youth Club Forum

# For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Saturday, September 30, 7 p.m.  
OISE, Room 2214, 252 Bloor St. West  
University of Toronto  
(at St. George Subway Station)

TORONTO

For more information: (416) 593-4138  
or e-mail: spartacan@on.aibn.com



# Join the Labor Black Leagues!

The first Labor Black Leagues were formed as a result of the Spartacist League-initiated, 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped the Ku Klux Klan from marching in Washington, D.C. in November 1982. We stand for mobilizing the masses of minority and working people in militant integrated struggle against

the brutal system of racist oppression that is capitalist America. Initiated by and fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, a multiracial revolutionary Marxist organization, the Labor Black Leagues are part of the revolutionary movement of the workers and oppressed against the bosses and for socialism.

## If You Stand For—

**1** Full rights for black people and for everyone else in jobs, housing and schools! Defeat the racist assault on affirmative action! For union-run minority job recruitment and training programs! For union hiring halls! Open up the universities to all—for open admissions, free tuition and a full living stipend for all students. Free, quality, integrated public education for all!

**2** A fighting labor movement—picket lines mean don’t cross! Defeat police scabberding and strikebreaking through mass pickets and union defense guards! For sit-down strikes against mass layoffs! Fight union-busting; keep the capitalist courts out of the unions! Organize the unorganized, unionize the South! Jobs for all—for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay with full cost-of-living escalator clause! Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!

**3** Fight for women’s rights! Defend abortion clinics! Free abortion on demand; free, quality 24-hour childcare! Equal pay for equal work! For free, quality health care for all!

**4** Full citizenship rights for all immigrants; everyone who made it into this country has the right to stay and live decently! Stop deportations! No to racist “English only” laws! Down with anti-Hispanic, anti-Semitic, anti-Arab and anti-Asian bigotry!

**5** Defend the separation of church and state! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Down with the anti-sex witchhunt—cops and courts out of the bedroom! Down with all laws against consensual activities such as “crimes without victims” like pornography, gambling, drugs and prostitution!

**6** Mass labor/black/Hispanic mobilizations drawing on the power of the unions against the racist terrorists. Stop the Nazis! Stop the KKK!

**7** Abolish the racist death penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all victims of racist capitalist repression! No faith in the capitalist courts! No to gun control! Defend victims of cop terror and racist police frame-up! No illusions in civilian review boards or community control of the police! Down with the racist and anti-labor “war on drugs”! For decriminalization of drugs! For class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and



WV Photo

social defense; support the work of the Partisan Defense Committee!

**8** Unconditional opposition to every attempt to abolish welfare! Down with slave-labor, union-busting “workfare” schemes! Fight any and every attempt of the government to take away or cut back even more social programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public health and aid to education and housing! For a massive program of public works—high-quality integrated housing, schools, libraries, hospitals for the working people and the poor!

**9** Down with the chauvinist poison of protectionism! For international working-class solidarity! Support revolutionary struggles of working people abroad! Defend the deformed workers states—Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea—against capitalist restoration and imperialist attack! For proletarian political revolution to oust their Stalinist bureaucracies! For labor action against U.S. imperialist war moves and military adventures! For the right of independence for Puerto Rico! U.S. troops out of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean!

**10** Down with the Democrats and Republicans! For a revolutionary workers party

that champions the cause of all the oppressed! Finish the Civil War! Those who labor must rule! For a workers government to take industry away from its racist, incompetent and corrupt owners! Rebuild America on a socialist planned economy!

## —Join the Labor Black Leagues!

Membership pledge: \$3/year unemployed; \$10/year employed. For more information:

**CHICAGO** (312) 563-0441

Labor Black Struggle League  
Box 6938, Chicago, IL 60680

**LOS ANGELES** (213) 380-8239

Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 29574, Los Feliz Station  
Los Angeles, CA 90029

**NEW YORK** (212) 267-1025

Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 2502, Church St. Station  
New York, NY 10008

**OAKLAND** (510) 839-0851

Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 29497  
Oakland, CA 94604

## Darfur...

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all imperialist sanctions against the Khartoum regime.

In addressing the Darfur situation, Bill Fletcher Jr., a longtime AFL-CIO spokesman, described the dilemma for himself and other black liberals, writing in “Darfur: What Should the U.S. Do?” (*National Newspaper Publishers Association*, 12 July): “What does one ask of an administration that lied us into a war and occupation of Iraq; threatens Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Syria and North Korea with possible military action?” Nevertheless, Fletcher does look to Bush, a man intensely and justly hated by black people, to stop the slaughter in Darfur, although without directly utilizing U.S. military forces. Fletcher writes: “The Darfur crisis must be resolved by Africans.... If the Bush administration wishes to help, then let them support the African Union financially and diplomatically. Provide the AU with sufficient logistical support to deploy more peacekeepers.”

But who are these “peacekeepers”? The AU deployment in Darfur is currently mainly made up of forces from Rwanda and Nigeria. These countries and the other states making up the AU are themselves ruled by monumentally brutal and corrupt neocolonial regimes. Their military forces routinely rape, torture and massacre tribal villagers, committing atrocities similar to those being committed in Darfur, although without the same kind of publicity. It is grotesque to view the bloody capitalist regimes that rule every country in Africa as part of the answer for Africa’s oppressed. Furthermore, the AU is and can only be a shill for the interests of the far more powerful imperialist countries.

In order to gain public support for escalating imperialist intervention in Sudan, the “save Darfur” campaign describes what is happening there as genocide. But what is happening in Darfur is not geno-

cide, an emotion-laden term that has frequently been inflated to cover all national, racial and ethnic atrocities. One of the few liberal publicists who argues against using that label for Darfur is Jonathan Steele, who commented in a British *Guardian* column (19 September) that “Darfur is not Rwanda” but a brutal civil war. Furthermore, he pointed out, “the [anti-Khartoum] rebels also committed atrocities,” something that has rarely been reported in the Western media. Despite this recognition, Steele pushes the line in favor of more AU “peacekeepers” to Sudan.

Neither the Bush gang nor the Democrats are eager to engage in a serious intervention in Sudan. As U.S. forces are stretched to the limit in the brutal wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, Democrats and Republicans both prefer to grandstand about “Muslim atrocities” in Sudan while subcontracting any intervention to other countries or coalitions. However, they do find it convenient to cynically stoke outrage over Darfur to serve their ideological purposes.

Furthermore, the calls for intervention into Darfur have from the outset been characterized by the anti-Communist demonization of China, which has significant investments in Sudanese oil, as supposedly responsible for the carnage in Sudan. As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the Chinese deformed workers state, where capitalist rule was overthrown by the 1949 social revolution, against imperialist and domestic counterrevolution.

In the dwindling days before the midterm elections, the Democrats are using the events in Darfur in part to appeal to their black constituency. Denouncing the Bush administration for taking so long to assemble an international “peacekeeping” force, Virginia Democratic Congressman Jim Moran thundered, “Would we be this complacent if the genocide wasn’t in Africa? Would the administration act any differently if claims of ethnic cleansing were in Europe or the Middle East?”

What about the Palestinians?! For decades, the Palestinians have been the victims of mass expulsion and a brutal military occupation at the hands of Israel. As everyone knows, the Zionist state has been the recipient of massive U.S. financial and military aid, while Washington supports Israel diplomatically in forums like the UN. And the Democrats have been just as staunch supporters of Israel, and in many cases even more so, than the Republicans.

The U.S. imperialist government, whether administered by Democrats or Republicans, *actively supports* the murderous oppression of peoples in various Third World countries when carried out by its allies and client regimes, and is itself the perpetrator of mass murder, most recently in the war against Serbia in 1999 and the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq today. Notwithstanding the Democrats’ attempts to capitalize on anger at the Republicans over Darfur, racist indifference to black life is a constant thread throughout the history of U.S. involvement with Africa. More fundamentally, the systematic oppression and impoverishment of the black population has always been rooted in the bedrock of American capitalism. This was flagrantly demonstrated for all to see by the Democrats’ and Republicans’ abandonment of masses of poor blacks to die a year ago in New Orleans (see article, page one). It is necessary to remember the imperialist “humanitarian” missions undertaken under Democratic administrations, including Clinton’s U.S.-led UN intervention to “help” starving black Somalis. Troops brutalized the population, massacring at least 1,000 Somalis at the battle of Mogadishu in October 1993. The Somalis’ killing of 18 soldiers in that battle led to the U.S.’ ignominious withdrawal the following year, after it was made crystal clear that “humanitarianism” had simply been window-dressing for racist imperialist aggression.

Washington’s humanitarian credentials are clearly threadbare today under the

justly hated and feared Bush regime (currently engaged with the Democrats in negotiating acceptable means of torture), so aside from practicality, liberals find international coalitions and bodies like the UN the appropriate vehicle to “help” desperate Darfur. But the UN is—as Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin defined its predecessor, the League of Nations, after World War I—an imperialist den of thieves, joined in the UN by their semicolonial victims. Throughout its history, the UN has served as a fig leaf for U.S. imperialism, including the 1950-53 “police action” against the North Korean deformed workers state, which took the lives of upwards of three million Koreans; the 1960 military intervention into the Congo under whose cover the CIA and Belgian imperialists assassinated nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba; and the starvation sanctions against Iraq.

The dominant members of the UN besides the U.S. are those very European nations—Britain, Germany, France—that along with Belgium historically bled, enslaved and exploited Africa, carving it up to suit their imperialist interests. Britain itself conquered Sudan through the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people. Calling on the imperialists to bring peace and freedom to Darfur is like expecting the fox not only to protect the henhouse but to deliver the feed.

Only a revolutionary, proletarian struggle to bring down imperialism itself can pose the road forward for the besieged peoples of Africa. The key to ending the horrific conditions in Darfur and elsewhere in Africa is a series of workers revolutions, in the imperialist countries as well as in key proletarian centers on the African continent, especially the industrial powerhouse of South Africa as well as Egypt. It is the multiracial U.S. proletariat that has the power to bring down the American imperialist beast through socialist revolution. The Spartacist League/U.S. fights to forge the internationalist, revolutionary workers party that is necessary to provide the leadership to accomplish that historic task. ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

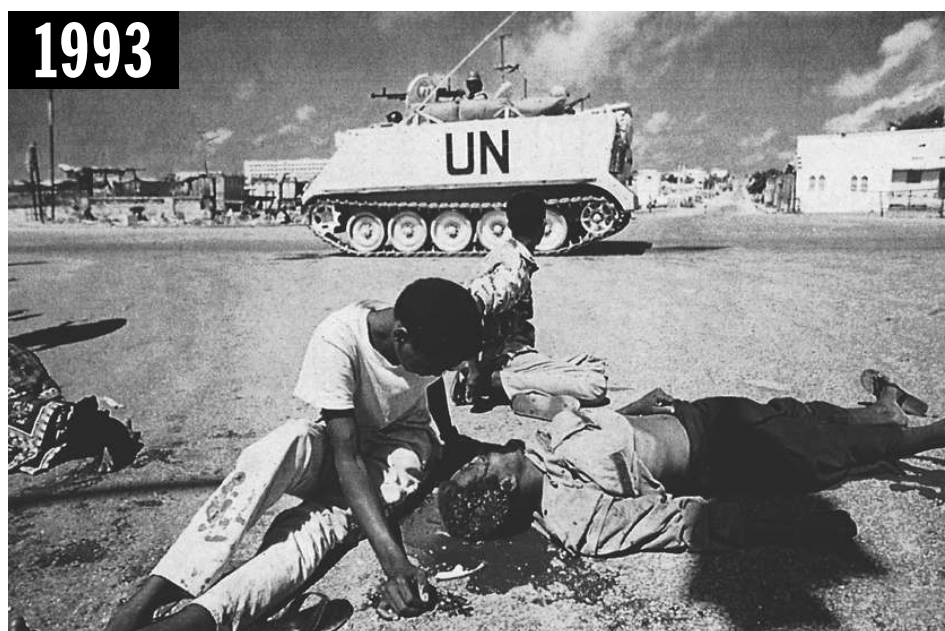
## Darfur: Colonialism's Murderous Legacy

# No to UN/Imperialist Intervention in Sudan!

Many people around the world, not least black people in the U.S., are understandably horrified by what is happening in the Darfur region of western Sudan. The conflict has resulted in mass slaughter and the driving of almost two million people from their homes. Its most proximate cause is the unleashing of the *janjaweed* militias, based on nomadic Muslims, by the central government in Khartoum against guerrilla forces based on a farming population that is also Muslim. A major drought in the mid 1980s had already exacerbated competition for land resources between nomadic herders and settled farmers. Underlying the current conflict are the effects of murderous British colonial rule, which carved Sudan out of a myriad of peoples, setting the stage for years of ethnic and religious bloodletting.

However, the outrage of the U.S. black population over the carnage in Darfur is being cynically manipulated by some of the most reactionary forces in American politics today: Christian rightists, neocons and Zionists. As we noted in "U.S./UN Hands Off Sudan!" (WV No. 870, 12 May), the forces in the unholy alliance making up the "save Darfur" movement "reduce the complex conflict in western Sudan to 'Arabs' oppressing 'Africans' in order to whip up anti-Arab and anti-Muslim chauvinism, which has greatly intensified since the launching of the reactionary 'war on terror' after the September 11 attacks."

This alliance includes such prominent Democrats as Madeleine Albright, secretary of state in the Clinton administration, who joined other Democrats, Republicans and other notables in addressing a rally of tens of thousands in New York's Central Park on September 17, part of a "Global Day for Darfur." In 1998, the Clinton



**Left: Demonstrators in Mogadishu, Somalia, gunned down by UN "peacekeepers," part of invasion force led by U.S. under Clinton. Right: Madeleine Albright, Clinton's secretary of state, addresses NYC Save Darfur Coalition rally, September 17.**

White House launched aerial bombings in Sudan and Afghanistan on the pretext of harboring Al Qaeda terrorists, killing dozens and destroying Sudan's only pharmaceutical factory. In a September 22 interview on Fox News, Clinton boasted that these attacks proved "how hard" he had tried to kill Osama bin Laden. Albright was a leading architect and spokesman for the UN-endorsed economic sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s, which resulted in the deaths of *one and a half million people*, many of them children and the elderly. While most black people oppose the brutal U.S. occupation of Iraq, leaders of the "save Darfur" movement

include some of the most die-hard partisans of "staying the course" in Iraq.

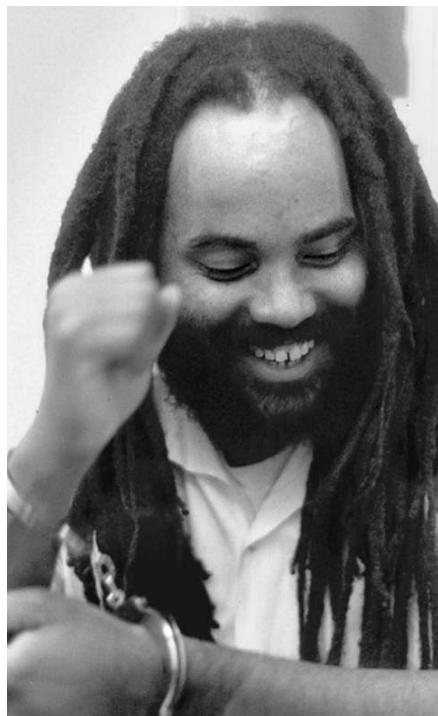
At this month's UN general assembly, George W. Bush, Tony Blair and other imperialist leaders, along with their mouthpieces like UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, were united in calling for a new UN "peacekeeping operation" to back up the 7,000 African Union (AU) troops already there. There are already 10,000 UN troops in Sudan, ostensibly to police a peacekeeping agreement between rebellious forces in the south of the country, which has a black African population, and the reactionary Muslim Arab regime in Khartoum, whose blood-

soaked rule has meant the death and imprisonment of thousands of labor activists, Communists and other opponents.

But any imperialist intervention in Sudan, including under the UN flag or through the agency of the AU, only deepens the misery of all the peoples of the region and strengthens imperialism at the expense of oppressed peoples around the globe. The International Communist League demands: All UN/African Union forces out of Sudan! As Congress threatens to impose new economic and other sanctions under the "Darfur Peace and Accountability Act," we call for ending

*continued on page 15*

## Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!



OOC Productions

### RALLY!

**Mumia Abu-Jamal's  
Life Is in Danger—  
Mobilize Now!**

Sponsored by  
**the Partisan Defense Committee  
and the Labor Black Leagues**  
e-mail: [partisandefense@earthlink.net](mailto:partisandefense@earthlink.net)  
[www.partisandefense.org](http://www.partisandefense.org)

#### BAY AREA

Saturday, Oct. 21, 2 p.m.

YWCA, Ehmann Hall  
1515 Webster St., Oakland  
(at 15th St., 2 blocks from 12th St./  
City Center BART Station)  
More info: (510) 839-0852

#### CHICAGO

Friday, Oct. 13, 7 p.m.

United Electrical Hall  
37 S. Ashland  
(at Monroe)  
More info: (312) 563-0442

#### LOS ANGELES

Thursday, Oct. 19, 6:30 p.m.

UCLA Downtown  
Labor Center  
675 S. Park View St.  
(4 blocks west of Westlake/  
MacArthur Park Red Line Station)  
More info: (213) 380-8897

#### NEW YORK

Saturday, Oct. 28, 3 p.m.

Salem United Methodist Church  
2190 Adam Clayton  
Powell Jr. Blvd.  
(at 129th St., 2, 3 train to 125th St.  
or A, C, D to 125th St.)  
More info: (212) 406-4252

## Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!