

Bridges, Levees, Runways, Tracks

Capitalists Starve Infrastructure: Working People Die

- July 18—An 83-year-old Con Edison steampipe explodes in Midtown Manhattan at the height of the evening rush hour, injuring many with scalding steam and setting off widespread panic. One person dies of a heart attack.
- August 1—The I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis suddenly collapses during evening rush-hour traffic. The main span plunges into the river along with dozens of cars, then both approach spans buckle. Thirteen people are killed and nearly 100 injured. The body of the last remaining victim, construction worker Gregory Jolstad, is pulled out of the dark waters on August 20, nearly three weeks later.
- August 6—Six coal miners are buried in a collapse of the non-union Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah, where deadly “retreat mining” techniques were used. Then three rescuers are killed as the mountain continues to shift around them.
- August 18—Two New York City firefighters die trying to put out a fire in the Deutsche Bank building being demolished at the World Trade Center site. The building was a firetrap, produced by a combination of mammoth corruption and official indifference. The following week, a fork-lift on the 23rd floor plunges to the ground, crashing through a construction shed and injuring two more firefighters.
- August 29—The second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina arrives with no guarantee that the barely patched-up levees will hold this hurricane season, while much of the dispersed black population

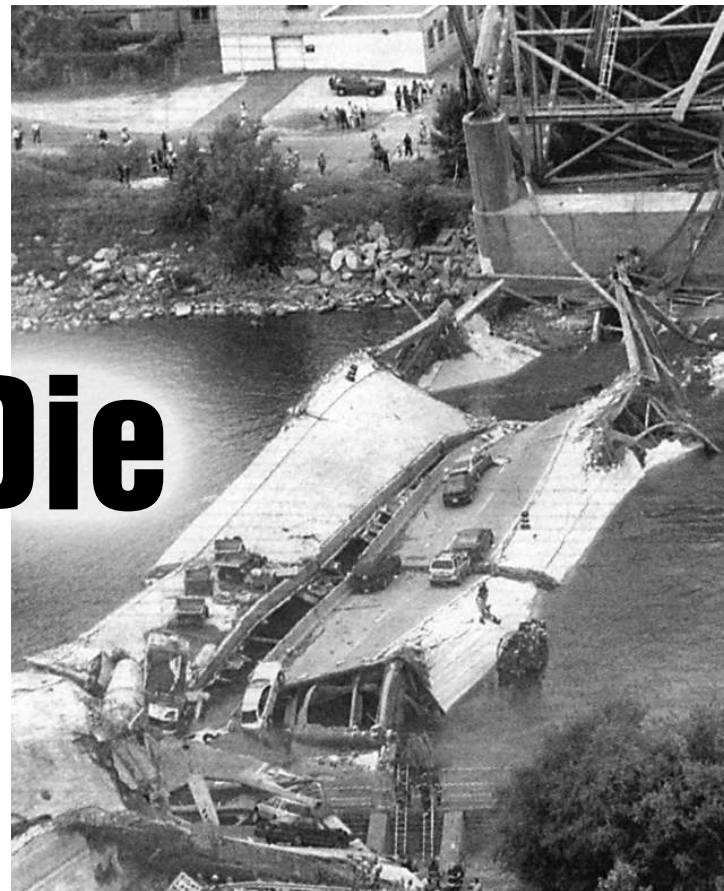
of New Orleans is told in no uncertain terms: Stay out!

This is the picture of the anarchic and decaying system of American capitalism. From coast to coast, the country’s bridges, roads, airways, mass transit systems, waterways and power grids are disasters waiting to happen. The country’s rulers have looted basic industry and criminally neglected the infrastructure of society, and their drive for ever-greater profits means depraved indifference to the lives of those they exploit. The destructive irrationality of the capitalist system is highlighted by frenzied financial speculation, most recently seen in the sub-prime mortgage meltdown, that threatens to touch off a world recession. Meanwhile, the bloody U.S.-led occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, carried out in pursuit of American global dominance, thunder on unchecked.

With practiced ritual, capitalist politicians from Bush on down offered their prayers for the victims’ families in Minnesota, Utah and New York, while Congressmen once again called for “hearings” that would amount to little more than cover-ups for the crimes of the capitalists who call the shots. Not only the Minneapolis victims, but the Utah miners and the thousands who died or were displaced following Katrina are not victims of “natural disasters” but of a capitalist system that always holds safety hostage to profit.

Conditions in the U.S. cry out for a counter-offensive by the working class against the exploiters

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Takushi/Pioneer Press



Rourke/American-Statesman

Top: August 1 Minneapolis highway bridge collapse. Bottom: New Orleans residents fleeing after Hurricane Katrina, 2005.

From NSA Wiretapping to Death Row Speedup Republicans, Democrats Step Up War on Our Rights

AUGUST 27—The resignation today of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales was quickly cheered by Democrats in Congress who had for months been calling for his resignation. Gonzales had pursued the White House quest for ever-greater repressive powers with such maniacal and deceitful purpose that he made his predecessor, John Ashcroft, a religious nut and fan of the Confederate slavocracy, look almost reasonable. But Gonzales’ resignation in no way signals a slowing of the government’s assault on democratic rights.

In the past several weeks, the Bush administration, with the complicity of the Democratic-controlled Congress, has

instituted a series of measures in the name of the “war on terror” that represent a further ominous rollback of the rights of the population. On August 5, President Bush signed legislation that would allow the National Security Agency (NSA) to monitor telephone calls and e-mail messages of U.S. citizens—without a court warrant—as long as there is a “reasonable belief” that one party in the conversation is not in the U.S. Then it was revealed that the government had

approved a plan to grant police forces wide access to military spy satellites in order to carry out domestic surveillance.

To top it off, it was made known that the Justice Department was preparing regulations under the renewed USA Patriot Act giving the Attorney General new authority over death penalty cases, including the power to greatly shorten the time that condemned inmates have to appeal their convictions to federal courts. Illustrating the broad reach of the state’s

“war on terror,” Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen charged in 2002 as an “unlawful enemy combatant,” now faces a possible life sentence after being found guilty of “conspiracy” charges in criminal court despite the lack of concrete evidence of any plot or criminal act on his part.

The September 11 attacks gave the U.S. rulers the pretext to put in place repressive measures that they had long sought. And this program has been carried out by both the Democratic and Republican parties of capital and with the imprimatur of a pliant judiciary. The measures include a vast government program aiming at nothing less than spying on the whole population. For years, the NSA, in collusion with some major telecommunications companies, executed warrantless wiretaps allowing the Feds to “data mine” millions of phone and Internet communications records. A huge pool

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Protest Padilla Conviction! Free All the Detainees!

Free Jamal Hart Now!

The following Partisan Defense Committee letter, addressed to Warden Ronald R. Holt of Schuylkill Federal Correctional Institution in Pennsylvania, was issued on August 25. Jamal Hart has been imprisoned since 1997 on bogus firearm possession charges.

The Partisan Defense Committee reiterates our vehement protest of the severe and onerous restrictions against Jamal Hart. Mr. Hart is still being denied all non-legal personal visits and phone calls long after he was finally released from solitary confinement.

We also protest the actions of Case Manager Walter Whalen who, we have been informed, has improperly adjusted Mr. Hart's security level to prevent him from being transferred to a lower-level security facility. We have also been informed that this Case Manager Whalen displays a poster condemning Mumia

Abu-Jamal, the death row political prisoner who is Mr. Hart's father. This is a conscious provocation.

This repression comes in the context of, and is meant to hinder, Mr. Hart's legal efforts to file a writ of *habeas corpus* in the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Mr. Hart's petition argues that his current incarceration is based on a 1995 conviction *that does not exist*. By all rights, Jamal Hart should be released.

Jamal Hart is only imprisoned because he sought to highlight the case of his father, an innocent man. We demand you stop the outrageous repression of Jamal Hart now and that all his visitation and telephone rights be restored immediately!

* * *

To correspond with Jamal Hart, send letters to: Jamal Hart, #50597-066, FCI Schuylkill, P.O. Box 759, Minersville, PA 17954-0759. ■



TROTSKY

Against Illusions in Bourgeois "Justice"

Writing shortly after the execution of anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti 80 years ago, Max Shachtman, then editor of the *International Labor Defense* monthly *Labor Defender*, upheld the *ILD's* fight for class-struggle defense against those in the official Boston-based defense committee who preached reliance on the capitalist courts.

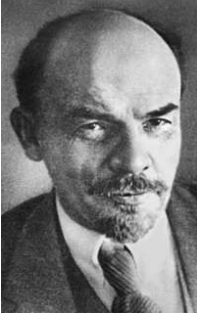
The courts, the judges and executives of Massachusetts, never had any idea of giving "justice" to Sacco and Vanzetti. Their intentions were at no time characterized by a desire to consider the abstract principles of equity and fairness in the case. All the delays, all the illusive legerdemain of the courts, the pompous and fraudulent going through with the motions, was only for the purpose of demonstrating to naive people the thoroughness and legal sanctity of the final decision.

The blows dealt the liberation movement for Sacco and Vanzetti by the elements who fastened themselves on the Boston Committee and dominated its policy consisted essentially in this: that they failed to see the case as a class issue, a part of the bitter and inexorable international struggle between the ruling class and the ruled; that they nursed and fostered the illusion that it was possible to extract an essence of "justice" from the murderers of Sacco and Vanzetti by dignified and respectable supplication. They tried to smother the militant protest movement and hurled the mud of slander upon the workers who organized it. They sought to cover the rough clothes of the workers' movement with the cap and gown of the lawyer, and substitute a cultured Boston accent for the violent shouts of the masses in a dozen tongues.

It was quite different with the masses of the world. Their magnificent and almost unprecedented solidarity was based on a common understanding of who was enemy and who was friend. The earth-shaking rise of the workers everywhere for Sacco and Vanzetti not only showed how much explosive is contained in the working class of the world, how dangerous it is for the capitalists to tamper with these powder kegs, but it also proved that the world proletariat pierces and condemns the shams and pretences of the American ruling class and its "peace" and its "justice" and its "golden opportunities."

If anything was demonstrated by the Sacco-Vanzetti case it was that labor cases cannot be fought with fat volumes of legal spider webs alone but that the class character of the prosecution must be pointed out and the defense organized on that basis.

—Max Shachtman, *Sacco and Vanzetti: Labor's Martyrs* (1927)



LENIN

Stop the Execution of Kenneth Foster!

Texas

We print below an August 22 letter from the Partisan Defense Committee to Texas governor Rick Perry protesting the scheduled August 30 execution of Kenneth Foster, Jr., a writer, poet and fighter for prison reform who has been on Texas death row for ten years.

The Partisan Defense Committee demands that your office stop the execution of Kenneth Foster, Jr. We join in the worldwide outrage against the scheduled legal lynching of this man *who has never killed anyone*.

Mr. Foster is charged under Texas' infamous Law of Parties, which permits someone to be executed for the acts of others. In this case, it was a passenger in Mr. Foster's car who was accused and convicted of murder. Like hundreds of poor and black prisoners on death row, Mr. Foster was saddled with legal counsel who failed to mount a vigorous defense or appeal. Now he is threatened with execution for a crime he did not commit.

The impending execution of Mr. Fos-



Foster Family
Kenneth Foster with Nicole Johnson and their daughter during 2001 visit to Texas death row.

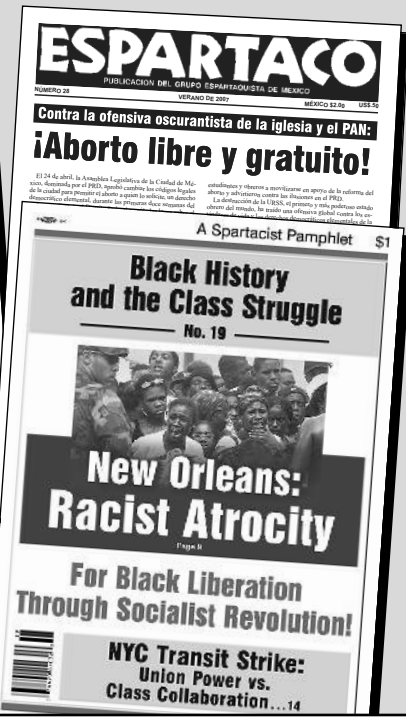
ter exemplifies what the racist death penalty is all about. It is a legacy of chattel slavery and a barbaric outrage, it is the lynch rope made legal.

Mr. Foster has put it eloquently: "Texas is about to commit a vile injustice. What is about to happen is beyond extreme—it's sadistic." We say again: Stop the execution of Kenneth Foster, Jr. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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

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

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

The closing date for news in this issue is August 28.

No. 897

31 August 2007



Mexico City: Right-Wing Reaction Against Abortion Reform

We reprint below an excerpted article translated from *Espartaco* No. 28 (Summer 2007), published by our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México.

On April 24, the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City, dominated by the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution], voted to change the city's legal codes to allow abortion on demand, an elementary democratic right, in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. This not only gives the city the most liberal laws on abortion in Latin America outside of Cuba and Puerto Rico, but, by providing it in public hospitals free to city residents, makes abortion far more accessible than in the U.S. and most of Europe.

Some researchers estimate that in Latin America and the Caribbean the primary cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 39 is complications from illegal abortions, which kill some 1,500 Mexican women each year. Abortion reform is an important gain for all women but will have particular impact on the lives of working-class, poor and young women—those who do not have the means to obtain safe abortions by traveling to other countries or paying a hefty price to have one illegally at a decent facility. Still, the law maintains penalties of three to six months in jail for women who receive an abortion after the first 12 weeks, and from one to three years of prison for those who perform it. We say: Down with all penalties! For free abortion on demand *in all of Mexico*! No to the 12-week limit!

As revolutionary communists, the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), supports this reform and every gain that has been won for women, no matter how partial. On April 19, the Juventud Espartaquista [youth group of the GEM] held a

ESPARTACO

speakeout at the UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico] Political Science school calling for “Free abortion on demand! Women's liberation through socialist revolution!” This was one of the very few leftist pro-abortion rights events held on campus this spring. Our comrades laid out the Marxist perspective for ending women's oppression, called on students and workers to mobilize in support of the abortion reform and warned against illusions in the PRD.

The demise of the USSR, the world's first and most powerful workers state, has ushered in a global offensive against the living standards and basic democratic rights of the working class and the oppressed, as well as an ideological cli-

Free Abortion on Demand!



Marco Paláez



Espartaco

Above: Mexico City protest against attorney general's attempt to reverse legalization of abortion in the city. Left: April 19 GEM rally at UNAM; placard at right reads: “Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!”

mate dominated by widespread belief in the “death of communism” and a resurgence of religious fanaticism. Where abortion rights exist, as in the U.S.—ruled by Bush's gang of religious fanatics—they have been under constant attack both by Republicans and Democrats, and it is increasingly hard to get an abortion, particularly for poor women.

Mexico, of course, has been no exception to this bourgeois offensive: two decades of anti-worker, neoliberal policies have devastated the standard of living of the working class. Furthermore, in the last seven years, PAN [National Action Party] rule has combined privatizing, openly pro-American-imperialist policies with right-wing, religious ideology. Recently, the country has been rocked by powerful, combative strikes as well as massive mobilizations of the working class, the poor and the oppressed demanding that their most elementary needs be addressed and defending gains won through hard-fought struggles. The bourgeoisie itself is highly polarized, and the

differentiation is on social as well as economic issues. The bourgeois-nationalist PRD of [former presidential candidate Andrés Manuel] López Obrador seeks to co-opt and deactivate workers' discontent through concessions. It is in this context that the abortion reform, originally drafted by the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] and passed due to the PRD's support, came into being.

Abortion, which provides women with some control over whether or not to have children, is an explosive political issue. In Mexico, with the second-largest Catholic population in the world after Brazil, the medieval Catholic church has played an ever-growing political role especially since the PAN's Vicente Fox took the presidency in 2000. Since it was first proposed, the reform has caused an uproar of indignation from obscurantist, right-wing forces that egg on the most violently backward layers of the population and represent a deadly threat to women, leftists, workers, gays and indigenous people.

The PAN government and the Catholic church joined hands in a reactionary, anti-woman campaign against the proposal. They ranted from the pulpits of national television, priests and nuns demonstrated in the streets of Mexico City, and there were laughable threats of excommunication by the Vatican itself. After the city's Legislative Assembly approved the reform, there was a renewed attack, now spearheaded by the grotesquely misnamed National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) and the Attorney General's Office (PGR) to challenge the constitutionality of the new law, with the PGR arguing that an embryo is *sujeto de derecho* [worthy of rights]! We say: For the separation of church and state!

In supporting this reform, we place no confidence whatsoever in the PRD or the PRI, which are as much parties of capital as the PAN. Reforms under capitalism are not only partial but reversible. The oppression of women is a necessary part of capitalism and can be uprooted not through reforms but only through the revolutionary overthrow of the system of exploitation based on private property. We fight to build a Leninist-Trotskyist proletarian party to lead the struggle for a socialist revolution that would begin to lay the basis for the genuine emancipation of women together with the emancipation of the working class and all of the oppressed.

Material Basis of Women's Oppression

Marxists view the institution of the family, a necessary component of the regime of private property, as the main source of the special oppression of women. The family is not an immutable, timeless institution but a social relation subject to historical change. Ancient hunter-gatherer society was one of equality between men and women, where the necessary division of labor, based on women's childbearing role, entailed no subordination by sex and where lineage was traced through the mother. In the classic *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Friedrich Engels (using information available at the time) traced the origin of the institution of the family and the state to the division of society into classes. The development of technology—agriculture, metallurgy, domestication of animals and other revolutionary advances—allowed for a surplus beyond what was necessary for the minimal subsistence that characterized hunter-gatherer societies, making possible the existence of an idle ruling class. The state arose to ensure the dominance of that ruling class by force. The centrality of the family flowed from its role in the inheritance of property along the male line, which required

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No Illusions in Bourgeois PRD! For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

80th Anniversary of Legal Lynching Lessons of the Fight to Free Sacco and Vanzetti

August 23 marked the anniversary of the executions of anarchist workers Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in Massachusetts in 1927. Arrested in May 1920 at the height of the anti-immigrant Red Scare that followed the 1917 Russian Revolution, the two were convicted the next year on frame-up murder and robbery charges. Sacco, a skilled worker in a shoe factory, and Vanzetti, who supported himself as a fish peddler, were singled out because they were Italian immigrants and because they had dedicated their lives to fighting for the emancipation of the working class.

PART ONE

With their executions, Sacco and Vanzetti joined a long list of working-class fighters subjected to the barbaric death penalty or entombed in prison by the rulers of “democratic” American capitalism: the Haymarket martyrs, labor organizers and anarchists executed in 1887; Joe Hill, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) activist framed up on murder charges and killed by a firing squad in Utah in 1915; Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, also framed up on murder charges stemming from a bomb explosion at a 1916 San Francisco “Preparedness” rally that drummed up support for U.S. entry into World War I, an interimperialist war. (Mooney and Billings were released from prison in 1939.) Up to their last breaths, Sacco and Vanzetti remained unbowed. As the guards strapped him in the electric chair, Sacco declared, “Viva l’anarchia.” Moments later, Vanzetti turned to the warden and stated, “I am innocent of all crime, not only of this one, but all. I am an innocent man.” He was electrocuted within minutes.

The story of Sacco and Vanzetti is also one of militant struggle for their lives and freedom led by the International Labor Defense (ILD), associated with the early Communist Party (CP). The



Boston Public Library

Above: Bartolomeo Vanzetti (left) and Nicola Sacco. Right: ILD led 20,000 workers at April 1927 rally in New York City’s Union Square demanding freedom for Sacco and Vanzetti.

U.S. affiliate of the International Red Aid (MOPR), which was established by the Communist International, the ILD blazed a trail of class-struggle defense by mobilizing workers across the U.S. on Sacco and Vanzetti’s behalf, in conjunction with MOPR’s efforts internationally.

Following the executions, ILD secretary James P. Cannon, a leader of the early CP and later of American Trotskyism, drew the lessons of this struggle in an article in the ILD’s *Labor Defender* (October 1927) titled, “A Living Monument to Sacco and Vanzetti.” Cannon wrote: “In this act of assassination the ruling class of America shows its real face to the world. The mask of ‘democracy’ is thrown aside.” In appealing for workers solidarity, Cannon pointed out, the ILD “endeavored to link up the fight for them



Labor Defender

with the general defense of the scores of labor prisoners confined in the penitentiaries today and with the broader fight of the toiling masses for liberation from the yoke of capitalism.”

That is the perspective that guides the work of the Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League. The work of the ILD provides vital lessons for working-class militants, leftists and radical youth in the struggles of today, in particular the fight for the life and freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal. A Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, later an award-winning journalist and supporter of the MOVE organization, Mumia was framed up on false charges for the 9 December 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. Mumia’s case is the racist and political frame-up of an innocent man. As we have stressed since the PDC first took up his cause some 20 years ago, the road to his freedom lies in mobilizing the proletariat in the U.S. and internationally, whose social power lies in its numbers, organization and ability to bring production to a halt.

The similarities between the frame-ups of Sacco and Vanzetti and of Mumia are striking. All three were victimized for their political beliefs and activities. Sacco and Vanzetti were among the anarchists targeted for repression by the federal government; Mumia had been targeted by the FBI and Philadelphia cops from the time he was a 15-year-old spokesman for the Black Panthers, also earning their wrath for his later defense of the MOVE organization against brutal cop attacks. Both cases featured jury-rigging, concealment of evidence, coercion of witnesses and phony ballistics, with trials presided over by judges openly biased against the defendants.

In 1924, after denying a motion for a new trial for Sacco and Vanzetti, Judge

Webster Thayer told Dartmouth College professor James Richardson, “Did you see what I did with those anarchistic bastards the other day?” (quoted in Herbert Ehrmann, *The Case That Will Not Die* [1969]). At the time of Mumia’s 1982 trial, Judge Albert Sabo was overheard by a court reporter boasting, “I’m going to help them fry the n-----r.” In both cases, another man ultimately confessed, absolving the defendants of any involvement, only to have the courts disregard the confessions. And for Mumia as well as for Sacco and Vanzetti, workers and oppressed around the world rallied to their support, seeing their own struggles in the fight for their freedom.

Of crucial importance is that in the Sacco and Vanzetti case—as in Mumia’s case today—the policy of class-struggle defense was pitted against illusions sown by bourgeois liberals, trade-union misleaders and reformist leftists in the “fairness” of capitalist justice. Up to the day of Sacco and Vanzetti’s execution, the ILD waged a tireless fight for unity in action on their behalf, based on the class struggle. The ILD supported using any legal means available for Sacco and Vanzetti. But as Cannon insisted, the fight for Sacco and Vanzetti had to be taken to the “supreme court of the masses.” At every turn of the legal battle—motions for a new trial, appeal before Massachusetts’ highest court, petitions for clemency or appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court—the ILD fought against those who undermined the struggle by preaching reliance on the black-robed justices or the Massachusetts governor, a policy accompanied by slanders, exclusions and even physical attacks against the ILD and CP.

A Proletarian Cause

By the time of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, their cause had been taken up by a wide spectrum of organizations and prominent individuals: from labor unions and socialist organizations in the U.S.

STRIKE CALLED ALL UNIONS TO GO OUT

Seattle Union Record
SIXTY THOUSAND TO RESPOND TO CALL
NO CONSTRUCTIVE LEGISLATION YET
ANNOUNCEMENT OF STRIKE
A general strike of all the union members in Seattle was called upon Saturday at a meeting held in the Labor Union Hall, Saturday, February 2, 1919, when the date for the strike was set for Saturday, February 9, 1919.

February 1919: Workers gather groceries in preparation for five-day Seattle General Strike.

Museum of History and Industry, Seattle



Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free All Class-War Prisoners!

to Members of Parliament in Britain and world-renowned writers and artists. Albert Einstein signed a protest to U.S. president Calvin Coolidge. Playwright George Bernard Shaw denounced the frame-up, while Pulitzer prizewinner Edna St. Vincent Millay publicized their cause in her poems. Upton Sinclair, author of *The Jungle*, the classic muckraking novel about the meatpacking industry, championed their defense as did John Dos Passos in his 1927 pamphlet *Facing the Chair*. Sacco and Vanzetti were later memorialized in paintings by Ben Shahn, music by Woodie Guthrie, Ennio Morricone and Joan Baez, and in plays and movies.

An article by Harvard law professor and later Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter in the *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1927), later expanded into the book *The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti*, laid bare the legal farce to a national and international audience. Frankfurter's book created such a stir that the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, former president William Howard Taft, blasted it as "vicious propaganda" and Frankfurter's phone was tapped.

Support for Sacco and Vanzetti was notable for its breadth, including from liberal figures like Frankfurter who saw in their frame-up a stain on the image of American democracy. But their case belongs to the international proletariat. As early as 1921, there were protests in European capitals like London, Rome and Paris, as well as in Casablanca, Morocco, Mexico City, Caracas, Venezuela and Montevideo, Uruguay. The identification of workers around the world with the two militants was captured by the Syndicate of Truck Drivers of the Port of Veracruz, Mexico, who in a 1921 protest demanded, "Free Sacco and Vanzetti or the proletarian world will rip out your guts!" In the U.S., various unions and even the conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL) tops, along with the Socialist Party (SP), IWW and other leftist and civil libertarian groups, would also add their voices.

Organized defense of Sacco and Vanzetti was initiated by Italian anarchists in Boston and joined shortly after by a number of civil libertarians. But it was the intervention of the International Red Aid and the ILD in the U.S. that played a central role in the proletarian protest movement. And at a time when executions routinely took place shortly after convictions,



Labor Defender
James P. Cannon, leader of International Labor Defense in 1920s. ILD poster during class-struggle campaign on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti.

it was the mobilization of millions that kept Sacco and Vanzetti alive for six years.

The Communist International and the CP in the U.S. issued appeals for a worldwide campaign for Sacco and Vanzetti in the fall of 1921. The first issue of *Labor Herald* (March 1922), publication of the CP-allied Trade Union Educational League, called for "Labor! Act at Once to Rescue Sacco and Vanzetti!" The CP's *Daily Worker* reported on each twist and turn in the case and regularly reported on protests internationally. In a front-page appeal, the CP called in the *Daily Worker* (27 December 1924) for "all organizations of workers in America to join with it in a united front for Sacco and Vanzetti, against their capitalist enemies and for their immediate release."

The Sacco and Vanzetti case was a feature of the founding convention of the ILD in 1925. The ILD grew out of discussions in Moscow between James P. Cannon and ex-"Wobbly" Big Bill Haywood. Non-sectarian labor defense had been a theme of Workers (Communist) Party propaganda since its inception, but the ILD gave it flesh and blood. A former IWW member himself, Cannon had a history of experience in labor defense cases. He recalled, "I came from the background of the old movement when the one thing that was absolutely sacred was unity on behalf of the victims of capitalist justice" (quoted in Bryan Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary*



Left, 1890-1928 [2007]). Seeking to overcome the limitations of past labor defense practices, in which each case would lead to the establishment anew of an ad hoc defense committee, Cannon sought to build a labor-based defense organization for the entire workers movement.

As Cannon described in *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962), the ILD was founded especially to take up the plight of "any member of the working class movement, regardless of his views, who suffered persecution by the capitalist courts because of his activities or his opinions." The ILD fused the IWW tradition of class-struggle, non-sectarian defense—captured in the Wobbly slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all"—with the internationalism of the Bolshevik Revolution. Upon its founding, the ILD identified 106 class-war prisoners in the U.S. and instituted the policy of financially assisting them and their families. Within a little more than a year, the ILD had branches in 146 cities with 20,000 individual members as well as 75,000 members of unions and other workers organizations collectively affiliated to the ILD.

The ILD publicized Sacco and Vanzetti's struggle and organized rallies and political strikes to demand their freedom. The ILD struggled to prevent the workers' militancy and class solidarity from being dissipated by the liberals, social democrats and AFL tops who preached the inherent justice of the capitalist

courts. The ILD mobilized on the basis of the united front, seeking maximum unity in struggle of the various organizations standing for defense of Sacco and Vanzetti while giving a thorough airing of the political differences between the CP/ILD and others. The slogan "march separately, strike together" embodies the two aims of the united-front tactic: class unity and the political fight for a communist program.

The international protest movement wrote a historic page in the textbook of class-struggle defense. The ILD initiated 500 May Day Sacco and Vanzetti meetings in cities across the country and played a key role in organizing labor protests and strikes, from a rally of 20,000 in New York City's Union Square in April 1927 to protests and strikes involving hundreds of thousands on the eve of the executions. The ILD understood that in order to stop the executions and win their freedom, it could rely only on mounting such a powerful wave of labor action that the capitalist rulers would refrain from carrying out their plans.

However, the anti-Communist AFL tops sabotaged the strike movement at decisive moments, abetted by the SP social democrats and others. Countless articles and books have since been written vilifying the CP and ILD—from those that acknowledge a "miscarriage" of justice in the case to others preposterously claiming that either Sacco or both men were guilty. Representative of the former is the newly published *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Men, the Murders, and the Judgment of Mankind* by Bruce Watson, which parrots anti-Communist slanders passed on for generations, from the grotesque claim that the CP couldn't have cared less whether Sacco and Vanzetti lived or died to the lie that the ILD pocketed the money they raised for the defense.

The Red Scare

Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested on 5 May 1920 amid a virulent anti-immigrant, anti-Red hysteria. When U.S. imperialism entered the First World War, the government implemented a plethora of repressive measures criminalizing anti-war activity. The 1917 Espionage Act mandated imprisonment for any act deemed to interfere with the recruitment of troops. Haunted by the spectre of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the

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Young Spartacus



Detroit News

Chevrolet workers in Detroit at start of November 1945 strike (left). Sit-in to integrate Atlanta restaurant during civil rights movement, winter 1963-64. Power of multiracial working class must be mobilized in fight against racial oppression.



Danny Lyon

“Racial Oppression and Working-Class Politics”

Crystallizing out of student and youth struggles against segregation and, later, against the Vietnam War, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) became the iconic organization of the New Left radical student movement of the late 1960s. Originally the youth group of the Cold War “socialists” of the League for Industrial Democracy, under the impact of events, SDS was drawn increasingly to the left. In 1965, SDS dropped its anti-Communist exclusion clause and soon was separated from the League entirely. It grew rapidly, drawing in tens of thousands of young activists at its peak. However, after years of rejecting the history of the “old left” as sectarian, sterile and irrelevant, SDS found itself confronting the same questions, centrally: what force can bring about social change, what attitude should be taken toward the Soviet Union and other workers states, and how to combat racial oppression.

A broad span of tendencies began to gain followers within SDS, ranging from the Moscow-line Stalinists of the Communist Party to the revolutionary communist Spartacist League, as well as anarchists, Maoists and uncritical cheerleaders for Third World and black nationalism. Intense ideological struggles ensued in which spokesmen for various positions were able to compete for hegemony. Some of the petty-bourgeois radicals in SDS were able to overcome the oppressive weight of bourgeois ideology and relearn lessons set forth in the *Communist Manifesto* regarding the working class as the modern agency of social revolution.

At the national SDS convention in the summer of 1969, a split took place between the National Collective, a bloc of groups that tailed national-liberation movements and dismissed the proletariat, and the crudely pro-working-class tendency of the Worker-Student Alliance (WSA) led by the left-Stalinist Progressive Labor Party (PL). The Revolutionary Marxist Caucus, supporter of Spartacist politics within SDS and forerunner of today’s Spartacus Youth Clubs, worked within the WSA wing (known as PL-SDS), struggling to transform SDS into a socialist youth organization open to all political tendencies seeking revolutionary political change. It was in this context that “Racial Oppression and Working-Class Politics” was produced as a position paper pre-

Revolutionary Marxists at 1969 PL-SDS Conference



sented for discussion at PL-SDS’s December 1969 New Haven conference.

The National Collective degenerated rapidly on the one side into Weatherman-style anarcho-terrorist despair, and on the other into internecine Maoist factional squabbling driven by the twists and turns of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy. (Today’s Revolutionary Communist Party is one result.) Some, such as Bernardine Dohrn, have found their place braintrusting the “New SDS,” a liberal talkshop whose main purpose so far seems to be drawing in youth to aid the Democrats’ prospects in the 2008 elections.

The PL wing of SDS also degenerated, although not as rapidly, eventually retreating into campus parochialism and ordinary reformism, leading pointless and tepid campaigns against “racist textbooks.” Today Progressive Labor, still Stalinist and now without the leftward pressure imparted by the radicalization of the 1960s, vacillates between increasingly hollow sectarian “revolution now” rhetoric and run-of-the-mill liberalism. Readers may also note that the position paper devotes some attention to the Labor Committee of Lyn Marcus, who is currently known as Lyndon LaRouche. While LaRouche today is a right-wing crackpot, at the time he was a left-wing crackpot. The Labor Committee was a tendency to be contended with in SDS, and served as a useful polemical foil for the exposition

of our Marxist program.

Youth now are far more likely to encounter liberal hand-wringing over racism à la the “New SDS” than the distorted orientation to the working class that the RMC’s main fire was directed against at the time. However, this position paper, written in a period of significantly higher consciousness and struggle, remains a powerful exposition of a genuine Marxist approach to black oppression, laying out a perspective in which the struggle for black freedom is bound up with the general struggle for the emancipation of the working class.

* * *

It hardly needs saying that increasing black-white conflict is the dominant feature of the current American political scene. The polarization of U.S. society along racial lines has been reflected even within the left, which has become increasingly split between supporters of Black Nationalism and advocates of an oversimplified pro-working-class line, indifferent and sometimes hostile to the Black liberation movement. One effect of the increasing black-white hostility is that any struggle involving Black people is viewed as the same struggle. Everything, from demands for Black Studies departments to integrating the building trades, is seen as part of a larger Black liberation movement, and attitudes toward each par-

ticular struggle are determined by general theoretical outlook.

The position of this paper is that Marxists must aggressively fight against the oppression of the Black masses while rejecting Black Nationalist pseudo-solutions. This must be done in ways that are compatible with the over-all goals of socialism. This means making clear and careful distinctions between different demands and struggles of the Black movement and different facets of the race question generally. Our guiding concern must be to link up a pro-working-class political line with demands aimed at fighting the pervasive double oppression of Black workers.

Racism and Racial Oppression

One result of the ghetto uprisings in Watts, Detroit, Newark and elsewhere was that it was no longer possible to deny that Black people were deeply hostile to the state of American society. The liberals argued (e.g., in the Kerner Report) that the oppression of Black people was a result of the racism of the white population, rather than locating the source of oppression and hostility in the working of the economic system and the policies of the ruling class and deliberately obscuring the fact that some whites have qualitatively more social power than others. To blame the oppressed condition of Black people on pervasive racist attitudes is a variant of the classic reactionary argument that social ills stem from a flawed human nature. By placing the blame for racial oppression on the white population en masse, the liberal wing of the ruling class not only deny their own responsibility, but even pose as champions of the Black people against the ignorant and bigoted white workers. In some cases, blaming racist attitudes begs the question. Many liberal capitalist bosses do not believe any of the myths of racial inferiority, yet deliberately pursue oppressive policies aimed at dividing workers along ethnic lines.

The widespread acceptance on the left of the liberal myth that the oppression of Black people results from the racism of the white lower classes has been totally destructive of the left. Its most extreme exponents are, of course, the Weathermen, who regard the white working class as hopelessly corrupted by racism, and,

therefore, “the enemy.” However, even those who realize that racism is against the long-term interests of white workers, such as the Worker-Student Alliance caucus, see changing racial *attitudes* as the key to the problem.

It is essential to make a distinction between those actively responsible for racial oppression and the masses, who passively accept it. An analogy of the relation between national chauvinism and imperialism is useful here. National chauvinism is rampant in the U.S.—look at the recent proliferation of American flag decals. Yet, no one would contend that U.S. counter-revolutionary policy in Viet Nam is the result of the nationalist attitudes of the American workers! National chauvinism helps sustain U.S. imperialism, but is not the cause of it. In a like manner, the racist attitudes of the white working class help sustain the oppression and economic degradation of the Black masses, but do not cause it.

Most white workers are neither active racists nor thorough-going integrationists. Rather, their attitude toward Black people is contradictory and differs according to the context. Many white workers will treat Black workers on the job as equals. Many believe Blacks should have equal rights, yet maintain racist attitudes on social and sexual questions. (A white worker might vote for a Black as union official, yet, as the saying goes, wouldn’t let his daughter marry him.) In general, there are many more white workers who will support the political and economic *rights* of Blacks and unite with them in struggle than there are who are really free of race prejudice. In addition, the level of racism is affected by the level of class struggle. Involvement in a militant strike action, for example, often combats backward consciousness on many levels.

The Southern Populist movement of the 1890s was the highest point of class struggle reached in the post-Reconstruction South. It not only united poor white and Black farmers around their shared economic interests, it also aggressively fought for the political rights of Black people. Yet, in deference to the white supremacist attitudes of most Southern farmers, the leaders of the Populist movement stressed that they were not in favor of social integration. Thus, by today’s standards, the Populist movement would be considered racist, although it aggressively fought for the political rights of Blacks. Certainly we should make no concessions to racism. But this example shows that fighting racism and fighting racial oppression are not identical.

For a Materialist Approach

The practical conclusion to be drawn from making this distinction between racism and racial oppression is that SDS is more likely to gain the support of white workers if we oppose concrete acts of racial oppression in the name of democratic rights and class solidarity, than if we rant about “fighting racism” as a social attitude (which has a moralistic tone to it—like fighting sin). Again, an analogy with the fight against imperialism is

useful. In fighting American imperialism, we make specific demands, such as the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Viet Nam and all other countries. We do not approach this struggle mainly by calling moralistically on the American working class to give up its national chauvinism and solidarize with the international proletariat. To be sure, the demand for immediate withdrawal from Viet Nam implies an attack on patriotic attitudes, just as the demand to integrate a union implies an attack on racist attitudes. But we attack these attitudes at their weakest point, where they come into conflict with other powerful social attitudes.

There is an important tactical reason for using the terminology of fighting racial oppression rather than fighting racism. To announce that we are fighting racism within the working class implies that the rank and file white worker is

tional on whites not suffering any loss.

Given the insecurity of white workers, it is necessary to combine demands for equal opportunity for Blacks with demands aimed at assuring white workers that the benefits accruing to Blacks will not come at their expense. Thus, in demanding that more Black workers be admitted into skilled jobs, we should also raise demands (such as a shorter work week with no loss in pay) aimed at expanding total employment. However, an end to discrimination should not be made conditional to these broader demands being realized.

Under normal conditions, demands aimed at improving the condition of the working class as a whole are less within the power of the presently constituted labor movement than demands for the upgrading of one section of the class. Socialists have traditionally contended—

education. In other words, according to them the whites might as well have the lion’s share of social services until these services become unlimited.

The Labor Committee’s empathy for white workers worried about losing their jobs to Black militants causes them to blur an important distinction. It is the distinction between firing a white worker to replace him with a Black and eliminating discrimination in hiring. We should almost always oppose firing a white worker to replace him with a Black. On the other hand, we should always oppose discrimination in hiring even if this means (as it will in the building trades) that a larger percentage of the white labor force would be unemployed. The former would exacerbate racial antagonisms; the latter would tend to unite the working class in the fight against unemployment. The underlying principle is that Black workers should be treated as equals. We wouldn’t expect any employed worker to give up his job to an unemployed worker regardless of color. In a like manner, an unemployed Black worker should have the same chance to find a job as a white worker, and vice versa.

If the Labor Committee’s principle that the economic oppression of Blacks can be opposed only provided there is no redistribution of income against whites is accepted, Blacks are slated to remain on the bottom of American society until socialism. If the desires of white workers must be substantially met before attacking the problem of racial discrimination, the benefits accruing to the Blacks will lag behind those of the class as a whole. In the Labor Committee schema, Blacks are given the role of residual claimants on the social and economic gains of the working class.

Black Rights as Class Demands

The Labor Committee’s belief that racism is simply a result of economic insecurity and will disappear when that insecurity is alleviated is as naive and wrong as the Weathermen’s view of racism as the radical equivalent of original sin. The Machinists and Shipbuilders unions attempted to maintain their white-only policies in shipyards and aircraft plants even in the middle of the World War II employment boom! On the other hand, some unions were established on an integrated basis during the Depression. The widespread racial oppression in the labor movement isn’t going to be eliminated without a political fight in the trade unions. Economic prosperity makes that fight *easier to win*. It doesn’t make it any less *necessary*.

The Labor Committee’s propaganda presents the economic effects of racial equality as only negative—namely, that such gains come only at the expense of white workers. It appears the Labor Committee has taken the arguments of racist demagogues too much at face value or that, for all their pretensions to expertise, they know very little about the economic facts of life. The upgrading of Black workers provides a higher floor for general wages and strengthens the competitive position of all workers. From the integration of the Mine Workers in the 1890s, the main factor bringing Black workers into the trade unions has been a desire to eliminate cheap, non-union labor, not moralism. One doesn’t have to be very sophisticated to see the connection between the systematic terrorization of the Black population and the maintenance of the South as a bastion of anti-unionism, low wages, and the runaway shop. If the indirect benefits of Black equality are not as obvious to white workers as the direct losses, part of our job is to make them obvious. Socialists have a responsibility to refute the lies of racist demagogues like [Alabama governor George] Wallace, that Black liberation means white workers will lose “their jobs, their money, and their women.” SDS should present the

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Wayne State University

Cops invade Detroit ghetto during 1967 upheaval. More than 7,000 people were arrested and over 40 killed.

the target of our hostility. To say we are opposing the double oppression of Black workers puts the responsibility where it belongs—on the capitalists and trade union bureaucrats. Rather than saying we expect the mass of white workers to oppose us, we are calling on white workers, as potential comrades, to fight the oppressors of Black people, who are the oppressors of white workers as well.

Black Rights and Economic Insecurity

Within SDS, the Labor Committee is considered the main exponent of the view that the widespread hostility of white workers to the Black liberation movement stems from a belief that Black equality will be achieved at their economic expense. So far as this view goes it is substantially correct. However, the Labor Committee has drawn a fundamentally wrong conclusion which leads to de facto tolerance for most forms of racial discrimination—namely that equality for Blacks be made *condi-*

and rightly—that permanent full employment and a continuously rising standard of living are not possible under capitalism. We can and must raise demands which take the level of consciousness outside the framework of capitalism—transitional demands which workers will accept as necessary but which cannot be achieved under this social system. But it would be a cruel joke on the legitimate aspirations of Black workers involved in struggle for socialists to make struggling for their rights conditional on the acceptance of other demands. If the attack on the economic oppression of Black people is to be postponed until the eradication of economic insecurity on the part of whites, racial oppression would continue to exist until several decades *after* the victory of the socialist revolution.

Labor Committee Default

In practice, the Labor Committee’s policies have meant toleration of racial oppression while posing ultimatic solutions to the problem of the limited resources available to the working class under capitalism. A good example of this is the Labor Committee’s opposition to the so-called CCNY solution. After considerable agitation by Blacks, the City University system officials agreed to replace the existing admissions selection—based on academic qualifications—with an ethnic quota system increasing Black admissions. (The city government later rejected the agreement.) The Labor Committee argued that this was no solution to the problem and, correctly, called for open admissions for all working people. So far, so good. However, instead of critically supporting the CCNY solution against the present system, which is both class and race biased, while continuing to agitate for open admissions, the Labor Committee supported the status quo in effect, until the advent of free universal higher



New York, 1965: Spartacists at antiwar march call for victory for the Vietnamese Revolution, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces.

SDS...

(continued from page 7)

economic case for combatting racial oppression in the most attractive manner possible.

Black Liberation and Upward Mobility

An important aspect of the oppression of Blacks is the small size of the Black middle class. Not only are Black workers concentrated in lowest paid jobs, but there is a relatively small percentage of Black professionals, administrators and businessmen. Moreover, much of the Black middle class is restricted to the Black communities rather than being integrated into American corporate society.

Given the petty-bourgeois leadership of the Black movement, it is not surprising that many demands of that movement are aimed at increasing the upward mobility of the Black population. In its reaction against bourgeois aspirations in the Black movement, the WSA has made a major error—namely, it has refused to oppose those aspects of racial oppression expressly designed to keep Blacks out of the middle class. It is correct and necessary to denounce expanding the “Black bourgeoisie” as the solution to the problems of the Black masses. However, the WSA has taken the further step of refusing to fight discrimination against Blacks for middle-class positions. (Their position recalls a section of the French Marxists who thought they should be indifferent to the Dreyfus Case of anti-Semitism in the French officer corps. This sectarian disorientation actually facilitated their later collapse into opportunism.) The petty-bourgeois “hustlerist” aspect of the Black movement must be defeated politically, by being rejected by the Black masses. It will not and should not be defeated by erstwhile revolutionaries making a de facto alliance with the most reactionary sections of the ruling class to keep Blacks out of middle-class positions.

There is a parallel between the Labor Committee’s reaction to white workers’ fear of economic integration and the WSA’s approach to bourgeois goals in the Black movement. Both begin with correct premises, but reach conclusions which mean tolerance for certain forms of racial oppression. Thus, the Labor Committee opposes the CCNY solution because they don’t want educational resources redistributed against the white population, while the WSA opposes it because they don’t want more black B.A.s. Of the two positions, the Labor Committee’s is worse because it leads to acceptance of the worst forms of economic exploitation. However, the WSA’s position is also fundamentally sectarian.

The Worse the Better?

The principle of not opposing racial discrimination to the extent equality would strengthen the upward mobility of the Black population is impossible to implement. This is so because *any* improvement in the condition of the Black masses provides a basis for upward mobility. If the quality of ghetto primary school education is improved, for example, Black youth will be better able to compete for college admission. If Black workers have access to better-paying jobs, more of them will send their children to college.

The WSA’s position on this question is also incorrect at a higher theoretical level. Socialists have usually contended that racial oppression is inherent in capitalist society. The WSA, however, seems to be afraid that the ruling class is going to seriously ameliorate the oppression of Blacks. The whole line of argument has a “the worse, the better” flavor to it—Blacks should be kept down so they’ll be more revolutionary. It is similar to the position one usually associates with the Socialist Labor Party—opposition to reforms for fear that they may work! Coming from people who consider them-

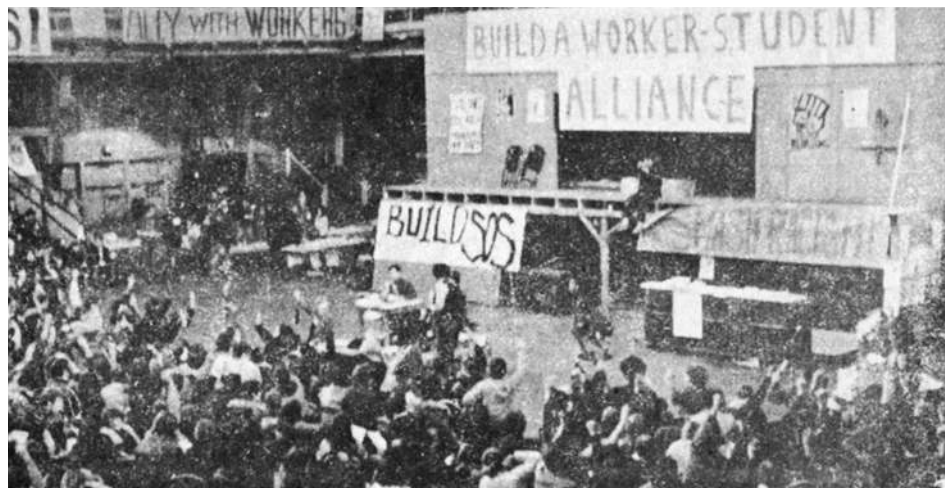
selves orthodox Leninists, this faith in the ability of reformism to dampen class struggle and change class structure is as surprising as it is false, to say the least.

Moreover, from the standpoint of proletarian socialists, the expansion of the Black middle class would not be an unmitigated disaster. To the extent that the social structure of the Black population resembles that of the white population, class rather than race consciousness will be strengthened among both Black and white workers. The split between those Black Nationalists who consider themselves revolutionary and the “pork chop” Nationalists occurred precisely because the government was successful in co-opting large sections of the Black liberation movement. A Black worker who slaves for a few years under a Black boss is much more likely to see class, not race, as the fundamental division in American society.

The converse is also true. A white worker striking with fellow Black workers against a company which had a significant percentage of Black executive and managerial personnel would develop a more class-conscious attitude toward the Black population. It is precisely the overwhelming concentration of the Black population at the lowest social levels that tends to cause white workers to view Blacks with feelings of fear and contempt. The integration of sections of the ruling class would be paralleled by increased Black-white unity in the working class.

Trade Unions and the State

One of the most difficult problems facing American radicals is the widespread racial discrimination in the trade unions. In dealing with this problem, there is



New Left Notes

PL-SDS national convention in Chicago, 1970. Revolutionary Marxist Caucus fought for Trotskyist program against Progressive Labor-dominated leadership.

considerable social pressure, particularly on a campus-based group, to follow the lead of the liberals and use government action against discriminatory unions. Thus, most of the California left, including the Independent Socialist Clubs (now called International Socialists [predecessor of the International Socialist Organization]), supported a suit against Harry Bridges’ International Longshore and Warehouse Union under the Civil Rights Act. Likewise, there has been no significant left-wing opposition to the Nixon Administration’s “Philadelphia Plan” for the construction industry [aimed at breaking union hiring halls by setting quotas for minority hiring].

That liberals should look to the state to enforce equal rights in the labor movement is understandable. The fundamental principle of liberalism (and all other forms of capitalist political philosophy) is the supreme authority of the state over all other social institutions. However, Marxists consider the state an instrument of class oppression and regard the labor movement as the legitimate source of all social authority. In calling upon the state to integrate the unions, radicals are calling upon the capitalists to fight their battles for them, in a movement radicals eventually intend (or should intend) to lead against that very state. This is a contradiction that cannot be reconciled. Any increase in state control over the



Young Spartacus

Los Angeles, November 2006: Spartacus Youth Club at protest against racist purge of black and minority students from University of California.

unions, regardless of the ostensible reason, must strengthen capitalism politically and ideologically.

A section of the ruling class realizes that the civil rights issue is an effective way to weaken the unions by turning Black people and middle-class liberals against them. Thus, a recent issue of *Fortune* magazine—an authoritative organ of the liberal bourgeoisie—contained an attack on the monopolistic abuses of the building trades unions. It concluded with a ten-point program, addressed to construction companies, on how to break the power of the unions. One of the ten points was union de-certification for failing to comply with the 1965 Civil Rights Act.

As the above example shows, ruling-class efforts to control the unions in the name of “public good” are usually a cover for union busting. The Nixon Administration is openly wooing Southern racists

sounding pretext. We are all against organized crime and for internal democracy in the unions. But the Landrum-Griffin Act hasn’t reduced gangsterism in the labor movement. Its principal effect has been to railroad Jimmy Hoffa, a tough and troublesome business unionist. And these laws would be used faster and harder against a communist union leadership than they will ever be used against the Mafia!

Permitting the government to determine the racial policies of unions gives the state a powerful weapon for union busting and influencing the selection of union leadership. And this weapon will not be used in the best interest of the working class. Whatever doubtful immediate gains Black workers get by the government opening up some jobs for them will be more than offset by the losses sustained by the entire working class due to the long-run effects of expanding state control over the labor movement. The only force on which we can rely is an organized, militant, class-conscious rank and file defending the gains of their unions against the bosses, the bureaucrats and the state.

Resolutions

I. In its propaganda and actions, SDS must concentrate on fighting concrete acts and practices of racial oppression, rather than simply opposing racism as a pervasive social attitude.

II. It may at times be necessary to support gains against Black oppression even if they imply short-term economic losses for sections of the white working class. However, our basic propagandistic thrust must be to keep gains for Blacks from being counterposed to white workers’ interests by raising the appropriate demands, and to seek to unite Black and white workers in common struggles.

III. SDS must oppose all forms of racial inequality, including those that are specifically designed to limit the upward mobility of the Black population.

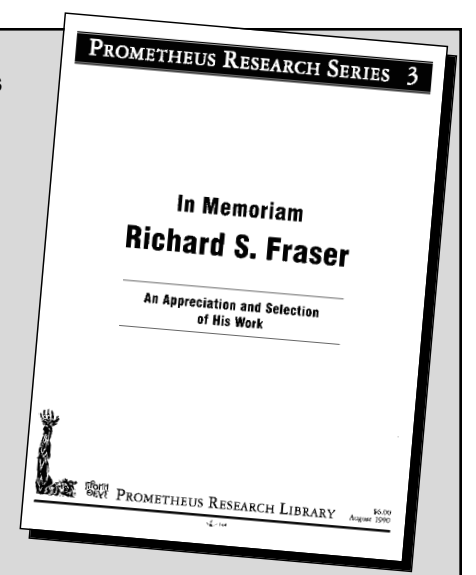
IV. Under all circumstances SDS must oppose the expansion of state control over the labor movement, even when this is done in the name of the rank and file (e.g., fighting corruption, securing racial justice). ■

Prometheus Research Series No. 3

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Organize Non-Union Mines! Utah Mine Collapse: Industrial Murder

AUGUST 27—Capitalist profiteering is behind the disaster in the canyons of central Utah, where six miners were trapped on August 6, and three people died ten days later when a rescue tunnel collapsed. With criminal disregard for their safety, the six men were sent 1,500 feet below ground to remove the great chunks of coal that held up the ceiling of the mine. After having placed the miners in harm's way, Crandall Canyon mine owner Robert Murray, joined by federal mine safety officials, sealed their fate by bungling and then effectively abandoning the rescue effort. The miners' families, who want to recover the bodies even if the men are dead, have not let Murray get away with this. Yesterday, a seventh borehole was being drilled into the mine and a camera lowered through a separate opening.

Mining at non-union Crandall Canyon was a disaster in the offing. Utah's mines are tunneled deep to reach wide seams of profitable coal, placing a massive amount of weight on the coal pillars. Not only did the Crandall Canyon tunnels go well beyond the depth considered safe by many engineers, but the section where the cave-in occurred had been abandoned by an earlier owner in part because further mining posed a risk to miners. Shortly after purchasing a 50 percent stake in the mine last August, Murray petitioned the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) for permission to extract coal from the pillars, a procedure known as "retreat mining," which by design triggers tunnel collapses. One United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) official described this practice to *Workers Vanguard* as "mining with one leg in the grave." Showing how it is mainly a rubber stamp for the coal barons, MSHA approved this self-evidently dangerous plan.

The bosses repeatedly ignored warning signs of the impending catastrophe. Prior to the cave-in, miners complained to supervisors about the heaving mine floors. The force of the mountain settling above reportedly was so strong that it was breaking coal off the walls and ceiling. A violent shift of the tunnels in March did prompt the mine operators to move the crew—to another section a mere several hundred feet away. Meanwhile, the mine

had racked up 325 safety citations since January 2004, including 116 considered life-threatening. For the bosses, the accompanying fines are just a small cost of doing business. The month before the cave-in, for the third time in less than two years the mine owners were cited for failing to provide at least two separate emergency escape routes. The penalty for the previous offense last September: \$60.

Whenever he opens his mouth, Murray comes across as especially greedy and deceitful. Last week, he was forced to do a public about-face after his bid to resume production at the mine provoked angry protests by the families and friends of the missing miners. However unhinged Murray might be, his is a typical capitalist enterprise. In fact, many mines have far worse safety records than Crandall Canyon's, a symptom of the drastic decline in unionization of the coal industry as well as the do-nothing policies of the UMWA leadership. It is no surprise that Murray's rants have taken aim at the UMWA, as any union representation would make it more difficult for him to toy with miners' lives.

At the request of Crandall Canyon miners, the UMWA is now helping them in discussions with MSHA. But by the admission of UMWA head Cecil Roberts, the union leadership has made no attempt to organize the mine since Murray took it over. Without aggressive organizing, the UMWA will continue its decline, leaving increasing numbers of non-union miners at the mercy of the ruthless coal barons. As we wrote in WV No. 862 (20 January 2006) following the Sago, West Virginia, mine disaster: "The only way to establish and enforce safety is through mobilizing labor's power. Any real measure of protection workers have gained in U.S. mines—or elsewhere in industry—was won through hard struggle by the unions." A strong union can control working conditions and shut down unsafe work sites. By the same token, unless the union fights to defend the lives and livelihoods of its members, it will find it more difficult to organize the unorganized.

The UMWA bureaucracy keeps the union's power in check by relying on capitalist politicians and government

agencies like MSHA while renouncing the class-struggle methods that built the union. For example, following a 1993 strike in West Virginia, the UMWA tops refused to organize an all-out defense of Jerry Dale Lowe, a union safety rep who was framed up and sent to prison for nearly eleven years. Now, Roberts has written to Democratic Party leaders in Congress requesting an "independent" investigation of the Crandall Canyon disaster. Investigations by Democrats currently under way will amount to little more than a smokescreen for the malicious indifference of the bosses.

Government investigations following the Sago disaster resulted in passage of a 2006 law called the MINER Act. Based on a cover-up report on Sago, this legislation gives the coal bosses three years to introduce into the mines already existing wireless communications technology. With an average of over 33 miners killed on the job per year in the U.S. this decade (to say nothing of the countless numbers who have fallen victim to black lung and other diseases), how many more miners' lives is Congress willing to write off to give the companies this reprieve? As far back as 1969, Congress had mandated MSHA to oversee development of equipment allowing miners to signal their whereabouts. The coal bosses largely ignored this mandate, as they have the safety provisions of the 2006 legislation, to avoid cutting into profits. Other proposals for inclusion in the MINER Act, such as requiring mine shelters stocked with food, water and oxygen, were rejected by Congress out of hand at the coal operators' insistence.

Most if not all of the deaths in U.S. coal mines in the past year could have been prevented if safety measures had not been blocked and quashed by officials from *both* Democratic and Republican administrations. Whereas the George W. Bush White House, elected with the support of Big Coal, has outright killed safety measures, MSHA under Bill Clinton routinely



Hogsten/Salt Lake Tribune

Trapped miners' relatives and others on way to August 19 press conference where families charged Crandall Canyon bosses with giving up on rescue.

put off implementation to allow time for testing and study of the proposals.

When rule changes were to the benefit of the bosses, though, Clinton's MSHA was all too willing to oblige. To take one example, MSHA at that time did nothing to stop the use of the foam material Omega Block as a seal to close off abandoned mine tunnels, despite inadequate testing. Not until the "test" of the Sago mine explosion, which an Omega Block seal failed to contain, and the deaths of 12 miners did minds change. Bush has turned the top spot at MSHA into a way station for former mine bosses like current director Richard Stickler. But the model for MSHA today was Clinton's "New OSHA," defined by its "partnership" with business and "voluntary compliance."

It will take hard class struggle to defeat the profit-hungry coal barons. In the booming coal industry in the Rocky Mountain area, where growing numbers of people from Mexico and Central America have flocked in recent years to work, this battle is directly linked to the defense of immigrant workers. In fact, three of the trapped miners were born in Mexico. Some 20 miles from Crandall Canyon in Price, Utah, an organizing drive by the UMWA at the Co-Op Mine recently ran straight up against a campaign by the bosses to use workers' legal status to intimidate and fire them. This underscores the need for the labor movement to demand: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations! Organizing the unorganized into the unions will require an uncompromising fight for the independence of the labor movement from the state agencies and political representatives of the capitalist class enemy. ■

Infrastructure...

(continued from page 1)

and their Democratic and Republican parties. To begin with, what's needed is a fighting labor movement determined to use its power to enforce safety standards and shut down dangerous structures and facilities without regard to the capitalists' bottom line. Ultimately, the well-being of the population can only be secured when the capitalist class is expropriated through a workers revolution and a collectivized, planned economy is established based on production for human need and not profit.

The Minnesota Bridge: Case Study in Criminal Neglect

Under capitalism, engineering practice, like everything else, is profit-driven. The Minnesota I-35W steel truss bridge, completed in 1967, was designed to save on the amount of steel required. Like many such bridges, it lacked redundancy: if any structural member fails, the bridge collapses. It was designed without adequately accounting for fatigue and cracking in structural steel due to cyclic stress and corrosion. Although of a different design, the Silver

Bridge in West Virginia collapsed in 1967 due to similar factors, killing 46 people.

The science underlying crack propagation as a principle failure mechanism in structural materials emerged in 1913 and was elucidated by A. A. Griffith in 1920, and further refined by scientists afterward. Metal fatigue and stress cracking were certainly understood well enough by the mid 1960s to evaluate existing bridges. But it took a disaster like the Silver Bridge collapse for the bourgeoisie to even establish a mandatory bridge inspection program. Nevertheless, more than 30 years later less than 4 percent of "in-depth" inspections correctly identify weld crack indications.

Even a well-built bridge will not last if it is not properly maintained. As the former chief engineer for the New York City Department of Transportation, Samuel Schwartz, explained in a *New York Times* (13 August) op-ed piece, "Bridges are machines with movable parts" that need to be regularly cleaned, lubricated and painted to prevent corrosion or the seizing up of moving joints. But, as Schwartz noted, routine maintenance is routinely scuttled because states and localities only receive federal funds for major projects rather than the "mop and

pail" work that bridges really need.

These kinds of cost-driven irrationalities in infrastructure would not be tolerated if the working class ruled society. But faced with aging, deficient bridges, you might expect that common sense would dictate that even this profit-driven system would, at a minimum, limit traffic load, ensure necessary maintenance and plan for early replacement of the I-35 and other outmoded bridges. Instead, by the late 1980s, more lanes and increased truck weight limits—authorized by Congress—greatly increased the load on the Minneapolis bridge. By the time of the collapse, vehicle traffic had more than doubled from the original projections.

In 1990, after only 23 years of service, the bridge was rated by federal inspectors as "structurally deficient," i.e., it was in poor condition but still considered nominally safe. As deterioration continued in the 1990s, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MDOT) increased inspections and stop-gap repairs. A 2000 report by MDOT engineers cited numerous structural problems, concluding that "eventual replacement of the entire structure would be preferable." However, the state had no plans to do so until 2020.

A 2006 study by the URS Corporation recommended redundant "steel plating of all 52 fracture critical truss members" as the safest interim solution. The MDOT rejected this and instead adopted the study's cheaper option, which was to inspect the welds. Even then, they halted the inspection halfway through in order to start repaving and other work on the bridge roadway. This work was taking place when the bridge collapsed. Corroded and frozen hinge joint bearings, which eventually caused one of the support piers to tilt slightly, were prominently cited in several MDOT inspections. A forensic engineering study will eventually discover which structural member failed—but in the end it was about money.

They Don't Starve the Pentagon

Historically, the bourgeoisie has produced massive public works when this has suited its purposes, particularly in periods of capitalist expansion...and to prepare for war. In the 19th century, the American system of canals and railways was the path of expansion to the West. The 42,000-mile interstate highway

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system, named the “National System of Interstate and Defense Highways,” was completed in the 1950s during the anti-Soviet Cold War. Developed in part to facilitate military operations in case of war, this network was patterned after the Autobahn system developed during Hitler’s Third Reich, which was designed to speed the Nazi invasion of Europe.

However, for nearly four decades the government has slashed infrastructure spending so much that the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) 2005 report card gives an overall grade of “D” (poor) to the country’s infrastructure as a whole. Yet bridges, with a “C” grade, are in better shape than almost every other category! Aviation, dams, drinking water, power grids, hazardous waste, navigable waterways, roads, school buildings, transit and wastewater treatment all received “D” grades. Almost 20 years ago, we headlined: “New York Bridges Are Falling Down” because of conscious capitalist policy (WV No. 456, 1 July 1988). The next year, sections of the Oakland Nimitz Freeway collapsed during an earthquake, killing scores and leaving many more homeless. As we stated in “Freeway Death Trap—A Capitalist Crime” (WV No. 488, 27 October 1989), people died “because of a willful refusal to repair and maintain structures that were *known* to be inadequate.”

Today, nothing has changed. The ASCE projects that it will take \$1.6 trillion over five years to restore public infrastructure to acceptable conditions. Few dispute the accuracy of the ASCE cost projections, but the capitalist ruling class has no intention of shelling out. With the decline of American industry, the U.S. bourgeoisie has lost its hegemonic economic position and faces increased competition from other imperialist powers, primarily Japan and Germany. Since 1980, hand in hand with deindustrialization, the U.S. has spent less than 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product on infrastructure, far less than many other advanced industrial countries. The only significant increase in “public spending” has been an explosion in prison construction, under both Democratic and Republican administrations. In large part, this has been in the service of the racist rulers’ “war on drugs.” As of two years ago, some 60 percent of the U.S. prison population was black or Latino.

What America’s capitalist rulers will

never starve is the Pentagon budget, which is greater than the *combined* total military spending of all other major states in the world. The direct budgetary costs thus far for the Iraq war and occupation are about \$450 billion, which understates the real expense that includes supplementary spending and other such measures. The actual costs could eventually reach \$1-2 trillion. The U.S. earlier spent trillions in its war drive against the Soviet Union, which, following American imperialism’s stinging defeat in Vietnam, was renewed under Democrat Jimmy Carter and deepened by the Republican Ronald Reagan. A good part of the imperialists’ calculations was to compel the Soviet Union to spend a great amount on its own defenses, undermining its economic development. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR in 1991-92, a historic defeat for the proletariat and the oppressed worldwide, removed a military and industrial powerhouse that had been a countervailing force against U.S. imperialism.

In response to the recent disasters, the reformist *Workers World* (18 August) all too predictably headlines: “Los Angeles Activists Demand: ‘Money for Bridges—Not for War’.” What’s wrong with this nice idea? The “Anybody but Bush” liberals and their reformist followers push the *lie* that the U.S. imperialist system, which shatters whole countries like Serbia and Iraq, can be reformed to “end war” and “rebuild America,” particularly if the lesser-evil Democrats are in office. The reality is that the capitalist system is based on production for profit and not on satisfying human needs. The imperialists’ wars are fought centrally in order to secure control of markets, resources and new sources of labor to exploit. As long as the capitalist system exists, this government will wage wars. Creating a society where human needs come first requires nothing less than the overthrow of capitalist class rule, through a series of proletarian revolutions across the planet.

Workers Revolution Will Rebuild America

The Democrats like to blame Bush’s tax cuts for billionaires for contributing to the country’s decay. But cutbacks in infrastructure and social services are Democratic as well as Republican policy. Over two decades of neglect of the flood control system around New Orleans prior to Katrina included the eight years of the Clinton administration, during which the



AP
ATU members on picket line during December 2005 NYC transit strike that was led by TWU Local 100.

U.S. experienced an economic boom and the federal government ran a sizable budget surplus. Now, after the Minnesota bridge collapse, Hillary Clinton calls for a paltry \$10 billion increase in bridge spending over ten years, in line with other Democratic proposals. This is despite the fact that the ASCE report projects it will cost almost \$10 billion per year *for 20 years* just to eliminate all bridge deficiencies.

A working-class fight for safety and to rebuild this country would powerfully resonate throughout society. But this requires a fight against the labor misleaders who support this murderous profit system and bind workers to the Democratic Party and other agencies of capitalist rule. When Hurricane Katrina hit two years ago, we outlined a fighting program for labor in “New Orleans: Racist Atrocity” (WV No. 854, 16 September 2005):

“The masses of displaced people must be provided with jobs—*union jobs* at union wage scales, with health care, housing, clothing and all other necessities. Instead of being regarded as victims, these working people can be incorporated into a force for their own revitalization. What is needed at the minimum is a massive program of federally funded public works to rebuild New Orleans and the rest of the devastated Gulf Coast. There should be workers committees that would make sure that shoddy designs and penny-pinching construction could be vetoed before they endangered people’s lives, and that lifesaving repairs and maintenance would not fall victim to the ax of austerity.”

It doesn’t take a natural disaster for this profit system to threaten people’s lives. Look at the chaos that reigns in air transport today, with chronic staffing shortages, critical equipment failures and horrible working conditions. Massive accidents are just waiting to happen. One already did: in August last year a jet in Lexington, Kentucky, crashed on takeoff, killing 49 of the 50 people aboard, because there was only *one* air controller on duty. This is the bitter fruit of the most massive union-busting attack since the 1930s, when Reagan smashed the PATCO air traffic controllers strike in 1981 (with plans drawn up by the Carter White House). Criminally, Reagan was abetted by the heads of the Machinists, Teamsters and other unions who refused to shut down the airports in solidarity with PATCO.

Such dangers loom daily in NYC’s antiquated subway system, which the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) runs without regard for the safety of workers or riders. This was seen yet again in April when two track workers, members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, were killed within a week. We noted in “NYC Transit: Murder by Speedup” (WV No. 892, 11 May) that “track workers have for years demanded radios for everyone working in the dark, filthy, dangerous subway tunnels, so that they can be connected with train crews and control centers. But for the MTA, a

worker’s life is not even worth the cost of communications equipment.” The system cannot run without the TWU, as the union powerfully demonstrated in the December 2005 transit strike. Our article called for the TWU to “fight for *elected union safety committees with the power to shut down unsafe worksites on the spot.*”

The capitalists and their politicians have demonstrated many times over that they are the enemy of human progress. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution, declared in the 1938 Transitional Program, founding document of the Fourth International: “The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin.... If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish.”

The experience of the Soviet Union shows the enormous power of collectivized property and centralized economic planning, despite the degeneration of the workers state under the rule of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste. A year after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, 90,000 of the people evacuated had been provided with new homes, while those directly responsible for criminal mismanagement were punished. Two decades earlier, when an earthquake demolished Tashkent in Soviet Uzbekistan, a massive reconstruction program had the entire city—population 1.1 million—rehoused in three years. In Cuba, masses of people are routinely moved to safe areas of the island during major hurricanes. And after Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, Cuba offered medical brigades to give emergency care, only to be turned down by Washington.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the remaining deformed workers states—China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam—against imperialist assault and internal counterrevolution, as we did in regard to the Soviet Union. We fight for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies that undermine the collectivized economies and that oppose the struggle to extend socialist revolution to the wealthy, advanced capitalist countries. Instead, they preach “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. The Stalinist misrulers must be replaced by regimes of workers democracy and proletarian internationalism based on workers councils (soviets).

The fight for a socialist future is necessarily international. The horrific images of homeless, starving men, women and children in New Orleans, the dead lying on the streets for days, prompted many to compare it to the Third World. “That’s not supposed to happen *here*,” was the shocked response. But it shouldn’t have to happen *there* either. More than 500 are dead in the latest earthquake in Peru, while in Bangladesh and South Asia, nearly 25 million have been displaced by the worst monsoon floods in living memory. Humanity cannot stop tsunamis and tornadoes, or tectonic plates from shifting. But the world proletariat can alter human society, by overthrowing the capitalist imperialist system that cripples the economic development of semi-colonial countries. From the Indian subcontinent to Africa and Latin America, natural disasters are compounded by imperialist subjugation, which deprives the masses of such basics as safe housing and clean water.

In concluding our 1988 article on New York bridges, we wrote:

“A workers revolution would put America back to work rebuilding the bridges, highways and factories. And not just here—massive aid programs to rebuild Vietnam, Latin America, Africa, everywhere the imperialists have plundered and destroyed. The capitalist class in its twilight has shown that it is incapable of maintaining society. The working class led by its revolutionary vanguard must wrench society from the bourgeoisie’s death grip.”

It is to that end that the Spartacist League/U.S. fights to build a revolutionary workers party, section of a reformed Fourth International. ■

Spartacus Youth Club Events—Meet the Marxists

BAY AREA

Thursday, August 30, 5 p.m.
SF State University, Rosa Parks D,
Cesar Chavez Student Center
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Monday, September 10, 7 p.m.
Columbia University
Hamilton Hall Lobby
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
or e-mail: nysl@tiac.net

**For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!
For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution—Finish the Civil War!
Break with the Capitalist Democrats and Greens!
For a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party that Fights for All the Oppressed!**

With an update on the fight to free death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal

TORONTO

Wednesday, September 12, 2:30 p.m.
University of Toronto
Sidney Smith Bldg.
100 St. George Street, Room TBA
For information: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail: spartacan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, September 12, 6 p.m.
**Students: Ally with the Working Class!
Victory to the CUPE Workers Strike!
For Socialist Revolution to Smash
the Capitalist System of
Racism, War and Oppression!**
University of British Columbia
Student Union Building, Room 213
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
or e-mail: trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

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

BAY AREA

“From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal”
Thursday, September 13, 5 p.m.
San Francisco State University
Cesar Chavez Student Center, Room T-153

Spartacus Youth Club Video Showing

For information: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

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WORKERS VANGUARD

War on Our Rights...

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of personal data has been amassed enabling fishing expeditions for “terrorist suspects.”

Since the existence of Bush’s surveillance program became widely known almost two years ago, Democratic politicians have been up in arms over the fact that it bypassed special courts set up by the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Billed by liberals as a barrier to NSA/CIA domestic spying, the FISA courts are actually rubber stamps that have almost never refused a request for a wiretap warrant. By signing legislation allowing warrantless wiretaps, Bush countered the criticism that his actions were illegal through the simple expedient of...legalizing them. Congress even went further in the law than Bush had requested. Henceforth, the FISA court will not review specific applications but only the broad wiretap procedures used by the government. After months of hearings, subpoenas and other posturing, Democratic leaders in the Senate and House let the new law sail through committees and put up virtually no resistance to its passage.

The NSA’s invasion of privacy can carry drastic consequences. Today, if you are singled out and labeled a terrorist

working class from any social struggle.” As the SL has stressed since the onset of the “war on terror,” what the capitalist rulers get away with will largely depend on the level of social struggle. The rulers of this decaying capitalist society are plenty dangerous. But they are also dependent on the labor of the working class for their profits. If mobilized independently of the capitalist political parties and at the head of all the oppressed, the many-millioned proletariat would be a powerful force in defense of its own interests and of the rights of immigrants, black people and others under attack by the bourgeoisie.

Jose Padilla: Abducted, Tortured, Framed Up

The sinister web of the “war on terror” is exemplified by the ordeal of Jose Padilla, who was summarily stripped of elementary rights of citizenship. Padilla’s show trial in Florida ended on August 16 with the jury finding him and co-defendants Adham Hassoun and Kifah Jayyousi guilty of “conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim” people overseas and other charges. The case against Padilla and his co-defendants was a blatant frame-up from beginning to end. In what was supposedly a murder conspiracy case, federal prosecutors presented no evidence that the defendants had plotted to commit murder—or any other violent act. Instead, the vaguest correlation that could be inferred between Al Qaeda and any



Corbis

Joint Operations Command Center in Washington, D.C., centralizes all branches of city and national security operations, including spying on political protests.

years—no access to lawyers. While in the brig, Padilla was tortured by being subjected to extreme sensory deprivation, shackled in “stress positions,” drugged and deprived of sleep to break his will and force him to provide incriminating evidence about himself and others. Two psychiatrists and a psychologist who conducted detailed examinations of Padilla on behalf of his defense team say his treatment in the brig left him with severe mental disabilities; all three say he may never recover. One former military interrogator told the *Christian Science Monitor* (14 August): “If he is not profoundly psychologically disturbed from that experience then he is a stronger man than me.”

In concluding a powerful three-part series detailing Padilla’s ordeal, the *Christian Science Monitor* (15 August) wrote: “US treatment of Padilla shows the inclination to do anything to break the silence of a suspected terrorist, even [if] it means violating such basic citizen rights as protection against self-incrimination and harsh interrogation, as well as the right to a trial. In short, the US military used terror—Padilla had little or no human contact for more than three years—to fight terror.”

When the Bush administration finally brought criminal charges against Padilla in November 2005, it was to avoid a decision in the U.S. Supreme Court on his “unlawful enemy combatant” designation. The previous year, in the case of Yaser Esam Hamdi, a U.S. citizen captured in Afghanistan and held without charges as an “unlawful enemy combatant,” the Court had ruled that Hamdi must have a “fair opportunity” to challenge the government’s case. At that same time, the Supreme Court refused to hear Padilla’s case on the pretext that his *habeas corpus* petition had been filed in the wrong court. The judge in the recent Miami trial barred both sides from even mentioning Padilla’s military detention, insuring that the legality of his detention, abuse and denial of due process would continue to be sidestepped by the courts.

Padilla’s conviction underlines how conspiracy prosecutions provide legal cover for repression of the government’s political opponents when the state can find no evidence of criminal activity. As law professor Peter Margulies noted in reference to Padilla’s case, the conspiracy charge “basically allows someone to be found guilty for something that is one step away from a thought crime” (*New York Times*, 18 August). The early trade unions in this country were outlawed as “criminal conspiracies.” Leftists and union organizers were imprisoned in the U.S. on charges of conspiracy for opposing both World Wars I and II. Such prosecutions continue to this day, as seen in the frame-up of radical attorney Lynne Stewart (see “Outrage! Lynne Stewart, Mohamed Yousry, Ahmed Abdel Sattar Convicted,” WV No. 842, 18 February 2005).

The government succeeded in making Padilla’s name virtually synonymous in the public mind with “dirty bomber” by repeatedly accusing him of having planned to set off a radioactive bomb on U.S. soil. Yet when it came time to put Padilla on trial, the government’s case made no mention of a bomb, dirty or otherwise. This was not least due to the fact that the people who fingered Padilla had themselves been tortured by U.S. authorities and made no secret of that fact.

Practically the entire case against Padilla rested on what the prosecution called a “data form” allegedly representing his attempt to be admitted to an Afghan *mujahedin* training camp. But the “data form” bears no mention of Al Qaeda and does not even have Padilla’s name on it. Prosecutors were allowed to blatantly inflame the jury by playing a seven-minute television interview with bin Laden—a device also used in the Lynne Stewart trial—in which he called for *jihād* against the U.S., even though there was no evidence that Padilla had even seen the clip. Despite the lack of any evidence, the jury took only a little more than a day to reach a verdict. Showing that the fix was in, they walked into court on the eve of the July 4 holiday dressed in outfits such that the rows in the jury box were colored red, white and blue! Free Padilla, Hassoun and Jayyousi!

As the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee argued in an *amici curiae* brief filed on behalf of Padilla in July 2003:

“The ‘war against terrorism’ is a fiction, a political construct, not a military reality. It is a political crusade conducted in the name of ridding society of a perceived evil. It is no more a ‘war’ in a military sense than ‘war against cancer,’ ‘war against obesity’ or a ‘war against immorality.’ Like the ‘war against communism’ and the ‘war against drugs,’ this ‘war’ is a pretext to increase the state’s police powers and repressive apparatus, constricting the democratic rights of the population. The Executive’s declaration that its ‘war against terrorism’ forfeits constitutional protections for designated individuals echoes the regimes of shahs and colonels and presidents ‘for life’ from the Near East to Africa to Latin America, to justify the mass imprisonment and

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Jose Padilla being transferred from military to civilian custody, January 2006. SL/PDC *amici curiae* brief on behalf of Padilla can be obtained for \$.50. Order from/pay to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013-0099.

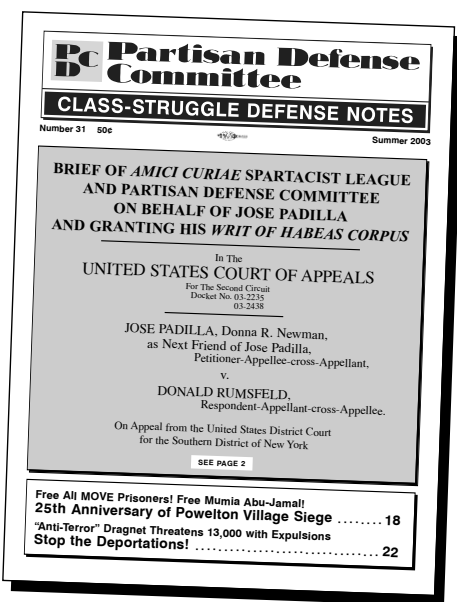
based on “classified” evidence, the government claims the right to disappear you as an “unlawful enemy combatant” with no legal recourse. The “war on terror” has greatly accelerated the drive toward unfettered power by the executive branch. As it has for many decades, much of the constitutional power originally vested in Congress is increasingly being transferred to the presidency. This corresponds to the needs of U.S. imperialism, relying on its overwhelming military might, to assert itself as cop of the world, as seen today in the ongoing murderous occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, its provocations against Iran and in many other ways.

Frame-ups, spying, infiltration and terror are part of the everyday workings of government in the U.S., whether under Democratic or Republican administrations. The veneer of “democracy” is meant to cover the reality of the capitalist state—consisting at its core of the cops, courts, prisons and armed forces—as an apparatus of violence designed to protect capitalist profits and rule against the exploited and the oppressed, and to defend the bourgeoisie’s interests against its foreign rivals.

A statement by the Spartacist League/U.S. Political Bureau issued the day after the September 11 attacks warned that “the most immediate targets of the forces of repression will be any and all people of Near Eastern descent” (printed in WV No. 764, 14 September 2001). The statement explained that the more fundamental purpose of the “anti-terror” campaign “is to intimidate and constrain the multiracial

defendant—such as favorable statements by Hassoun and Jayyousi regarding a televised interview with Osama bin Laden—was depicted as participation in the conspiracy.

Padilla was seized in May 2002 at Chicago’s O’Hare airport and held as a “material witness.” One month later, he was declared an “unlawful enemy combatant” and disappeared into a Navy brig in South Carolina, where he had no way to challenge his imprisonment, no contact with his family and—for almost two



WV Photo

July 1981: San Francisco protest against California attorney general’s attempt to brand Marxist SL as “terrorist.”

Mexico City...

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the woman’s sexual monogamy and social subordination. Engels describes the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property as “the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*.”

Capitalist society is divided into two principal classes: the bourgeoisie that owns the means of production and the proletariat that sells its labor power to create wealth and keep society running. For the working masses and the poor who have no wealth to pass on to new generations, the family serves to feed and clothe the workers and raise the next generation. Engels notes, “The modern individual family is based on the overt or covert domestic slavery of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules.” Still today, the institution of the family plays an economic and social role, and that is the basis of women’s oppression. Thus, the struggle for women’s liberation is a strategic part of the fight for socialism and can only be realized through socialist revolution.

Our perspective is not the redivision of household tasks within the family, but rather the transfer of housework altogether to the public sphere. The institution of the family as an economic unit of society cannot be abolished but must be replaced, with communal kitchens, childcare and laundries. The dictatorship of the proletariat, to the degree that it has sufficient resources at its disposal, will immediately change the material condition of women in particular, over and above the general liberating effects of the revolution, and far beyond making women and men equal in the eyes of the law.

Women’s oppression is not simply a question of backward ideology and the denial of democratic rights. Malechauvinist ideology is propagated to justify the concrete economic oppression and subjugation of women. Abortion is restricted to bolster the institution of the family, whose social role, alongside other institutions such as the church, is to teach



David Bacon

Left: Residents of impoverished barrio outside Monterrey. Right: Women workers at *maquiladora* textile plant.



interet-general.info

respect for authority, act as a conservatizing force, regiment the population (especially youth) and instill a morality that proscribes anything deviating from the family ideal—from premarital sex to gay sex. Youth sexuality, even if some do not want to admit it, is a biological fact. Adolescent girls will get pregnant and need abortions. For free contraception and free abortion on demand! Down with parental consent requirements! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! We oppose “age of consent” laws in which the capitalist state dictates at what age one (typically women) can or cannot decide to have sex. We are against laws against “crimes without victims,” like consensual sex, pornography and drug use.

In Mexico, with half of the population living in poverty even by official figures, the family’s stultifying influence acquires even greater significance as a means for economic survival, especially for young adults who cannot find decent jobs, for the aged trying to live on miserable pensions—if they even have one—and for women, forced to stay in marriages they don’t want to be in simply because they

couldn’t survive on their own, especially if they have children. For free 24-hour childcare!

Women and Permanent Revolution in Mexico

In all societies, the degree of women’s emancipation is an accurate indicator of general emancipation. Many aspects of the anti-woman nature of Mexican society are known throughout the world. Ciudad Juárez is infamous for the hundreds of murders of women workers; the victims are typically young and often sexually mutilated. In March, Ernestina Ascencio, a 73-year-old indigenous woman, was raped and killed by members of the Mexican army in Veracruz, and [Mexican president Felipe] Calderón had the gall to declare that she had died of gastritis. Police sexually abused and raped women arrested during the brutal occupation of the town of Atenco in May 2006.

But in large part the horrid conditions of women in Mexico do not make the headlines because it is just a matter of daily life. Violence against women occurs in 60 percent of households. Open

discrimination in hiring is the norm. Women are usually relegated to the most repetitive, dangerous jobs in industry, especially in the *maquiladoras* [foreign-owned “free trade” factories]. They are subjected to degrading procedures, such as regular pregnancy tests, and earn less than men for the same work. At the same time, by being integrated into industry women gain some economic independence and have become a powerful and vibrant component of the proletariat. We say: Equal pay for equal work! Organize the unorganized!

Conditions for indigenous women in Mexico are particularly brutal and demeaning, due to the intersection of greater poverty and backward traditions. In some regions, young girls are still sold into marriage! In some cases, women do not speak to men who are not family members. Indigenous women typically live in poor peasant family homes or in urban slums. Over 34.5 percent of households in indigenous municipalities lack running water and 21.1 percent lack electricity. The illiteracy rate for women aged 15 and up living in indigenous

War on Our Rights...

(continued from page 11)

unmarked graves of political dissidents. Like them, the Executive is proclaiming the *right to disappear* citizens of its choosing.”

In Britain, where preventive detention is sanctioned by law, Labour Party prime minister Gordon Brown has sought to double to 56 days the time that detainees can be held without charge. The Bush administration has sought to affirm the government’s right to impose preventive detention *for life* by declaring someone an “unlawful enemy combatant”—or by accusing him of conspiracy. Adam Liptak in the *New York Times* (18 August) pointed out that while criminal prosecutions concern an alleged crime already committed, conspiracy prosecutions tend to focus on the future—to stopping supposedly dangerous people from completing their plans. He noted: “The weaker the evidence of conspiracy is, the more such a prosecution can look like a request for judicially sanctioned preventive detentions.”

“Although civil libertarians protested Padilla’s detention without charge, there was no significant public outcry,” observed the *Christian Science Monitor*. That was not an accident. The Bush administration’s evisceration of constitutional rights has been largely supported by the Democrats, whose opposition to the White House gang is based on their claim to be better suited to pursue the “war on terror.” As opposed to the “Anybody but Bush” swamp of liberals and so-called leftists who seek to pressure the Democrats to “fight” all the way to the White House in 2008, we understand that the system of

capitalist imperialism has been and will continue to be enforced by barbaric measures of repression until it is swept away through proletarian revolution.

Down With the Racist Death Penalty!

The new Justice Department regulations giving the Attorney General power to speed up executions hark back to the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act signed by Clinton. That law implemented the previous speedup on death row by gutting the right of federal *habeas corpus* appeals for those sentenced to death in the state courts. It also set up a system in which states could use “fast track” procedures enabling them to carry out death sentences more speedily and with fewer opportunities for appeal, as long as they could attest that they provided adequate representation for capital defendants. In fact, in a number of cases federal courts ruled that states were not doing enough to ensure that defendants had adequate counsel.

In last year’s reauthorization of the USA Patriot Act, the job of deciding whether states were providing condemned inmates with decent lawyers was moved from federal judges to the Attorney General. The Patriot Act reauthorization passed Congress with the support of a number of key Democrats, including Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. As law professor Eric Freedman put it, since “the states were not providing competent defense representation in capital cases, Congress decided to solve the problem by the simple device of having the attorney general announce that it did not exist” (*New York Times*, 20 August).

This move to speed up executions comes at a time when ever more death row inmates are being exonerated by DNA evidence and public opinion has

shifted away from previous overwhelming support for the death penalty. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, the number of executions fell from a peak of 98 in 1999 to 53 last year. Several states have halted executions in recent months because of legal challenges to the use of lethal injection.

The death penalty stands at the pinnacle of the capitalist state’s arsenal of repression. And in the U.S., this barbaric institution is a legacy of black chattel slavery, the lynch rope made legal. Squarely in the capitalist rulers’ sights today is death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth and later a MOVE supporter and award-winning journalist, who was framed up and convicted of a crime he did not commit and sentenced to die explicitly for his political beliefs. The forces of racist “law and order” represented by both the Democratic and Republican parties want to see Mumia dead or locked away in prison for life because they see in him the spectre of black revolt, a voice of defiant opposition to the oppression of black people that is a cornerstone of American capitalism. Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!

“War on Terror” Targets Everyone

It is not only federal agencies but local police forces whose powers have expanded as part of the “war on terror.” What used to be “red squads” have resurfaced in many cities under different names as part of a broad attempt to intimidate and suppress political dissent.

In addition, under the banner of “homeland security,” military and intelligence agencies are implementing changes that cross a well-established line, drawn by the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, prohibiting military forces from conducting

law enforcement on U.S. soil. This was exemplified in 2002 by the Pentagon’s creation of the Northern Command, a military branch charged with coordinating operations in the U.S. against terrorism and other “threats on the homeland.” The administration’s plan to expand domestic access to some of the most powerful tools of 21st-century spycraft, giving police the ability to view data obtained from satellite and aircraft sensors that can see through cloud cover and even penetrate buildings, extends this danger.

Another domestic police project using military technology is a mapping “data inventory” of 133 cities being carried out by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Reporting on this project several years ago, military analyst William Arkin wrote: “A national ‘spatial data infrastructure’ will be created down to the house level. Intelligence analysts speak of one day being able to identify individual occupants, as well as their national background and political affiliations” (*Los Angeles Times*, 23 November 2003).

There is an inherent tendency of the ruling class—a tiny class of exploiters who produce nothing but reap trillions in profit out of the sweat and blood of working people and who wreak death and destruction around the world—to tighten the screws on the workers and oppressed. Continuing to build up the forces of domestic repression, which the capitalists have long deployed against the brutally oppressed black masses and other minorities, is crucial to maintaining their class rule. None of the rights and gains that working people hold dear will be secure as long as the capitalists hold power. Our purpose is to build the workers party necessary to lead the proletarian socialist revolution that smashes the murderous capitalist state and replaces it with a workers state, where those who labor rule. ■

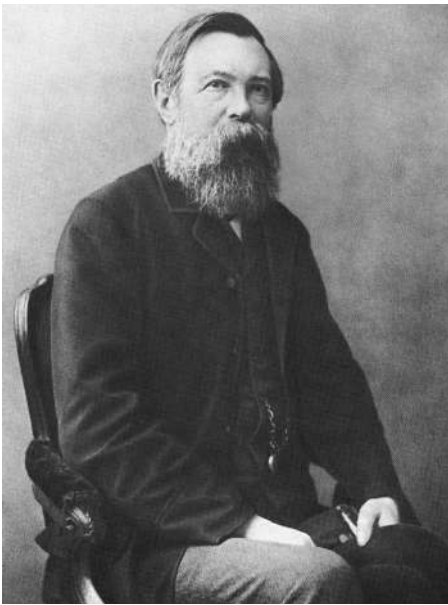
households is an astounding 32.2 percent, while for men it is 19.4 percent; in non-indigenous households it is 6.7 percent, with a minimal sex differential.

Especially in Mexico City and other large urban centers, an important sector of the population, mainly drawn from the petty bourgeoisie, does not buy into the PAN's fundamentalist Catholic ideology. Recent polls show that unlike at the national level, a larger section of the capital's population supports the abortion reform than opposes it (although by a slim margin). While some people at PRD and union demonstrations reject our paper when we point out our position on abortion, others—especially students and young women workers—will buy it precisely for that reason. We find particular receptivity among nurses, likely well aware of the results of illegal abortions, who mobilized against the dismantling of social security. In May, in a refreshing display of irreverence, a large portion of the 20,000 naked people posing in the Zócalo [main plaza in Mexico City] for Spencer Tunick's photo shoot—right in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral on a Sunday morning—chanted, “¡Norberto Rivera, el pueblo se te encuera!” [(Cardinal) Norberto Rivera, the people get naked for you!].

This socially more liberal sector represents an important base of support for the PRD, and it is to them that this party appeals through the abortion reform, the *sociedades de convivencia* (broadly understood as gay marriage) and proposals to legalize prostitution. But illusions in the PRD as a friend of workers and the oppressed are suicidal. The capitalist class as a whole, regardless of its conjunctural postures, is opposed to free access to abortion on demand with no restrictions because it gives women some freedom from total subordination to the family structure. It is in the interest of the working class to take up the struggle against women's oppression in counterposition to the bourgeoisie.

Neocolonial Mexico is a country of combined and uneven development, where the most modern methods of capitalist production coexist with the most archaic agricultural methods and the near-total absence of infrastructure, especially but not solely in the countryside. A fundamental obstacle to making free abortion on demand a reality, not only in Mexico City but throughout the country, is the scarcity of quality health care facilities and trained personnel, aggravated now by the PAN federal government's attacks on social security. We say: Down with social security “reform”! Free, quality health care for all!

The material resources to fully integrate women into the productive process, to begin to lay the basis for women's emancipation, to free the peasants and indigenous people from their ancestral misery, isolation and ignorance are simply lacking and cannot be achieved short of a socialist revolution that extends internationally. In our struggle for socialist revolution, we are guided by the perspective of permanent revolution formulated by



W.E. Debenham

Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) explained basis of women's oppression in development of family system and private property.

Leon Trotsky. In the imperialist epoch, the tasks associated with bourgeois-democratic revolutions (like the French Revolution of 1789), such as national emancipation, agrarian revolution and political democracy, can only be carried out by the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry and the urban poor. Thus, the democratic aspirations of the masses—from the right to vote (which was trampled on by the attempted *desafuero* [stripping of immunity] against López Obrador and the [2006 presidential] election fraud) to the legal equality of women—are motor forces for socialist revolution. For Mexico, the overthrow of the brutal U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie by the powerful multiracial working class north of the Río Bravo will be an urgent life-and-death question. For joint class struggle in the U.S. and Mexico!

The PRD seeks to channel these just aspirations into the dead end of capitalist politics, thinly veiled with the rags of bourgeois democracy. Through bourgeois-nationalist ideology, it also seeks to blur the class divisions in society, pushing the lie that all Mexicans should “stick together” for the sake of the country. This is sheer deceit. Not only are the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie irreconcilable, but furthermore, the weak Third World bourgeoisies are inextricably tied to their imperialist masters and are utterly incapable of breaking with them to play any revolutionary role whatsoever. At best, they seek to renegotiate the terms of their own subordination to the imperialists and in the process deactivate the struggles of the mighty proletariat. When nationalist ideology is not sufficient, the PRD does not hesitate to unleash the full repressive force of the capitalist state, as it has done many times in the past.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Vanguard Party, Tribune of the People!

Lacking any interest in the preservation of the bourgeois order, the proletariat's

historic mission is one of universal emancipation. Yet in every society, the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class. In countries of belated capitalist development, the acute degradation of women is profoundly rooted in pre-capitalist “tradition” and religious obscurantism. The bulk of the Mexican proletariat today imbibes male-chauvinist ideology, anti-indigenous and anti-black racism and anti-Semitism, which the capitalists use in order to keep the working class divided and unaware of its social power and historic interests.

A Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party—the fundamental instrument to lead the working class in a socialist revolution—can only be forged in struggle against the influence of bourgeois ideology. We fight for the working class to take up the struggle for women's rights and to stand as the leader of all the oppressed. This is an essential part of the battle against capitalism. We have no illusions that this will be easy, but it is the only way to liberate humanity from the chains of exploitation and oppression.

We reject, as did the Bolsheviks before us, the degrading conception, embraced by much of the Mexican pseudo-left, that the liberation of women is “women's work”; it is an integral part of our program, fought for by our entire international organization. In sharp contrast, the left adapts to *machista* society and often indulges in disgusting displays of backward bourgeois ideology. At our April 19 speakout, we denounced the common practice by activists in Mexico of using anti-woman and anti-gay epithets to insult government officials or right-wing reactionaries. Our public exposure of this practice by the Rebelión UNAM student collective, among others, threw them into a rage. In a more violent reaction, a member of the fake-Trotskyist Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo-ContraCorriente physically attacked one of our comrades who denounced his use of a vile anti-gay epithet at the October 2 Tlatelolco demonstration in 2001.

Many youth who are outraged by the horrible oppression of indigenous people look to the Zapatistas [EZLN] for leadership. But they will not get women's liberation or anything resembling a revolution from them. During the EZLN upsurge in 1994, the Zapatistas explicitly rejected the struggle for proletarian revolution, and [EZLN leader Subcomandante] Marcos regularly rejects the legacy of Lenin. Their 1993 “Revolutionary Law of Women” asserts a number of elementary democratic rights for women, but according to statements by their own members during a gathering in Oventik in December 2006 and published on their official Web site, “There is no policy regarding abortion in Zapatista territory.”

It is no surprise then that Marcos has kept conspicuously silent in the heat of the present polarization. The EZLN's program is entirely circumscribed within the framework of capitalism and bourgeois democracy; it stands for reforms, like a new constitution, without touching the regime of private property, which is the basis of women's oppression. The Zapatistas are simply another manifestation of traditional Latin American populist nationalism with a certain base among the peasantry. Thus, necessarily, regardless of its conjunctural criticisms of the PRD, the EZLN remains in its orbit.

The idealization of traditional peasant culture and economy, as in the Zapatista “*caracoles*” [autonomous indigenous communities], means idealizing misery and backwardness and retaining the family structure. For the peasantry, the family is the economic unit of small-scale agriculture. The class interests of the peasants are based on private ownership of land, and the peasantry is incapable of reorganizing society on a collectivist basis. Their conservatizing influence can only be overcome through the leadership of the workers who participate in socialized production in industrial factories.

What is needed to put an end to the misery of indigenous people and the peasantry in general is the introduction

of modern technology into the countryside: tractors, fertilizer, irrigation, along with schools, hospitals, roads and transportation. This goal can only be achieved through socialist revolution and the implementation of a collectivized, internationally planned economy.

Feminism: Bourgeois Ideology

Any struggle that does not challenge the material basis of women's oppression will not liberate women. Feminism is a bourgeois ideology that places the source of women's oppression in ideas, equating the fight for the liberation of women with the fight for women's democratic rights, i.e., for the equality of women with men under capitalism. Feminism thus opposes the possibility of liberating the masses of working women in reality, through the overthrow of the economic system that is the source of their oppression, and instead presents the main division in society as that between men and women. The goal of bourgeois feminism is to allow bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women into the male club of power and privilege, as an enemy of the proletariat.

Rejecting abortion as an *elementary democratic right*, popular bourgeois feminist Marta Lamas writes that “we are all for abortions to come to an end; the problem is that in order to make that goal a reality there are those who think it should be penalized and others who think it should be decriminalized” (quoted in *La Jornada*, 12 April). In the face of the reactionary anti-abortion offensive, the PRD and bourgeois feminists moralistically and defensively embrace the guilt- and fear-inducing idea that abortion is dangerous and traumatic. Performed under proper sanitary conditions and by trained personnel, abortion is actually a very simple and safe medical procedure. Much of the squeamishness over abortion comes from the idea, invented by the Catholic church, that a fetus is a human being endowed with a soul, and that abortion is thus wrong. As materialists, we reject the idea of a soul.

V.I. Lenin forged the Bolshevik Party with the understanding that “the Social-Democrat's ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects” [*What Is To Be Done?* (1902)]. We Spartacists are committed to forging such parties internationally as the fundamental levers to bring about a communist future through socialist revolutions around the world. In the struggle for new October Revolutions, Leon Trotsky's words from 1924 [“Perspectives and Tasks in the East”] addressing the women of the East are quite applicable to Mexico and the entire semicolonial world: “There will be no better communist in the East, nor better fighter for the ideas of the revolution and the ideas of communism than the awakened woman worker.” ■

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Sacco and Vanzetti...

(continued from page 5)

following year Congress passed the Sedition Act that made criticizing the “U.S. form of government” a felony.

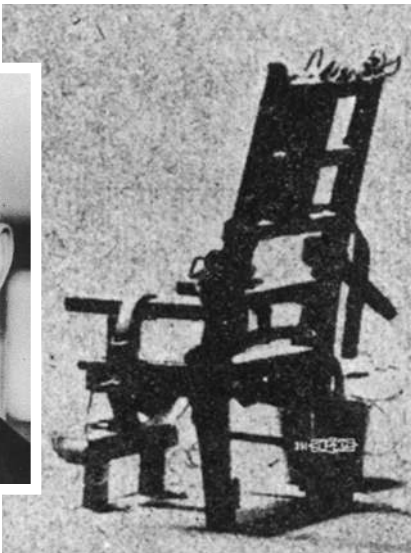
The Red Scare hit full stride in 1919. That year saw the crest of a wave of labor radicalism that swept Europe in response to the carnage of WWI and under the impact of the Russian Revolution. In the U.S., the ranks of the SP swelled to more than 100,000, mostly foreign-born workers, with two-thirds supporting the pro-Bolshevik left wing. The U.S. was hit by the biggest strike wave up to that time, as four million workers walked off their jobs in response to inflation induced by the war. In Seattle, a general strike brought the city to a halt for five days in February 1919, while later that year longshoremen refused to load munitions being sent to counter-revolutionaries seeking to overthrow the young Soviet workers state.

The U.S. bourgeoisie whipped up hysteria over a series of bombings attributed to anarchists. After an attempt to bomb his home in June 1919, U.S. attorney general A. Mitchell Palmer unleashed an additional wave of repression, ranting that revolution was “licking at the altars of the churches, leaping into the belfry of the school bell, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes, seeking to replace marriage vows with libertine laws, burning up the foundation of society.” In November the Palmer Raids were launched with the arrests of over 3,000 foreign-born radicals. Ultimately, at least 6,000 would be deported. As the world capitalist order stabilized, the 1920s in the U.S., now

Massachusetts judge Webster Thayer sentenced Sacco and Vanzetti to death. Right: Electric chair used in their execution.



UPI



Labor Defender

few months. Vanzetti returned later, at a time of intense repression against *Cronaca Sovversiva*, including repeated raids on its offices and confiscation of the paper, which was banned from the mails. In February 1918, federal agents raided the *Cronaca* office in Lynn, Massachusetts, seizing 5,000 addresses of subscribers, including Sacco and Vanzetti. Eighty Galleanists were arrested, and Galleani himself was deported in 1919.

The Frame-Up

On 24 December 1919, an attempt was made to rob a payroll truck as it approached the L. Q. White shoe factory in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. When payroll guards fired back, the two gunmen fled to a waiting black car which drove off. Witnesses described the gunmen as “foreigners.” One who fired a shotgun was said to have a dark complexion and black moustache. On 15 April 1920, two employees of the Slater & Morrill shoe

had been held incommunicado. In late April, Grupo Autonomo, a cell of Italian anarchists, had sent Vanzetti to New York to obtain information about the two. There he was advised by the Italian Defense Committee to dump any radical literature as more raids were anticipated. For that purpose, on May 5 they went to retrieve Boda’s car. When arrested, they did not tell the cops the purpose of their visit to the garage.

Vanzetti was first tried on frame-up charges for the failed robbery in Bridgeport in an attempt by the state to stick either him or Sacco with a criminal record before trial on the Braintree murder charges. Felix Frankfurter described the farce in *The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti* (1927):

“The evidence of identification of Vanzetti in the Bridgewater case bordered on the frivolous, reaching its climax in the testimony of a little newsboy who, from behind the telegraph pole to which he had run for refuge during the shooting, had caught a glimpse of the criminal and ‘knew by the way he ran he was a foreigner.’ Vanzetti was a foreigner, so of course it was Vanzetti!”

Despite the testimony of 18 witnesses that he was in Plymouth selling eels at the time, Vanzetti was convicted of assault charges. Vanzetti and Sacco were then immediately indicted for the Braintree murders.

The murder trial began on 31 May 1921 in Dedham, Massachusetts, with a platoon of cops armed with riot guns stationed on the courthouse steps. Even a federal agent noted that “the feeling in Dedham against Italians is very strong, and will probably get stronger as the trial progresses” (quoted in William Young and David E. Kaiser, *Postmortem: New Evidence in the Case of Sacco and Vanzetti* [1985]). Five of the jurors were chosen from a pool of personal acquaintances of a sheriff’s deputy. Jury foreman Walter Ripley was a former police chief who began every court session by ostentatiously standing and saluting the flag. When a friend told Ripley before the trial that he didn’t believe Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty, Ripley snapped back, “Damn them, they ought to hang them anyway!”

In his opening remarks, Judge Thayer called on the jurors to render service “with the same spirit of patriotism, courage and devotion to duty as was exhibited by our soldier boys across the seas.” With Thayer’s support, prosecutor Frederick Katzmman cross-examined Sacco as to whether his collection of anarchist and socialist literature was “in the interests of the United States.” To inflame the jury, Katzmman asked repeated questions about their avoiding the draft by going to Mexico, and in his jury instructions Judge Thayer repeatedly referred to Sacco and Vanzetti as “slackers.”

As in Mumia’s 1982 frame-up trial, there was a total lack of evidence. None of the stolen loot was ever found on or near them. Thirteen alibi witnesses placed Vanzetti in Plymouth selling fish. Witnesses also testified that Sacco was in Boston at the time of the killing. Among them was a clerk from the Italian consulate, where on the day of the killing Sacco had gone to get a passport.

Eyewitnesses initially told the cops that they had not seen enough to identify the gunman; they were coerced to change their accounts. Two of them initially identified a photo of New York



James/Philadelphia Inquirer

Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1969 as 15-year-old Minister of Information of Philadelphia Black Panthers.

the world’s chief capitalist power, was a decade of rampant reaction: further anti-immigrant legislation was passed in 1921 and 1924; anti-trust laws were used to break strikes; labor militants and Communists were thrown in jail. Growing by leaps and bounds, the Ku Klux Klan marched 40,000-strong in Washington, D.C.

Sacco and Vanzetti came to symbolize those caught in the web of repression. Each had come to the United States in 1908. Within five years they had become anarchists and subscribers to the Italian-language anarchist newspaper *Cronaca Sovversiva* (Chronicle of Subversion) of Luigi Galleani. Sacco’s name appeared frequently in the paper’s column announcing organizing activities, particularly raising money for political prisoners and jailed strikers. Sacco helped raise funds for workers and their arrested leaders during the 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The following year he helped organize strike pickets at the Hopedale Paper Mill and in December 1916 was one of three Massachusetts anarchists arrested for holding a meeting without a permit in solidarity with striking iron workers in Minnesota. Also in 1916, Vanzetti raised funds to support strikers at the giant Plymouth Cordage plant, at which he had previously worked.

Sacco and Vanzetti met for the first time in 1917 in Mexico, where many Galleanists had gone to avoid registering for the draft. Sacco returned to the U.S. after a

company in South Braintree, outside of Boston, were attacked by two men as they carried the factory payroll. Paymaster Frederick Parmenter and his assistant Alessandro Berardelli were shot and killed, and the bandits escaped with others in a dark-colored car.

Three weeks later, on May 5, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested in a trap set by Bridgewater police chief Michael Stewart, who sought to pin both robberies on anarchists. The two anarchists, along with their comrades Ricardo Orciani and Mike Boda, had sought to retrieve Boda’s car from a West Bridgewater garage where it was being repaired. As prearranged with Chief Stewart, the owner refused to turn over the car, and his wife called the cops. After the anarchists left the garage, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested on a streetcar to Boston.

Never told that they were robbery suspects, Sacco and Vanzetti believed that they were being arrested for their political activities. In his court testimony, Vanzetti described the questioning by Stewart: “He asked me why we were in Bridgewater, how long I know Sacco, if I am a Radical, if I am an anarchist or Communist, and he asked me if I believe in the government of the United States.”

The immediate backdrop to their arrests was the death two days before of fellow anarchist Andrea Salsedo, who had plunged 14 floors from the Department of Justice office in New York City. Arrested in February, Salsedo and Roberto Elia

bank robber Anthony Palmisano, who was in prison at the time, as that of the shooter. Witness Lola Andrews, a part-time nurse with a history of prostitution and insurance fraud, identified Sacco as a man whom she asked for directions shortly before the shooting. On cross-examination, Andrews conceded that she was pressured by Katzmman to say that Sacco was that man. Other eyewitnesses testified that Sacco was not the killer. Barbara Liscomb testified that the gunman she saw standing over Berardelli looked directly at her, and it wasn’t Sacco. Additional witnesses were concealed by the prosecution, such as Roy Gould, who was crossing the street when he was shot at by someone in the getaway car. The description of the shooter Gould gave to the cops could not have been that of either Sacco or Vanzetti.

Equally specious was the ballistics evidence. Six .32 calibre bullets were removed from Parmenter and Berardelli, ruling out the .38 revolver Vanzetti had on him when arrested. There was no formal record of custody for the bullets to document who handled them and when. All of the witnesses testified that there was only one gunman and only one pistol used. This was confirmed by the doctor performing the autopsy, George McGrath, who testified to the grand jury that all of the bullets “looked exactly alike,” with the same markings. Nevertheless, the prosecution came up with a “Bullet III” that, unlike the others, had a left twist, claiming that this was from Sacco’s .32.

In a post-trial affidavit submitted by the defense in 1923, the state’s chief ballistics expert, Captain Proctor, noted that he had told the prosecutor that if asked specifically whether tests showed that Bullet III passed through Sacco’s gun, he would have answered no. But after repeated badgering by the D.A., Proctor agreed to testify that the bullet was consistent with one from Sacco’s gun. Proctor later stated that he never believed the bullet passed through Sacco’s gun.

Despite the utter lack of evidence, the jury returned with guilty verdicts after only five hours of deliberation. In December 1921, Judge Thayer turned down a motion for a new trial. Though conceding the weakness of the prosecution’s case, Thayer ruled that “the evidence that convicted these defendants was circumstantial and was evidence that is known in law as ‘consciousness of guilt’,” supposedly manifested by the lies Sacco and Vanzetti told when arrested in order to protect themselves and their comrades. As the 1927 ILD pamphlet *Labor’s Martyrs* written by Max Shachtman put it, “The consciousness of guilt attributed to Sacco and Vanzetti was nothing but a healthy consciousness of the class struggle and the methods of the enemies of the working class.”

Parallels with Frame-Up of Mumia

Everything used to convict Sacco and Vanzetti—phony ballistics, terrorization of witnesses, use of the defendants’ political background to inflame the jury—would be replicated in Mumia’s trial 60 years later. Prosecutor Joseph McGill argued to the nearly all-white jury that Mumia’s Black Panther Party membership 12 years earlier proved that he had been planning to kill a cop. The prosecutors’ two main witnesses were coerced into changing their testimony, and witnesses who could exonerate Mumia were terrorized into not coming forward.

As documented in the PDC pamphlet *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!*, a ballistics expert testified that the fatal bullet was “consistent” with Mumia’s gun—but there is no evidence that Mumia’s gun, a .38 calibre, was even fired that night, or even what gun was used! The Medical Examiner’s report states that Faulkner was shot with a .44 calibre bullet. A witness to the shooting, William Singletary, said that the killer used a .22 calibre. Years later, Arnold Beverly came forward to confess to the killing and said that the gun he used was a .22. As part of a broad-ranging conceal-

In November 1925, Celestino Medeiros, in Dedham prison awaiting an appeal for his 1924 conviction for murdering a bank guard, passed a note to Sacco stating, “I hear by confess to being in the south Braintree shoe company crime and Sacco and Vanzetti was not in said crime” (*The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti*). Medeiros subsequently swore an affidavit stating that the robbery was carried out by a group fitting the description of the Morelli gang, which was wanted for a series of freight train robberies, and that five others were involved. Shortly after the robbery, Medeiros had \$2,800 in the bank, which would represent his share of the stolen payroll. Two friends of Medeiros later confirmed that he had described to them the role he and the Morellis played. Many years later, in his book *My Life in the Mafia*, Vincent Teresa described a meeting with Frank Morelli in the 1950s during which Morelli complained about a *Boston Globe* article accusing his gang of

The ILD waged a hard political battle against those who threw up obstacles to class-struggle defense of Sacco and Vanzetti. Today we face similar obstacles, and then some, in our effort to mobilize labor-centered protest to demand Mumia's freedom on the basis that he is an innocent man. The Sacco and Vanzetti case occurred in a period marked by the October Revolution, which inspired militant fighters around the world and drew a sharp dividing line between those who defended the Soviet Union and those who sided with

Why would Mumia's ostensible defenders attack the Beverly confession? The Beverly evidence makes clear that the injustice to Mumia was not the action of one rogue cop, prosecutor or judge but

[TO BE CONTINUED]

If left unchallenged, these attacks on the left and the workers movement will serve as a precedent for silencing any criticism or opposition to the bourgeois rulers. Particularly following the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet

Axel H., Florian L., Oliver R. and Dr. Andrej Holm have been held in investigative detention in Berlin since July 30-31, suspected of “belonging to a terrorist organization.” They are thus threatened with lengthy jail sentences under the rightly hated paragraph 129a pertaining to thought crimes. Three of the men are suspected of having tried to set a Bundeswehr vehicle on fire. Andrej Holm, a sociologist at Humboldt University, is accused of holding criminal political views and of having ties to the other people arrested. On

Reportedly, the victims of these arrests have been persecuted and spied on in their most intimate activities for nearly a year in the search for pretexts for their arrest. The aim of such attacks on the

We demand that all surveillance of the accused and their families be stopped and that all the data that has been collected be wiped out. Now as ever we demand that the “anti-terror” paragraph 129a/b be stricken from the books!■

We can't have any illusions in the federal government that they are any better. The Feds—these are the people who are shredding everybody's civil rights at home, the government that is waging a brutal imperialist war on the peoples

So people are angry, and people have a right to be angry. People have been brutalized, oppressed, segregated. The wrecking ball has been taken to their homes. They've been laid off, jailed, beaten and murdered for too long. It's the system, the racist capitalist system. And there's no reforming it. We need to mobilize the power of the multiracial labor movement to protest racist cop terror. The only way we're going to end racist cop terror is by fighting to put an end to this racist capitalist system, by fighting for socialist revolution. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

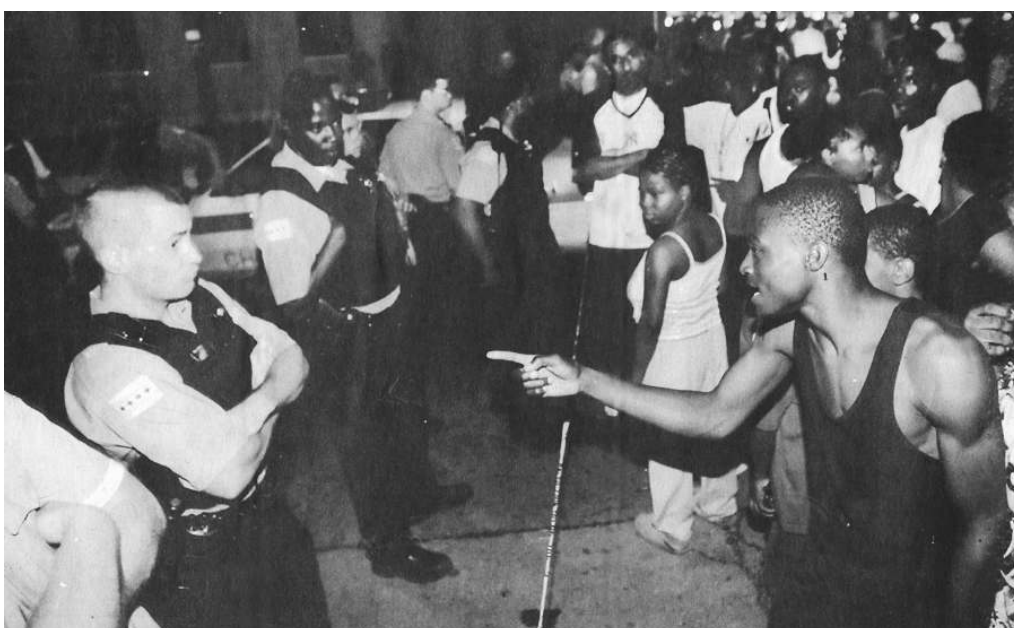
Chicago Cops Keep on Killing

PDC Speaker: Mobilize Labor! Protest Racist Cop Terror!

For the Chicago police, it is once again “open season” on black men. On August 4, a police sergeant killed 42-year-old Gefery Johnson in his home on Chicago’s South Side with taser shocks as he was handcuffed naked in the bathroom, shouting, “They’re killing me!” Just two days later, Aaron Harrison, an 18-year-old high school student, was chased into an alley on the West Side and fatally shot in the back by Special Operations officers. On August 21, Johnny Goodwin, 21 years of age, was shot and killed by Gresham District tactical squad cops. And on August 23, Eric Tonson, a 17-year-old student at Orr High School, was critically wounded by a shot in the neck by a cop who later claimed that the unarmed youth had “reached toward his waistband.”

This wave of cop terror, in particular the shooting of Aaron Harrison, has sparked a series of angry protests drawing hundreds of people who have braved police intimidation. On August 6, cops arrested five black youth who had participated in a protest in Harrison’s West Side neighborhood earlier that day, holding them incommunicado overnight. The cops then slapped them with trumped-up charges of aggravated battery on a police officer and “mob action.” The Partisan Defense Committee issued a protest letter on August 10 to Mayor Richard Daley Jr. demanding, “Hands off the anti-police-brutality protesters!” Labor, civil rights organizations and others must demand all charges be dropped!

The latest cop shootings give the lie to the police “reform” scheme pushed by Democratic mayor Daley and passed by the City Council in July. This utterly cosmetic ordinance removed control of the city’s Office of Professional Standards—



James/Chicago Tribune

Left: Angry residents of Chicago’s West Side at August 6 protest against cop killing of Aaron Harrison that night. Right: Labor Black Struggle League at August 10 rally against police terror.



WV Photo

the agency that reviews complaints of police “misconduct”—from the police department and placed it in the mayor’s hands. This supposedly innovative change was in direct response to two highly publicized videos of police beatings in bars, one of which depicts a drunken off-duty cop caught beating a female bartender. As the ordinance was being pushed through, it was revealed that 30 officers from the same Special Operations unit that later killed Harrison had amassed 862 allegations of brutality and other “misconduct.”

Many of those protesting the current cop rampage are bitter over last year’s whitewashing of the torture scandal involving former Lieutenant Jon Burge, who from 1973 to 1991 headed the police Violent Crimes Unit. A special prosecutor’s report released last year acknowledged some instances of wrongdoing but

covered up the far-reaching web of those involved. Burge and his henchmen had regularly extracted “confessions” from black “suspects” on the South Side through gruesome methods of torture. This was done with the complicity of the city’s Democratic Party machine, including when black mayor Harold Washington was in charge in the 1980s. The only penalty Burge received was his dismissal from the force in 1993.

On August 10, the Spartacist League and Chicago Labor Black Struggle League joined more than 300 people at a rally on the West Side called by the family of Aaron Harrison, the Rev. Paul Jakes, Democratic Party pol Al Sharpton and his National Action Network, whose central demand was for a federal investigation into the police shootings and harassment. We print below, edited for publication,

the speech by a representative of the PDC at the protest.

* * *

We are outraged by the brutal killing of two black men, Aaron Harrison and Gefery Johnson, by the Chicago police! Outraged! My name is Brian Mendis. I’m with the Partisan Defense Committee. We’re a legal and social defense organization whose purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League, and we take up cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people.

These racist killings by the Chicago Police Department were no aberration. In fact, the brutalization and oppression of black people is part of the job of these thugs in blue. Black oppression is built

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Germany, France

Protest Government Repression Against Leftists!

As part of a crackdown by several European governments against left organizations in recent months, several leftist activists and professors in Germany are being accused of membership in the Militante Gruppe (Militant Group—MG), which the German state has deemed “a terrorist organization.” After having been spied on for a year, three people face long prison sentences after allegedly attempting to set fire to trucks of the German army (Bundeswehr). In addition, a sociologist at Humboldt University and a political scientist at the Free University of Berlin are accused of being MG members solely on the basis of their academic writings. The legal basis for this attack is paragraph 129a of the German criminal code, which gives the state the means to go after its perceived opponents on the basis of their

beliefs and to imprison them without any evidence of any crime committed.

These attacks are a continuation of the brutal police attacks on leftists who protested against the imperialist Group of Eight summit in Germany in June (see “Germany: For Mass Working-Class Protest Against State Repression!” WV No. 894, 8 June). The state is trying to pin the label of “terrorist” on any leftist who expresses opposition to the exploitation and oppression of the capitalist system.

As a measure of the broad sweep of the attacks on the workers movement in Germany, Mag Wompel, editor of the

labournet.de Web site, is being sued by the Ixion firm for publishing material about a labor dispute. The supposed “defamation” consists of a posting on the Web site in which an Ixion worker used the word “capitalist” and described as “blackmail” threats by management that workers would lose their jobs if they refused to accept worse pay and working conditions. This is a frontal assault on freedom of speech that threatens anyone who supports workers struggles.

Left groups are also under attack in France, where the SMP Technologies company, supplier of taser guns to French police, has filed a defamation lawsuit

against Olivier Besancenot, main spokesman for the pseudo-Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), and the group RAID-H (Human Rights Alert and Intervention Network). When newly elected right-wing president Nicolas Sarkozy was Interior Minister, he equipped 3,000 police with the SMP’s Taser X26 paralyzing stun gun. Based on a 28 March 2006 report by Amnesty International, Besancenot argued that these guns have indirectly caused the death of dozens of people in the United States. He now faces a fine of 50,000 euros for damages under the lawsuit.

The Committee for Social Defense, associated with the Ligue Trotskyste de France, issued an August 27 letter to the French courts demanding, “Drop the

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