

## Mississippi's Scott Sisters

# Racist U.S. Justice: Cruel and Unusual

In October 1994, two black women, sisters Jamie and Gladys Scott, were sentenced to *double life prison terms* for their alleged involvement in an \$11 armed robbery. On January 7 the Scott sisters were freed after 16 years of incarceration. But, with their sentences suspended, they will be on parole for the rest of their lives and have to pay the

state \$52 monthly. Benjamin Todd Jealous, president of the NAACP, proclaimed, "The victory of their release encourages us to press on in our nationwide efforts to convince more governors to use their clemency powers to free more people who desperately deserve it." This is the pathetic voice of black petty-bourgeois protest inspired by the admin-

istration of Barack Obama, chief overseer of racist U.S. capitalism, pleading on behalf of a few who "deserve" when 2.3 million people, 70 percent black or Latino, languish in prison hellholes.

In Mississippi the legacy of slavery is self-evident in its bloody history. The viciously vindictive frame-up of the Scott sisters reeks of the stench of this legacy.



King/Clarion-Ledger

**Jamie and Gladys Scott at January 7 press conference in Jackson following their release from prison.**

The Scott sisters had no prior criminal record. Prosecution witnesses revealed that they were all threatened by the deputy sheriff and forced to sign false

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## —New York City—

# Bloomberg's Snow Job on Working People Beat Back Attack on Public Workers Unions!

The administration of multibillionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg enraged working people throughout New York City with its criminally negligent response to the Christmas weekend blizzard. Having already reduced the municipal workforce, the city basically did nothing to prepare for a major storm that everyone knew was going to hit. While most Manhattan streets serving tourists and the wealthy were cleared within a day, many in the outer boroughs did not see a snow plow for days after the storm. Unplowed streets were littered with abandoned cars, along with 100 snow plows and over 200 ambulances. Some 1,000 buses were stuck, their drivers told to stay inside the vehicles for hours on end by Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) management. Untold numbers of the elderly and sick were trapped in the subways. At least two people died in the conditions created by city officials. Meanwhile, Bloomberg blithely encouraged tourists to take in a Broadway show!

As anger over the disaster mounted, the capitalist politicians of the Republican and Democratic parties cynically tried to pin responsibility on municipal workers. Along with the rabidly anti-union



**Brooklyn, January 3: Eight days after blizzard, trash is picked up for first time. As Mayor Bloomberg and Sanitation Commissioner Doherty (shown in inset at December 29 press conference) caught flak for woeful response to storm, City Hall turned on sanitation workers.**

*New York Post*, Republican city councilman Dan Halloran, citing anonymous sources, accused sanitation workers of having staged a slowdown in solidarity with supervisors who were facing demotion, prompting one worker to tell the *Daily News* (5 January), "We don't care about management on a good day, never mind during a blizzard."

With outgoing Democratic governor David Paterson calling for a criminal investigation, four separate probes were launched—by the NYC Department of

Investigation (DOI), by the Queens and Brooklyn district attorneys and by the Brooklyn U.S. Attorney's office. In addition to the "slowdown," workers are reportedly being investigated for allegedly "padding overtime." On January 3, the DOI issued a fink memo warning transportation workers that "they are obligated to come forward and report information about misconduct."

Part of a nationwide drive against public sector unions, the obscene witchhunting of NYC public workers should be



fought by every union in the city. It was the municipal workers who responded heroically under enormously difficult circumstances to help people get through the storm. Emergency medical service (EMS) workers, unable to drive their ambulances down snowbound streets, often carried stricken residents on stretchers for blocks. As for "padding overtime," sanitation workers have toiled 21 straight days following the storm, often working at least 12-hour shifts, to dig the city out and remove trash.

As one sanitation worker told the *Daily News*, the city's response to the blizzard was "a perfect storm of fewer men, inferior equipment, 70-mph winds and a political failure to declare a snow emergency," adding, "this was all about money." Snow plows were fitted with cheap, inferior chains that snapped, sometimes ripping tires off the rims. Sanitation workers were given shovels that were unassembled—and missing the

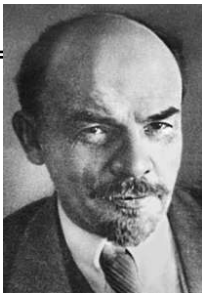
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TROTSKY

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM



LENIN

Honor Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht

In the tradition of the early Communist International, each January we commemorate the "Three Ls": Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, who died on 21 January 1924, and revolutionary Marxists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who were assassinated in Berlin on 15 January 1919 by the reactionary Freikorps as part of the German Social Democratic government's suppression of the Spartakist uprising.

Although not well known today, Karl Liebknecht's name is synonymous with intransigent opposition to one's "own" bourgeoisie in the crucible of imperialist war. Despite his individual opposition to German imperialism from the outset of World War I, on 4 August 1914 Liebknecht submitted to the discipline of the Social Democratic Party and voted for war credits along with the rest of the party fraction in the Reichstag (parliament). But Liebknecht became increasingly vocal in his opposition to the party's betrayal of the proletariat. When the party fraction resolved to support a new vote for the Kaiser's military budget at the Reichstag session of 2 December 1914, Liebknecht broke ranks and cast the sole vote opposing war credits.

Liebknecht was prohibited from delivering a statement motivating his vote on the floor of the Reichstag or having it printed in the body's official record. Barred from the German press, the statement was published in a Dutch socialist newspaper and translated into English in the Socialist New York Call. Below we reprint the statement as it appeared in the February 1915 issue of the U.S. leftist journal The Masses. Liebknecht's stand inspired proletarian militants in Germany and internationally, not least in Russia, where the working class under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party

would seize power in the October Revolution of 1917.

In a May 1915 leaflet, Liebknecht declared, "The main enemy is at home," which for generations afterward became the watchword for revolutionaries at a time of war between imperialist powers. As he denounced the slaughter of World War I at a May Day rally in 1916, Liebknecht

when it arrives, our program will live, and it will reign in a world of redeemed humanity. Despite everything!"

\* \* \*

My vote against the war credit is based upon the following considerations:

This war, which none of the peoples engaged therein has wished, is not caused



Willy Römer

January 1919: Communist leader Karl Liebknecht addressing Berlin workers and soldiers on eve of Spartakist uprising.

knecht was dragged from the platform and thrown into prison on charges of treason. Released in October 1918, Liebknecht along with Luxemburg founded the German Communist Party at the end of the year. They were assassinated two weeks later.

In honoring the Three Ls, we fight to carry on their revolutionary tradition. As Liebknecht declared the day before his murder: "Whether or not we are alive

in the interest of the prosperity of the German or any other nation. This is an imperialistic war, a war for the domination of the world market, for the political domination over important fields of operation for industrial and bank capital. On the part of the competition in armaments this is a war mutually fostered by German and Austrian war parties in the darkness of half absolutism and secret diplomacy in order to steal a march on the adversary.

Letters

The first of the following three letters was written in German in response to Part One of "Capitalism and Global Warming" (WV Nos. 965 and 966, 24 September and 8 October 2010). It was forwarded to WV by our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany.

Hannover
7 October 2010

Dear friends,
I emphatically reject your new position on so-called "global warming." It is utterly

On Global Warming

impossible for scientific proletarian research into objective climate changes to arrive at a definitive position on whether there will be a new "ice age" or "global warming" in 2060.

All the gobbledygook of the bourgeoisie so far, from Al Gore to "Queen" Elizabeth II, is the ideology of a moribund class.

Every class has a class interest in influencing nature. The capitalists are, for instance, attempting to engineer potatoes or corn, forcing farmers to buy new seed from the capitalists year after year. Normally, farmers get their seed out of their own harvest. Thus the bourgeoisie puts its class interest above that of humanity.

In the case of "global warming," the bourgeoisie, with its vicious unscientific "theory," CO2 and "greenhouse," is attempting to slow down, if not to halt, scientific-technical progress and the further industrialization of entire continents. Of course capitalist production and reproduction destroy the oceans and thereby the very basis of life on this planet. This is undeniable. However, global warming

is an ideological weapon, not an objective reality. I would characterize "global warming" as the new Malthusianism. Malthusianism was also an ideology of class rule that could not be proven in reality, although countless statistics were cited as "proof."

C.M.

\* \* \*

16 October 2010

In Capitalism and Global Warming, Part II, published 10/8/10, WV 966, you misapply a paraphrase from Trotsky's Transitional Program. Trotsky wrote there that we should not be interested in advising the bourgeoisie how to save the capitalist economic system. You write that "Revolutionary Marxists have no interest in advising the bourgeoisie on how best to meet its energy needs," implying that we should not even consider how we

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# Down With Bloody Repression of “Red Shirts,” Minorities!

# Thailand: For a Workers and Peasants Government!

## Abolish the Monarchy!

The following article is reprinted from *Australasian Spartacist No. 211* (Summer 2010/11), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League.

On 9 January, up to 40,000 demonstrators led by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD—more popularly known as the Red Shirts) rallied in Thailand’s capital, Bangkok, to commemorate supporters killed in the bloody crackdown on anti-government protests in mid-May. For weeks during April-May, tens of thousands had rallied behind the UDD, supporters of exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, in protests demanding new elections. Drawing in masses of urban and rural poor, demonstrators sustained repeated attacks by state forces against their occupation centred on Ratchaprasong intersection in the commercial heart of the capital. Then on 19 May, under the orders of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Thai military mobilised armoured vehicles and thousands of troops to brutally disperse the protest. Ninety-one people were killed and up to 1,900 injured in the bloody

**Australasian**  
**SPARTACIST**

repression against the weeks-long demonstration. The slingshots, bamboo spears, Molotov cocktails and other more conventional weapons of the demonstrators were no match for the tanks and live ammunition of the Thai army, which, along with the police, has a long history of murderous suppression of worker and student protests, separatist and leftist insurgencies.

Following the crackdown, a pall of terror fell over Thailand. Hundreds of Red Shirt protesters were rounded up and imprisoned, many detained under an Emergency Decree imposed in early April. The government froze bank accounts of suspected Red Shirt supporters, raided and closed down radio stations and blocked over 100,000 websites. Twenty-five people, including the exiled Thaksin and other leaders were charged with terrorism-related offences that can carry the death penalty.

As revolutionary Marxists, the International Communist League defends the Red Shirt protesters against ongoing bloody state repression while at the same time standing in political opposition to this bourgeois-populist movement, which is defined by its support to, and from, Thaksin, a billionaire telecommunications mogul. Its aims and politics are counterposed to the interests of the workers and rural toilers who have rallied behind it. It is necessary to build a Leninist-Trotskyist party to mobilise the proletariat, standing at the head of all the downtrodden and oppressed, against all wings of the Thai bourgeoisie in the struggle to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system through socialist revolution.

Thaksin, who was ousted from govern-



Left: “Red Shirt” supporter shot in head by military being carried into Bangkok hospital, 19 May 2010. Right: Bus in flames during protest in support of ousted prime minister Thaksin, 13 April 2009.



AP photos

ment in a military coup in 2006, was the first Thai bourgeois political leader whose wealth and base of support lay outside the Bangkok elite. Describing themselves as *phrai* (serf), and sneeringly referred to as “savages” and “buffalos” by sections of the elite, many Red Shirt supporters are disenfranchised peasants from Thailand’s poverty-stricken north and northeast. Thaksin garnered his broad support among the urban and rural poor following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which hit Thailand particularly hard. The crash saw real wages plummet by up to 40 percent and over two million workers lose their jobs in just a few months. Many were forced back to rural villages or into sweatshops and informal or casual work to survive. Before the year ended, the prime minister resigned in the face of the continuing economic turmoil and burgeoning street protests by workers, peasants and the middle classes. The following year Thaksin founded his *Thai Rak Thai* (Thais Love Thais) party. It put forward a nationalist, populist program that promised to ameliorate conditions for the masses, particularly in the rural areas. Elected prime minister in 2001, Thaksin delivered on many of his reform pledges, including a debt moratorium for peasants and a heavily subsidised universal health-care system.

For Thaksin, these reforms served to co-opt and contain plebeian discontent within the framework of capitalism, ensuring the necessary social and economic stability to attract imperialist investment back to Thailand, and with it a smooth flow of profits for himself and his cronies. Corruption, nepotism and authoritarianism prospered while Thaksin was in power. A former police officer, he undermined the power of the entrenched bureaucracy by centralising management of government affairs in his own hands and that of his *Thai Rak Thai* party. He exercised tight control over the media and embarked on sweeping anti-union privatisations as well as repressive domestic campaigns especially targeting ethnic minorities. These measures were designed to suppress any restiveness among the population while mobilising the majority behind greater Thai nationalism.

Following Thaksin’s re-election in a

second landslide victory in 2005, bourgeois opposition elements coalesced around the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD). This included support from Abhisit’s Democrat Party, sections of the military and bureaucracy, businessmen and others who felt threatened by Thaksin’s government including some public sector trade-union leaders. Known as the Yellow Shirts (the colour associated with the king), PAD seized on a tax scandal involving Thaksin in early 2006 to escalate protests against his regime. In September, while out of the country, Thaksin was deposed in a military coup—the eighteenth in the 60-plus year reign of King Bhumibol.

With the banning of *Thai Rak Thai*, its leaders regrouped as the People’s Power Party (PPP) and managed to form a coalition government after junta-approved elections in late 2007. The PAD Yellow Shirts launched a new round of protests,

storming Government House [the prime minister’s office] and blockading two international airports, while security forces largely refrained from intervening. Clashes occurred with Red Shirts who had mobilised on the streets. In a December 2008 judicial coup, the Thai Constitutional Court dissolved the PPP, leading to the installation of Abhisit as prime minister. Branding the Red Shirt opposition “communists” and “destroyers of Thailand,” the government of the Oxford-educated Abhisit has ruled with an iron fist ever since. Abhisit immediately slashed Thaksin’s healthcare scheme by 23 percent and bolstered his regime with a paramilitary band of armed thugs, known as the Blue Shirts, who serve to intimidate government opponents.

Without giving any political support to Thaksin, it was necessary for the proletariat

*continued on page 4*

## 25th Annual PDC Holiday Appeal

### Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! Free All Class-War Prisoners!

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Friday, January 21  
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La Pregunta Arts Cafe  
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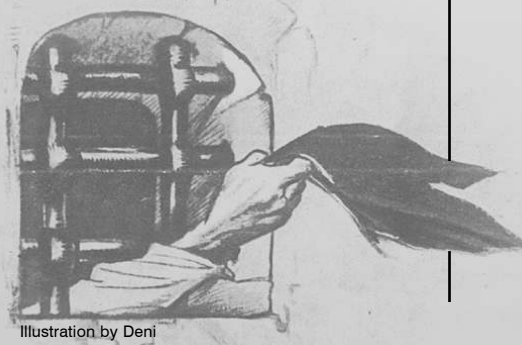


Illustration by Deni



# Thailand...

(continued from page 3)

to oppose the 2006 military coup—which threatened the ability of the working class to organise in its own interests and struck a blow at all the oppressed—and to defend the reforms gained under Thaksin. Concretely this would have meant *militarily* siding with Thaksin and his supporters against the coup, and with the masses on the streets, while fighting for the proletariat to emerge under its own banner.

## Thaksin Shinawatra: Blood-Drenched Bourgeois Nationalist

Bourgeois nationalists such as Thaksin are committed to defence of the capitalist order, which necessarily means enforcing the exploitation of the masses and the plunder of resources to enhance the power and the profits of the bourgeoisie and their imperialist masters. As prime minister, Thaksin launched two savage domestic campaigns. His “war on drugs” resulted in some 3,000 extrajudicial killings by the police and military. Many were also slaughtered in his bloody campaign against the Malay Muslim minority in the southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and parts of Songkhla, which he kept under martial law. The ferocity of the repression is captured by the events in Tak Bai on 25 October 2004. After firing on a demonstration in the town, killing at least seven people and wounding many more, Thai security forces then rounded up over 1,300 Muslims. With their hands bound behind their backs, the detainees were stacked on top of one another like cordwood in the back of trucks and driven to a military detention camp six hours away. By the end of the journey up to 85 prisoners had died of beatings, suffocation and kidney damage. Thaksin Shinawatra responded to this slaughter by praising the “good work” of the security forces.

While Thailand was never colonised by the imperialist powers, its borders nevertheless reflect the struggles between British and French colonialism in Southeast Asia. Thailand, or Siam as it was formerly known, emerged as an independent state in the late 19th century mainly as a buffer between French and British imperialism. The 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty handed several Malay states to the British while allowing Siam to retain the four states that it still holds today. The Malay state of Patani, which had been largely self-governing while paying tribute to Buddhist Siam, was forcibly incorporated into the state of Siam in the early 20th century. Once under Thai suzerainty the Malay Muslims suffered national and religious oppression and violent clashes occurred. In the period following the Second World War thousands migrated to the newly formed Federation of Malaya.

For decades Malay Muslims remaining in Southern Thailand have waged a sporadic insurgency against the Thai military and police. Making up about four percent of Thailand’s population, but comprising

the overwhelming majority in the four southern provinces, the Malay Muslims are largely denied education in their native tongue (Yawi, a Malay dialect), and suffer religious oppression at the hands of the state and Buddhist elite. The Thai working class must defend the Muslim minority against state repression without giving one iota of political support to the Islamists. Fighting for full democratic and national rights, it must demand that the Thai military and security forces get out of the southern provinces.

Revolutionaries would seek to unite *all* nationalities behind the proletarian fight to overthrow the Thai capitalist rulers. This requires a sharp struggle against the monarchy, which acts as both symbol and purveyor of Thai nationalism. While the arch-monarchist PAD Yellow Shirts seek



Patani Malay Human Rights Organisation

**October 2004 roundup in Tak Bai, part of murderous repression against Malay Muslim minority under then-prime minister Thaksin. Beaten, bound and stacked into trucks, 85 detainees died.**

to paint Thaksin as eroding the authority of the king, Thaksin of course well understands the monarchy’s historical role and has no intention of undermining this important institution for capitalist class rule. The bourgeoisie has spent decades deifying the monarchy as a rallying point for capitalist reaction and national unity, codifying in the Thai constitution that “The King shall be enthroned in a position of revered worship and shall not be violated.”

Despite their best efforts, today the Thai rulers are increasingly fearful the country will fall apart when the aged and ailing King Bhumibol dies, particularly as his successor, the Crown Prince, is widely despised. In order to “protect the monarchy,” the Abhisit government seized on the April-May demonstrations to establish a new “Bureau of Prevention and Eradication of Computer Crime.” Two hundred people, including Giles Ji Ungpakorn, a leader of the Thai leftist group Turn Left/Workers Democracy which is linked to the Clifftite British Socialist Workers Party, have been blacklisted from posting to the Internet. In February 2009, Ungpakorn left Thailand to avoid facing a charge of *lèse majesté* over criticisms of the monarchy expressed in his book on the 2006 anti-Thaksin coup, *A Coup for the Rich*. The draconian *lèse majesté* law is defined by Article 112 of the Thai criminal code, which states that defamatory, insulting or threatening comments about the king, queen and regent are punishable by three to fifteen years in prison. Down with the blacklists! Drop the charges against Ungpakorn! Down with the *lèse majesté* law! Abolish the monarchy!

Opposition to the monarchy is intertwined with the struggle against religion, which deeply oppresses women and minorities. The overwhelming hold of Buddhism has a strong conservatising effect on the masses. Men are expected to join the monkhood for a period in order to “purify” their minds and become morally upright family leaders. For the rural poor, getting their sons into the monastery can be a means to ensure access to food, shelter and education. Barred from the monkhood, women are treated by the Buddhist elite as potentially greedy temptresses whose attractiveness is seen as a potential source of anarchy.

While women now represent close to 50 percent of the labour force they are locked into the informal economy, heavily exploited as home-workers, or toil long

hours in low-paying factory jobs with virtually no rights. In the 1993 fire at the Kader toy factory just outside Bangkok, most of the 188 people killed were women workers, trapped because exits were locked as an “anti-theft measure.” Domestic violence against women is also rife. Thai women face sharp restrictions on abortion, which serves to keep them chained to the patriarchal family. In the poverty-stricken north and northeast rural areas many women have no choice but to join the thriving sex industry where unsafe practices abound and HIV can be a death sentence. We fight for the separation of religion and state, for full legal equality for women and for free abortion on demand as part of the struggle for free quality healthcare for all. Thai women workers will be in the forefront of the

revolutionary struggle to shatter the stifling control of monarchy and religion as part of the struggle to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system as a whole, the only road to the liberation of women.

The Thai proletariat needs a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party to bring to the working class the understanding of its historic role as the leader of the dispossessed masses and gravedigger of the system of capitalist exploitation. Such a party must fight as a *tribune of the people*, combating all forms of discrimination and raising the banner of international working-class struggle.

## The Fight for Permanent Revolution

Thailand is a classic example of combined and uneven development, where modern capitalist industry coexists with deep backwardness. The workings of international capitalism since World War II have transformed Thailand from a predominantly agricultural country to an industrial one with manufacturing such as vehicle assembly, electronics and food processing. In particular, industrial growth came on the back of the massive shift of production to Thailand by Japanese corporations first in the 1980s and then again under Thaksin following 2001. These developments have created a modern industrial proletariat with immense potential social power. This was demonstrated in 2004 when over 200,000 workers rallied on the streets of Bangkok, thwarting Thaksin’s attempted anti-union privatisation of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand.

The recent mass plebeian Red Shirt protests reflect the deep inequalities of Thai society. Millions of Thai workers eke out an existence often at below subsistence wage levels, with Burmese, Laotian and Cambodian unskilled and semi-skilled migrant workers having the worst conditions and pay. The sizable and deeply exploited internal migratory labour force, consisting largely of peasants seeking to escape impoverishment on the land, are a living link between urban workers and the countryside where over a third of Thailand’s labour force continues to toil in back-breaking labour-intensive agriculture.

While the oppressed Thai masses chafe under repressive capitalist rule, various fake-left and petty-bourgeois nationalist groups internationally have avidly pro-

moted the bourgeois Red Shirts whose demands are limited to the dissolution of parliament and new bourgeois elections. The maximum demand of a 14 April 2010 statement by the reformist United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) was for solidarity with the “fight for social justice and democracy of the ‘Red Shirts’” (*International Viewpoint* online). A 10 April joint statement by various outfits in Asia, including the Socialist Party of Malaysia, Partido Lakas ng Masa of the Philippines, Turn Left Thailand and the Australian Socialist Alliance (to name a few), declares that the crisis in Thailand “only can be resolved through genuine democracy and people’s power.”

In his “Red Siam Manifesto” (2009), Ungpakorn explicitly promotes similar illusions, fatuously declaring:

“The red, white and blue Thai flag, copied from the West in order to indoctrinate us to be loyal to ‘Nation, Religion and King’, the same slogan which was recently last used by the PAD protesters who blocked the airports. Yet during the French revolution, the red white and blue meant, ‘Liberty Equality and Fraternity’. This is the slogan we must use to free Thailand from the ‘New Order’ which the PAD and the army have installed.”

Military rule and repression is the norm and necessary means by which the small bourgeois class in neocolonial countries, as agents of imperialist domination, keep the democratic and social aspirations of the masses in check. In stark contrast to Ungpakorn’s faith in bourgeois democracy, history has shown that in backward countries like Thailand, where economic and social development has been stunted by the global domination of the imperialist powers, basic democratic rights can only be achieved when the proletariat takes power through workers revolution and begins to carry out the tasks of socialist construction. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution with V.I. Lenin, outlined in his “Basic Postulates” in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

“The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfilment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution.”

In further developing this point Trotsky stressed that the conquest of power did not complete the socialist revolution but only opened it by changing the direction of social development. Such social development can only be consolidated through the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced imperialist centres. Defence of those subjugated by imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in the imperialist centres pointing toward a proletarian struggle for power.

Our model is the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. Indeed it was the program of *permanent revolution* first developed by Trotsky for the Russian Revolution that points the way to national and social liberation in countries like Thailand. The October Revolution proved in life that only the proletariat, led by a revolutionary internationalist vanguard party like Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks and winning the support of the peasant and urban plebeian masses, can liberate societies in countries of belated capitalist development. In the imperialist epoch of decaying capitalism that began more than a century ago, all wings of the bourgeoisie in such countries are too dependent on their multiple ties to the imperialists, too fearful of independent working-class action to play any progressive role. They are incapable of solving bourgeois-democratic tasks, such as agrarian revolution and national independence, associated with the European revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The revolutionary internationalist perspective of permanent revolution is counterposed to Ungpakorn’s bourgeois-democratic musings and grovelling reliance on the capitalist state. In his article “Class Struggle between the Coloured

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## France, May 1968

### Prerevolutionary Situation Betrayed by Communist Party

Inspired by struggles around the world, the student protests for more social freedom that began in early 1968 in the Paris suburb of Nanterre spread rapidly. In Paris on May 10, pitched battles with the police left hundreds of protesters (and policemen) wounded. In response, on May 13, a general strike shut down all of France; it would grow to include some ten million workers. Seeking to end the strike, the government opened negotiations at Grenelle on May 25. The working class, lacking revolutionary leadership, was unable to put

#### LE BOLCHEVIK

itself forward as a contender for power and returned to work in June. We reprint below the first part of a forum by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France on the fortieth anniversary of the May '68 events. The forum, which originally appeared in the LTF's newspaper *Le Bolchévick* (Nos. 185 and 186, September and December 2008), has been translated and adapted for publication.

\* \* \*

The thirtieth anniversary of May '68, in 1998, occurred in the shadow of the "death of communism" campaign that followed the counterrevolutionary destruc-

#### PART ONE

tion of the USSR in 1991-92. So the working class was disappeared from every commentary, article, book, documentary, news report, etc. May-June '68 was turned into just a big student struggle for sexual freedom and a few other social gains. We wrote in *Le Bolchévick* No. 147 (Autumn 1998):

"The bourgeois press played up May '68 as a kind of bourgeois revolution that allowed more sexual freedom. This kind of propaganda has three purposes: exorcising the spectre of social revolution; proclaiming capitalism to be capable of continually 'renewing' and 'democratizing' itself; and casting an 'indulgent' look on the revolutionary 'unrest' which is now over and done with."

In 2008, on the fortieth anniversary of May '68, we are still feeling the effects of the "death of communism" campaign. The working class has reappeared in books, colloquiums and articles but it is presented as having become harmless, bound to the capitalist system and greatly weak-



Gérard Lecompte

Workers occupying factory in Le Havre with banner reading "Change of Ownership." 1968 French general strike posed question of power.

ened by the outsourcing made possible by the globalization of the economy.

We want to reaffirm that May-June '68 was a prerevolutionary situation, the driving force of which was the working class. The power of the working class paralyzed the country and caused the bourgeoisie to shake with fear. What the working class lacked was a revolutionary party capable of tearing the workers away from their treacherous leaders—mainly in the French Communist Party (PCF), which led the CGT trade-union federation—and of raising the consciousness of the working class to understand its historic role in overthrowing capitalism. The French bourgeoisie was able to get by fairly easily in the end because the PCF betrayed the working class. May '68 was the most recent prerevolutionary situation in this country. But there will be others. For those of us who devote ourselves to preparing to intervene into such a situation in order to turn it into a workers revolution, it is crucial to review these lessons.

#### The Post-World War II Period

To understand how a social explosion of such importance could have taken place and what a revolutionary party would

have done in this situation, we have to understand how different the world was post-World War II, and in the '60s, from what it is today. These differences are fundamentally due to the counterrevolution in the USSR in 1991-92 and to the campaign about the supposed "death of communism" (that is, that there can be no alternative to capitalism) that is being waged by the bourgeoisie with the help of reformist "socialists" all over the world, including those who, not so long ago (certainly in May '68) claimed to be revolutionaries.

Having usurped power in a political counterrevolution beginning in 1924, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR repudiated the very program of proletarian internationalism that had led to the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution, the program that Trotsky's Left Opposition continued to defend. The bureaucracy invented the anti-Marxist "theory" of building "socialism in one country" in the search for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, for which it betrayed workers and peasants fighting the imperialists all over the world.

But Stalin's victory did not constitute a social counterrevolution. The property forms created by the October Revolution were not destroyed but remained as gains for the workers of the world. The Trotskyists waged a relentless struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, seeking to oust it through proletarian political revolution. At the same time, they fought tirelessly for the unconditional military defense of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state against imperialism and counterrevolution, with the understanding that the outcome would ultimately be determined by the extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the imperialist centers through workers revolutions in those countries.

The post-World War II period was marked by the emergence of bureaucratically deformed workers states in most of the East European countries that were occupied by the Soviet Union and as a consequence of peasant guerrilla movements led by Stalinists in Yugoslavia, China, North Korea and North Vietnam. Struggles for independence erupted in large parts of the colonial world. In January 1959, Fidel Castro and his petty-bourgeois peasant guerrilla movement,

the July 26 Movement, overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. Faced with U.S. imperialism's increasing hostility, the Castro government allied with the Soviet Union and, beginning in August 1960, nationalized broad sectors of the Cuban economy, drove out

the Cuban bourgeoisie and created a deformed workers state. This small country, 90 miles off the coast of Florida, succeeded in defying the American colossus and carried through a social transformation that inspired a whole generation of radicalized youth around the world.

The Fourth International, which had been founded in 1938 under Leon Trotsky's leadership, was deeply disoriented when capitalism was overthrown under the leadership of Stalinist forces. Michel Pablo, then leader of the Fourth International, reacted impressionistically to the onset of the 1947-48 Cold War and Stalinist expansion. He abandoned the struggle to build Trotskyist parties that aim to lead the proletariat in the international struggle for socialist revolution (see "Genesis of Pabloism," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 21, Fall 1972). Pablo abandoned the program of political revolution to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracies in the USSR and East Europe, claiming that a process of "self-reform" would ultimately eliminate the bureaucratic deformations in these countries. Maintaining that "the international relationship of forces" was becoming unfavorable to imperialism, he declared that "the objective process is in the final analysis the sole determining factor, overriding all obstacles of a subjective order." Pablo concluded that Stalinist and other reformist parties could adopt an approximately revolutionary perspective and that the task of the Trotskyists was to enter these parties and push them in a revolutionary direction. Pablo's perspective of "deep entrism" led to the destruction of the Fourth International in 1951-53.

In 1960 in Belgium, Ernest Mandel, Pablo's right-hand man, became the power behind the throne of prominent left-talking trade-union bureaucrat André Renard, who went on to sell out the 1960-61 general strike that shook Belgian capitalism just after the loss of its main colony in the Congo. Pablo himself became an adviser to the bourgeois-nationalist National Liberation Front government in Algeria after that country wrested its independence from France in 1962. In that role, Pablo participated in writing the laws on "self-management" that tied the Algerian workers movement to the bourgeois state apparatus so as to defuse the massive factory and farm occupations that had spread across newly independent Algeria.

The Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI) and its youth group the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire (JCR), the predecessors of Olivier Besancenot and Alain Krivine's New Anti-Capitalist Party, intervened into the events of May '68 with the same Pabloite politics that destroyed the Fourth International. Instead of orienting to the working class as the driving force of socialist revolution, they focused on the student movement, billed as the "new vanguard," and, to a lesser extent, tried to pressure the PCF/CGT bureaucracy. The destruction of the Fourth International meant that France had no revolutionary organization capable of intervening in the events of May '68.

Our comrades in the United States had been expelled just five years earlier from the American Socialist Workers Party.



Serge Hambourg

Youth demonstrate in Paris, May 10. Repression of student unrest sparked general strike on May 13.



**Algiers, December 1960: Mass demonstration under outlawed National Liberation Front flag in defiance of continued French rule.**

The Socialist Workers Party had been Trotskyist, the historic party led by James P. Cannon, who did fight Pabloite revisionism, although belatedly and mainly on the American national terrain. Our comrades were seeking to break out of isolation and in May '68 were engaged in discussions in particular with Voix Ouvrière in France.

The social explosion in France in May '68 was not a bolt of lightning out of the clear blue sky. The Algerian War had a huge impact and radicalized a layer of students and workers. In many cases, they were breaking from the Communist Party, which had turned its back on Algerian independence until very late, that is, until French president Charles de Gaulle and the French bourgeoisie understood that they had lost the war and were forced to recognize Algeria's independence.

Looking at the news headlines from April and May 1968, you can see that they also focused on the Vietnam War. Just after the victorious Tet Offensive by the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, negotiations began in Paris between American imperialism and the North Vietnamese. Let's not forget that after defeating the French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the Vietnamese Communist Party and Ho Chi Minh agreed, apparently under joint pressure from Moscow and Beijing, to hand half of Vietnam back to the imperialists, in accordance with the Stalinist theory of peaceful coexistence—which the imperialists needless to say never abided by. For the American imperialists, Vietnam was one of the main fronts in the struggle against Communism, where conflict escalated in 1965, for example with massive napalm bombing. That set off a lot of unrest around the world, including in France.

Many demonstrations in support of the Vietnamese people were organized by the PCF, the pseudo-Trotskyists and the Maoists. Note that at the time, the Pabloites of the PCI and the JCR were giving political support to the Vietnamese Communist Party. The leadership of the PCF, for its part, diverted the internationalist support of French workers into tailing de Gaulle's policies. When it called for "Peace in

Vietnam," the PCF was really echoing de Gaulle, who, at the time, was maneuvering to preserve the influence of French imperialism in the former colonial world. In his September 1966 speech in Phnom Penh, de Gaulle denounced "the American war machine" and came out for an agreement with "the goal of establishing and guaranteeing the neutrality of the peoples of Indochina as well as their right to self-determination, as they actually are, each of them having full responsibility for its affairs." The Soviet bureaucracy at the time saw de Gaulle as an ally who

**1968 Tet Offensive by North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front fighters struck a powerful blow against U.S. imperialism.**



avored peaceful coexistence, preferring him to the pro-NATO French social democrats. Meanwhile the Maoist bureaucracy in China considered de Gaulle an anti-imperialist!

In early 1968 there was also the "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia. There were cracks in the Stalinist bureaucracy in that country. The "reform" wing led by Alexander Dubcek promised "socialism with a human face" to the population, which was trying to get rid of the bureaucratic straitjacket. This situation could have opened the road to a political revolution. And it is precisely because there was the possibility to open the road to proletarian political revolution that would drive out the parasitic bureaucracy and establish a healthy workers state that the Soviets

intervened to crush the protests in Prague in August 1968, provoking a new split in the pro-Moscow Stalinist parties and affecting the working class internationally.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, partly under the influence of the Vietnam War and the domestic unrest in the United States, in particular the struggle for black liberation, a series of prerevolutionary and revolutionary situations arose in Europe—in France in May 1968, in Italy in 1969, in Portugal in 1974-75. These situations were the best opportunities for proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries since the period immediately after World War II. They gave the lie to the anti-working-class theories, based on the writings of Herbert Marcuse in particular, that had been so popular before 1968. According to these theories, the working class had become "bourgeoisified" and could no longer play its historic role as the motor force for revolution.

In these countries the pro-Moscow Communist Parties and the social democrats would come to the rescue of the tottering bourgeois order. That's how the Western reformist parties, including the Stalinist parties, would play an enormous counter-revolutionary role contributing to the later destruction of the Soviet Union. The restabilization of bourgeois order in the Western imperialist countries in the mid 1970s was quickly followed by the imperialists' second Cold War offensive against the Soviet bloc.

While the ideological climate of the "death of communism" affects the con-

sistencies, especially in Paris, cracked down more and more on the students until the "night of the barricades" on May 10, when the police forces went wild, sending several hundred students to the hospital. In response, the major unions as well as the professors union and student organizations called for a one-day general strike on May 13, the tenth anniversary of the military coup d'état and de Gaulle's seizure of power. By the hundreds of thousands, blue- and white-collar workers and youth marched in the streets of Paris with slogans like "Happy Anniversary, General" and "Ten Years Is Enough." After this one-day general strike, the working class threw itself into battle.

Starting on May 14, the Sud-Aviation plant in Nantes Bouguenais went on strike, and the next day it was the Renault Cléon automobile plant, and then all of Renault. At that time Renault still played a key role in France, the saying being, "When Renault sneezes, France catches a cold." The movement spread to heavy industry, and then to all the factories in the country and to public transportation (trains, subways, etc.). Other sectors were rapidly impacted: banks, insurance, the post office, teachers (elementary, secondary, university), big department stores, etc.

Sectors that rarely strike, such as thousands of factories that did not have unions (because the bosses banned them or because they were too small), found themselves occupied for the first time by workers—men and women. By May 21, that is, one week after the May 13 general strike, several million workers were on strike, the figure generally cited being ten million.

That meant that the country was completely paralyzed by a general strike. People always talk about the prominent factories that had a huge political influence, but the strike was massive and total because all the factories were shut down. You have to understand that France in 1968 was much more industrial than today. On the order of 37 percent of the employed population was working-class, mostly with industrial jobs. The policy of industrial decentralization in the late 1950s and early 1960s created an important industrial network. Industry was no longer concentrated in the Paris region, the North and Lyon. Factories with several hundred or even a thousand men and women workers were set up in very small cities, even villages, in the provinces.

We say that this was a prerevolutionary situation. But what is a revolutionary situation? Lenin said, in "The Collapse of the Second International" (1915):

"To the Marxist it is indisputable that a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, it is not every revolutionary situation that leads to revolution. What, generally speaking, are the symptoms of a revolutionary situation? We shall certainly not be mistaken if we indicate the following three major symptoms: (1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the 'upper classes,' a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for 'the lower classes not to want' to live in the old way; it is also necessary that 'the upper classes should be unable' to live in the old way; (2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in 'peace time,' but, in turbulent times, are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis and by the 'upper classes' themselves into independent historical action."

The first point is easily illustrated with a few examples:

- Edouard Balladur (who at the time was a young adviser to Prime Minister Pompidou) relates how, when the ministers phoned the *préfets* (regional government officials) to clear out the factories, the *préfets* answered that...they couldn't.

*continued on page 8*

## Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

### CHICAGO

**Thursday, Jan. 27, 6 p.m.**

#### 1905: The Rehearsal for the Russian Revolution

University of Illinois at Chicago  
African-American Cultural Center  
Addams Hall, 830 S. Halsted St.  
Library Room 200

Information and readings: (312) 563-0441  
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**Wednesday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.**

#### Revolutionary Marxism vs. Reformism State and Revolution

UCLA, Ackerman Union, Room 2410  
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239  
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

### VANCOUVER

**Wednesday, Jan. 26, 6:30 p.m.**

#### U.S./UN/Canadian Imperialism Hands Off the World! For International Workers Revolution!

UBC SUB, Room 212  
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

### NEW YORK CITY

**Thursday, Feb. 10, 7:30 p.m.**

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NAC Rotunda  
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### TORONTO

**Wednesday, Feb. 2, 7 p.m.**

#### Marxism and the National Question: Independence for Quebec!

OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), 252 Bloor Street West  
Room 2279

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
spartacan@on.aibn.com



## May 1968...

(continued from page 7)

- The CGT 76 union branch in Seine-Maritime put out a pamphlet on their area in May-June '68 that is full of interesting details. So, for instance, they corroborate Balladur's story by publishing the authorization that the assistant *préfet* of Dieppe gave the CGT, *at the latter's request*, to control the distribution of gasoline.
- When de Gaulle's aide-de-camp General de Boissieu tried to get hold of General Massu in Germany, the telephone operator explained to him that she would have to ask permission from the strike committee to put this international call through.

Nantes is generally mentioned as the only example of a city run by a strike committee. But some recently published research about cities outside of Paris in May-June '68 brings to light how millions of workers managed their day-to-day affairs through strike committees. Many large urban areas (working-class ones, actually) had strike committees that managed food, childcare, gas distribution; also the CGT saw to providing electricity and water, garbage collection, etc.—all things that are taken care of by the government in normal times.

This shows how much the regime was teetering. "The upper classes" were apparently "unable" to live the old way. And the rapid growth of the strike, without any call by the union leadership, showed that the masses were also "unable" to put up with the old ways.

The reason the prerevolutionary situation in May-June '68 ultimately did not turn into a revolutionary situation is that independent working-class action did not develop further, mainly because of the lack of a revolutionary party capable of tearing the working class away from its misleaders, including the PCF. There were strike committees in all the occupied plants. The CGT 76 pamphlet I mentioned earlier, for instance, reprinted instructions from the CGT local leadership in Dieppe asking each occupied plant "to form a strike committee of the leading comrades, if they had not already done so." At best, these committees consisted of the local leaders of the various unions. They weren't (or were rarely) elected by the workers and only rarely asked the workers for their opinions. They had a lot of power, but they were controlled by the union bureaucrats.

### The Popular Front: The Greatest Crime

What was beginning to be posed by the strike was the question of power. The PCF was very conscious of this, right from the start. But for them, it was out of the



Georges Azemlarick

**Demonstration in Suresnes. Communist Party-led CGT union federation banner demands a "people's government," meaning an alliance of workers parties with the bourgeoisie to manage capitalism.**

question for the working class to drive out the bourgeoisie and take power. To divert the movement and protect itself, the PCF fought to form a government based on an alliance with the Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste (FGDS). The FGDS was a bloc between the social democrats of the SFIO (the French Socialist party) and several small capitalist parties. This is what we call a popular-front government and what the PCF at the time was calling a "people's government."

A popular-front government is a government that includes bourgeois workers parties like the PCF and the SFIO, and bourgeois parties. Bourgeois workers parties are parties that have a pro-capitalist leadership and program but are linked to the working class historically and through their base. In 1968, the bourgeois Radical-Socialist Party and future French president François Mitterrand's Convention des Institutions Républicaines (CIR) were in the FGDS together with the SFIO. In other words, the FGDS itself was already a popular-frontist formation. Through a popular front, bourgeois workers parties can mask their contradictions and hide behind their bourgeois allies to betray the workers' expectations. An example was when the PCF called for breaking the 1936 general strike. (PCF leader Thorez famously said, "One must know how to end a strike.") It did this under the pretext of not wanting to frighten its allies in the Radical Party.

In France, popular fronts, which have included the PCF since 1935, have, in one form or another for more than a century, been a key tool for the bourgeoisie to try to co-opt struggle. As soon as struggle erupts, the reformists seek to channel discontent into a new "left" governmental alliance with bourgeois forces that will inevitably stab workers, the poor and minorities in the back. But the popular front isn't the only means of containing working-class struggle—to preserve its class rule, the "democratic" bourgeoisie

will not hesitate to resort to more right-wing versions of parliamentary democracy or to bonapartism or even to fascism.

That's what had happened in France in the middle of the Algerian War, with de Gaulle's 1958 coup d'état, which established a bonapartist regime. In May '68, too, de Gaulle would contemplate using the army to break the general strike, as we will see later. Trotsky wrote:

"By Bonapartism we mean a regime in which the economically dominant class, having the qualities necessary for democratic methods of government, finds itself compelled to tolerate—in order to pre-

**June 1917: With Russia in revolutionary turmoil, demonstration in Petrograd raises Bolshevik slogans "Down With the Ten Capitalist Ministers! All Power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies!"**



serve its possessions—the uncontrolled command of a military and police apparatus over it, of a crowned 'savior.' This kind of situation is created in periods when the class contradictions have become particularly acute; the aim of Bonapartism is to prevent explosions."

—"Again on the Question of Bonapartism," March 1935

Preventing explosions is also the purpose of the popular front. Since the end of the Algerian War, well before the events of 1968 unfolded, the PCF and CGT leadership had been trying to build this kind of bourgeois coalition with the SFIO and the various anti-Gaullist bourgeois parties. Although it was hegemonic on the "left," the PCF went as far as not fielding a candidate in the 1965 presidential elections in order to give direct support to Mitterrand, who at that time was a member of the CIR, a bourgeois organization.

In the 1967 parliamentary elections, the PCF, the SFIO, the Radicals and the CIR ran separately and got better results than in 1965. Some Stalinists came to the conclusion that the left had missed winning a parliamentary majority by only a nose, after they took into account the other, bourgeois anti-Gaullist members of parliament! You have to understand that the PCF had just three fewer members of parliament than the SFIO. The PCF had 73 members of parliament, while all the other "left" parties together had 121. This shows how impossible it was to ignore the PCF in those days.

As soon as it felt the pressure mounting when the May-June '68 events began, the PCF pressed its potential partners to build a popular-front alliance. On May 10, before the "night of the barricades," the PCF leadership met with the FGDS to propose an alliance based on a common

program for managing capitalism, their "people's government." This had no result; no agreement was concluded. On May 19, when the strike had already spread, the CGT and PCF put out a declaration explaining that "the power of the popular movement urgently calls for an agreement among left organizations on a common program of government with an advanced social content, guaranteeing the rights of unions and satisfying the workers' main demands." Further meetings took place between the PCF and its potential partners on May 20, 22, 28 and even May 30, always with the same goal. Building a "people's government" became a watchword of the PCF's propaganda right down to the factory-floor level, for everybody from CGT secretary-general Georges Ségué speaking before 25,000 Renault Billancourt workers on May 20 to ordinary activists in the plants.

This question of class collaboration and of the popular front would have been key for a revolutionary party to take on in May-June '68. In Russia in 1917, the Bolshevik Party categorically opposed the capitalist Provisional Government, which included Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (SRs) along with ten capitalist ministers. The Bolsheviks won the leadership of the working class by showing the workers, who were influenced by the Mensheviks and the SRs whom they had elected to lead the soviets (workers councils), that

there was a contradiction between their leaders' pretensions to socialism and their alliance with the capitalists. In May 1968 the opposite happened. The Stalinists' constant search for an alliance with bourgeois parties (the FGDS above all) was the best proof that the PCF did not want to give a revolutionary purpose to the strike, that it did not want the strike committees to have the role of getting society going again in the interests of the working class, which would have led to a confrontation with the bourgeoisie.

In the end, the PCF sold out the May-June '68 strike for a few crumbs. Throughout everything, its goal was for this strike of millions of workers to end with de Gaulle's resignation and replacement by a bourgeois popular-front government. Given their influence in the working class, these leaders could not imagine that the PCF and CGT would not get corresponding government positions. In other words, they did not want a token ministerial portfolio in a pro-NATO social-democratic government, but a significant presence in one. In the end, it was the virulent pro-NATO anti-Communism of the SFIO and some of the bourgeois parties that prevented such an agreement.

When they form a popular front, by choosing bourgeois partners, the reformists clearly signal their intention to govern with the capitalists against the workers. At that point there is no contradiction to exploit between their actual pro-capitalist practice and a non-existent socialist platform. Trotskyists' opposition to such coalitions is implacable. It is our duty to warn the working class against the danger they represent.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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Web site: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org) • E-mail address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net)

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

**Chicago** ..... Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441  
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## Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 12)

‘Everyone will have a chance for a [better] future.’ The episode ended with many students and guards shaking hands and hugging each other as they forged a peace based on their shared interests.” [Brackets and emphasis in original.]

The guards demonstrated a much clearer understanding of their job description than the treacherous reformists of the OSI/ISO. To give just one example, *Telenoticias* reporter José Estévez asked one of them about their prior work experience:

“Guard: We’re from Loíza and...we do this almost every day.  
“Estévez: What do you do every day?  
“Guard: Beat people up.  
“Estévez: What for?  
“Guard: There for fun and here for money.”

Supporters of the Unión de Juventudes Socialistas—Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores (UJS-MST) are also active in the strike. Behind a “socialist” veneer, these reformists promote illusions in capitalist democracy. After the 2008 elections, the UJS-MST ran an article bemoaning the defeat of the bourgeois-nationalist Puerto Rican Independence Party. They also sup-

ported the U.S. imperialist-backed Varela petition promoting “democratic” capitalist counterrevolution in Cuba. When it comes to the question of the cops and the state, the UJS-MST rejects as “obviously insufficient” the main contribution of Marx and Engels—that the capitalist state cannot be made to serve the interests of workers and the oppressed but must be smashed through a revolution and replaced by a workers state. Renouncing the key lesson of the Paris Commune, they claim “Marxism has not been able to produce a coherent theory about the destruction or transformation of the bourgeois state and the period of transition to communism” (*¿Qué Es Y Por Qué Lucha el Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores?*, undated pamphlet).

As UPR students’ experience in the course of the strike demonstrated once again, cops and security guards cannot be “transformed” or persuaded to act in the interests of the very people they exist to repress. Workers revolution will establish a workers state, whose purpose will be the forcible repression of the capitalist class in the service of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is what the revolutionary workers of Russia, led by the Bolsheviks, did during the October Revolution in 1917. The UJS-MST and OSI/ISO have demonstrated their hostility to the lessons of the

**December 8:  
Organización  
Socialista  
Internacional leader  
Giovanni Roberto  
(at left) appeals for  
unity with campus  
administration’s  
strikebreaking  
thugs, declaring,  
“We are not  
enemies, we are  
brothers.”**

Rivera Pichardo/El Nuevo Día



Bolshevik Revolution because their program is to reform rather than overthrow the capitalist system.

The success of the UPR strike would be an important gain for working people and could inspire struggles internationally. Workers and student activists in the U.S. must see the struggle of the Puerto Rican student strikers as their own. The collaboration of the Puerto Rican colonial state and the U.S. imperialists’ agents in seeking to crush the students’ struggle underscores the need for joint struggle between workers in Puerto Rico and in

the U.S. against their common enemy. We seek to intervene into such struggles to win young militants to the task of building revolutionary workers parties around the world. We fight for the perspective that the working class must seize political power in its own name, overthrowing both the brutal U.S. imperialist overlords and their lackeys, the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie, through international socialist revolution. This requires Leninist leadership to advance the unity of the working class and solidarity with all the oppressed across international lines.■

## Letters...

(continued from page 2)

might solve this crisis, or the twin, environmental crisis, that now face us. We can wait until we take power to think about such matters.

This is fallacious. Saving the capitalist system has nothing to do with formulating and putting forward solutions to our energy and environmental crises, anymore than it has to do with the unemployment crisis. Trotsky formulated the transitional program in order to show workers that Marxists had a vision for resolving these crises that would work: solutions, such as full employment through public works.

I do not believe that there is a technofix to the energy and environmental crises, as the authors of this article apply. We need to redesign our transportation and our urban layout to become much more efficient, in the near future, if we are to reduce global warming. This means, for one thing, a real mass transit system in the U.S., as an alternative to automobile use. We also need to decentralize much of the population in our big coastal cities to smaller centers more inland. This is not only the way Marx and Engels envisioned socialist regimes would solve the division of town and country, as they discuss in the Manifesto. It is a necessary response to the crisis of global warming, which is now an inevitability. Global warming means that the ice caps will melt, sea levels will rise, and ocean storm activity, like Hurricane Katrina, is going to increase; in fact, it already has.

U.S. capitalism will never accept such solutions, but as these crises intensify, Marxists must forcibly advocate them. Throwing up our hands instead and claiming that all problems will be solved as soon as we come into power, will just not be credible and is not the transitional approach.

Tom S.

\* \* \*

16 October 2010

To the Editors of Workers Vanguard,

I was surprised when reading part two of your article, “Capitalism and Global Warming” in WV #966, to find the assertion that there currently exists a “problem of rapid population growth” and also that a socialist society will “provide the conditions for a natural decline in reproductive rates.” While you polemicise against Malthus, it seems that you unwittingly accept, on some level, one of his theory’s premises—that overpopulation is a phe-

nomena independent of the social relationships of production.

Marx himself always considered overpopulation as *relative* to specific social relations. He observed that the surplus population created by capitalism has the previously unknown quality of growing in proportion to the amount of available surplus labor, i.e. in proportion to the growth of the productive forces. Furthermore he wrote that, “what may be overpopulation in one stage of social production may not be so in another, and their effects may be different” (*Grundrisse*, 1973, ed. Martin Nicolaus, p.604-8). It obviously follows that we cannot predict if communist society will, “find itself compelled to regulate the production of human beings” nor the quantity of individuals that will be desired. The answer is contingent on our productive capacities, which are never likely [to] be static. It is likely that in a society where every individual can live to their potential that our species will benefit from the highest numbers which our technology and natural resources can support at the time in question. It is impossible to tell if the “high” birth rates that are experienced now, will be considered too low or too high by our descendants.

I should also mention that your representation of a decline in reproductive rates as an “advance” is relative to the institution of the family, and the domestic slavery of women within it. In a communist society *which has replaced the family* the rate of reproduction will have absolutely nothing to do with “advances.” It seems that from two angles, your analysis has faltered due to creeping shortsightedness.

J.A.H.

### WV replies:

We cannot possibly recapitulate the main points of our article on global warming, a complex issue involving many social, political and scientific questions. Rather, we will concentrate on a few of the matters raised in these letters.

C.M. dismisses global warming as simply bourgeois propaganda, offering no refutation of the vast amount of scientific evidence indicating that the earth as a whole is heating up, and that human activity is a contributing factor. In another context, we have had to refute the notion that science under capitalism is hopelessly tainted by corporate interests. For example, many point to the real crimes of Big Pharma and the medical establishment in order to reject vaccines and other science-based medicine (see “On Quacks and Their Defenders,” WV No. 962, 30

July 2010) and “In Defense of Marxism and Science,” WV No. 971, 7 January).

Tom S., on the other hand, raises the alarm that we must provide solutions to global warming “in the near future.” In offering his own remedies, he twists the 1938 Transitional Program, written by Leon Trotsky as the founding document of the Fourth International, into a recipe book for fixing the problems bequeathed by the capitalist profit system. The Transitional Program presents a series of demands—a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to provide jobs for all, a sliding scale of wages to offset inflation, a massive program of public works, etc.—in order, as Trotsky wrote, to provide a bridge from “today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.”

It is worth restating that the goal of communist political activity is to build workers parties around the world to lead proletarian revolutions that will establish an internationally planned, socialist economy. This is the only road to liberating the productive capacities of mankind and eliminating scarcity, the precondition for the disappearance of classes and the withering away of the state in a communist society. We certainly did not promise that a successful proletarian revolution would easily or immediately resolve problems of such magnitude as the enormous social and economic disparity between the advanced capitalist countries and the impoverished Third World, or, for that matter, the most serious problems of environmental degradation. As we wrote in Part Two of our article:

“For there to be any chance of rationally expanding the forces of production and utilizing the planet’s resources, including meeting the challenges of climate change, decaying modern capitalism must go. The conscious, large-scale planning required is entirely incompatible with the profit motive and competition, the anarchy of the market and crises of overproduction, the division of the world into nation-states and interimperialist rivalries.”

As to the spurious charge of Malthusianism raised by J.A.H., the essence of this reactionary theory is to blame the poor for their abject condition. To point to the contradiction of a rapidly growing population on a planet of finite resources, which are obvious facts, is no such thing. It is also obvious that rapid population growth *magnifies* the problems of poverty, starvation and much else that are endemic to capitalist society.

J.A.H. apparently thinks that it is desirable to populate the earth to the limit of

its capacities. In the service of this rather bizarre notion, he falsely attributes to us the position that overpopulation is a phenomenon “independent of the social relationships of production.” Working in an unattributed quote from Friedrich Engels, J.A.H. lectures us that we cannot tell “if communist society will, ‘find itself compelled to regulate the production of human beings’.” The complete picture presented by Engels is captured in this extract from an 1881 letter to Karl Kautsky, which we included in Part Two of our article:

“The abstract possibility that mankind will increase numerically to such an extent that its propagation will have to be kept within bounds does, of course, exist. But should communist society ever find itself compelled to regulate the production of humans in the same way as it has already regulated the production of things, then it, and it alone, will be able to effect this without difficulty.”

We noted the fact that economic and technological advancement in the developed capitalist countries of North America, Europe and Japan has effected a natural substantial reduction in the birthrate. J.A.H. is left to explain why what is good for the Swedes is not for the Somalis. Women of the advanced capitalist countries are not alone in wanting to stop being slaves to the fertility of our species. The position we put forward in the global warming article is not new. In “In Defense of Science and Technology—An Exchange on Eco-Radicals and HIV Denialists” (WV No. 843, 4 March 2005), we wrote:

“Under communism, both the division between town and country and economic dependence on the family will virtually disappear. No longer will poor peasants or agricultural workers be compelled to have more children in order to ensure enough manpower to work the land. Human beings will have far greater mastery over both their natural and social environments.

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

# A Transit Worker's Inside Story

January 14, 2011

To WV,

I wanted to give you some anecdotes about the city's now notorious non-action during the holiday blizzard. Here are my impressions on what happened. Most of the information that was reported in the press seems to be true. Transit did not enact its highest-level plan to tackle the storm until the day the storm hit. As a result, necessary equipment that would be used to tackle the storm, like its diesel work trains and its specialized snow-thrasher trains, were either idle or stuck in train yards under several inches of wind-whipped snow. Unacceptable levels of snow and ice accumulated on the tracks, with disastrous results. Trains stalled in open areas or on elevated tracks unable to move, some with passengers unable to leave. The HVAC systems on the passenger trains, unable to produce enough heat to counteract the freezing cold and

fierce winds, left much to be desired. In one reported case, a woman had to be hospitalized for exposure.

Part of the problem was also the question of personnel. Because the storm hit overnight, most of the morning shift woke up to find that there was no way to get to work. Had Transit enacted the appropriate plans, funds would have been authorized to pay overtime for workers to come in earlier, or stay later. I work the morning shift, and remember the chaos at my work location the morning after the storm. Nobody's relief was showing up, so most workers who were there had been on the clock since some time the day before, mostly pulling doubles, but even a triple was reported. At the same time, the entire midnight cleaning crew was still there because they had no way of getting home. Some of them wanted to clock back in and help out, but the boss would refuse, saying that the overtime wasn't authorized.

Some of my workmates decided to walk to work from wherever it was they lived. All morning, people would be trickling in hours late, huffing and shivering after their long march from some far corner of the borough.

None of the recovery effort was centralized or coordinated. Rescue trains were sent out on orders of local supervision. The "Rail Control Center," which is the centralized authority for the subway system, was not responding to radio transmissions from train crews for many hours. This is particularly distressing since oversight is imperative when you have rescue trains that regularly move opposite the normal direction of travel. Without coordination, there is less protection against a head-on collision or other disaster. From the top down, it seemed as though the Transit Authority was initially absolutely paralyzed by its inability to handle the situation. The only agency body that

seemed alert and ready to handle the situation was the office of labor relations, which metes out discipline. In the aftermath of the storm the union issued a flier reminding workers that there are contractual protections against having your pay docked because you were late during a snow emergency. There are people being charged with being absent without leave even though they tried their best to get to work but weren't able to make it for whatever reason.

I remember discussing the blizzard with other workers. Some said they would rather go through the experience of the 2007 Blackout. Some speculated that the TA's problematic response was due to the new administration under Chairman Walder. This new administration couldn't deal with the crisis, they argued, because they weren't "operations people." That is to say, they don't have their jobs because of their ability to organize and execute a subway system on the scale of New York. Walder's function, quite publicly, is to wrest concessions from the union.

A Transit Worker

## New York City...

(continued from page 1)

bolts! Another sanitation worker, speaking to WV, summed up the problem in one word: "manpower." The Sanitation Department has at least 400 fewer workers than two years ago, and Bloomberg plans to further reduce the workforce through attrition. Already last fall, Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association president Harry Nespoli warned that the city was "rolling the dice" by cutting the workforce (*Daily News*, 14 October 2010).

As the storm hit, EMS union officials urged the fire department to declare a snow emergency but were told that City Hall had turned thumbs down. Ambulances were not equipped with traction snaps for tires, and many ambulance battalions ran out of gas. As for the MTA, efforts by transit workers to confront the crisis—and the sheer ineptitude of the bosses—are described in the accompanying letter.

Many of the New Yorkers cursing Bloomberg recalled how then-mayor John Lindsay bungled snow removal after a 1969 storm, helping to bury his presidential hopes. One thing U.S. mayors are supposed to do with some competence is snow removal. But in order to do it, you need the personnel. That's not how Bloomberg and his capitalist cronies see it. To cut costs, the mayor, whose personal wealth is greater than the state's budget deficit, is pushing a scheme to further reduce the workforce via privatization of city services.

Bloomberg's deputy mayor for opera-



Albany: May 10 rally by state workers protests plan to impose furloughs, withhold raises.

tions, Stephen Goldsmith, made a name for himself as mayor of Indianapolis in the 1990s when he slashed the city workforce by some 40 percent through privatization and layoffs, while attacking health and safety regulations (and bungling a 1994 snow storm). In New York, Goldsmith is overseeing a "Workforce Reform Task Force," which issued a January 7 report proposing wholesale attacks on workers' rights and city unions. It called for rewriting union contracts and civil service laws to make it easier to fire and discipline workers, to gut seniority in order to lay off teachers and to extend probation for city workers.

The attacks against New York municipi-

pal workers are part of a broad assault by Republicans and Democrats alike on the wages, health benefits and (notoriously underfunded) pensions of public workers. With the continuing world economic crisis, governments in Europe as well as the U.S. are ramping up attacks on public workers, cutting wages and gutting pensions. The capitalist rulers are determined to further cut spending on social services, which they regard as "overhead" expenses that cut into the billions they make from exploiting labor.

In the U.S., the anti-union offensive takes its cue from Democratic president Barack Obama's brass-knuckle attacks on the teachers unions, which are used as

scapegoats for the sorry state of public education. The Obama administration, which recently imposed a two-year wage freeze on two million federal workers, got its start by showering billions on the banks and auto giants while wresting massive concessions from the United Auto Workers, meekly agreed to by the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy. After decades of attacks by the capitalists, abetted by the union tops' concessions, the industrial unions, historically the powerful core of the labor movement, have largely been decimated. Now, for the first time, public employees account for the majority of union members in the U.S. But those numbers include cops and prison guards, who should have no place in the unions. Their job is to break strikes, terrorize blacks and other minorities and suppress opposition to capitalist rule.

In New York State, newly elected Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo promptly launched what the *New York Post* (24 November 2010) termed an "all-out war with the public-employee unions." His first act upon taking office was to sign off on the layoffs of 900 state workers, followed by the announcement of a one-year wage freeze. In response, Stephen Madarasz, a spokesman for the largest affected union, the AFSCME-affiliated Civil Service Employees Association, declared: "We don't have any problem doing our part."

Here is a clear expression of the role of the union officialdom as capitalism's labor statesmen. With the rulers gunning for the public sector unions, the response of the labor tops is to bargain over terms of surrender, or even to serve as willing

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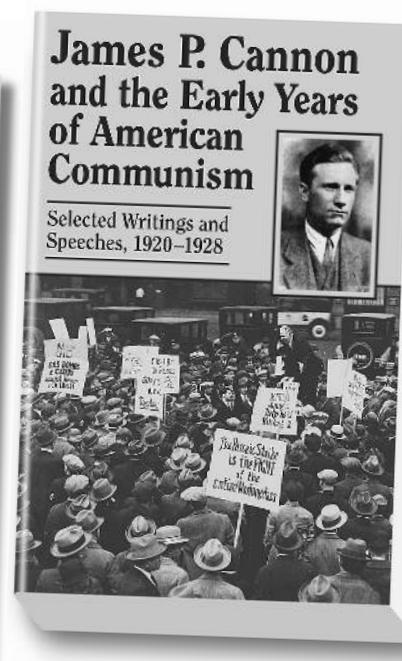
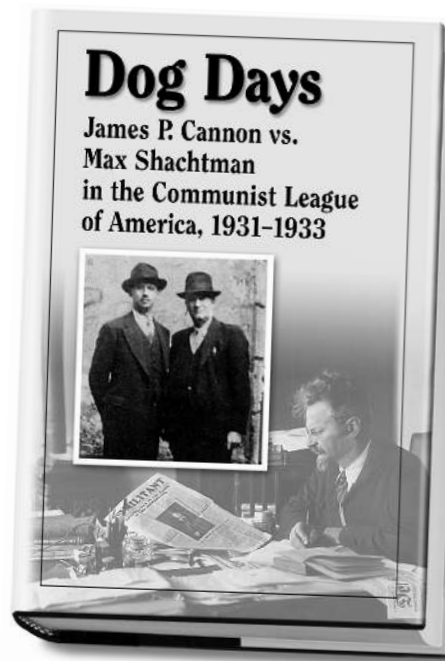
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## Jailed for Defending His Son Against Racist Thugs

# John White Freed

John White, a black Long Island resident imprisoned for defending his family against a racist mob, spent Christmas back at home after outgoing Democratic governor David Paterson commuted his sentence last month. Sentenced to up to four years for manslaughter and for possessing an unlicensed gun, the 57-year-old White walked out of prison after five months served. It is a travesty that he was ever jailed in the first place. And Paterson, New York's first black governor, who will be remembered most for slashing millions from health care and education, did not even grant a pardon. Outrageously, White, who rightly wanted a full exoneration, remains a convicted felon.

As we recounted in "John White Must Go Free!" (WV No. 905, 4 January 2008), in August 2006 White was awakened by his son Aaron, who had been chased home by five young whites, led by Daniel Cicciaro Jr., screaming the "n" word and

threatening to kill him. The gang's lying pretext was that Aaron had threatened to rape a white woman. John White grabbed his pistol, ran out of the house and confronted the thugs on his driveway. As White turned back to his house, Cicciaro lunged for the gun, which discharged accidentally, killing him.

At his trial, White spoke of how his family's experience in the South with the racist terrorists of the Ku Klux Klan influenced his actions. As the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense, which is fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, wrote in a letter to John White's family hailing his release from prison: "The logic of your conviction was to deny black people the most fundamental right of self-defense."

In capitalist America, black self-defense against racist terror has historically been met with state repression, including through gun control measures.

In the 1960s, gun control laws were passed in New York and California to specifically target Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. Like many other black Democrats, Al Sharpton, whose National Action Network was active in protest marches for John White, supports gun control in the name of fighting crime and violence. Recently, Sharpton has teamed up with the NYPD—the enforcers of racist state terror in the ghettos and barrios—to get guns off the streets of Harlem in a program called "Cash for Guns." As Marxists, we stand for the right of armed self-defense and in opposition to gun control, whose effect is to strengthen a monopoly of arms in the hands of the capitalist state, while racist terrorists like the KKK are always able to get guns.

The New York LBL was founded in July 1986 after a successful campaign to defend black transit worker James Grimes. A token booth clerk, Grimes was



Victor Alcorn

being railroaded by the courts for using his gun while on the job to defend himself against robbers who threatened to kill him. Likewise, the LBL and SL joined others in defending John White, and the Partisan Defense Committee sent protest letters and contributed funds toward his defense. As the LBL noted in its letter to the White family, "It is in the interest of the entire labor movement to fight against every instance of racist oppression." No to gun control!■

## Scott Sisters...

(continued from page 1)

statements written in advance. The jury deliberated for 36 minutes. All appeals to reverse the draconian sentence were denied.

Behind Mississippi governor Haley Barbour's decision to grant clemency to the sisters stood the Grim Reaper. Jamie Scott, who entered prison a healthy young woman, is now suffering complete kidney failure. After enduring the abuse of prison health care, she is in the final stage of this disease. As protests over the sisters' ordeal mounted in Mississippi and across the country, Governor Barbour made his decision. But he made it clear that a big reason for Jamie's release was that her medical treatment was a financial burden on the state. The macabre condition of Gladys' release is that she donate a kidney to her sister.

It should come as no surprise that Barbour treats these black women as figures in an account ledger, balancing out an expense with a kidney. In a 2010 CNN interview, Barbour was asked if Virginia governor Bob McDonnell made a mistake by omitting any mention of slavery when he proclaimed April "Confederate History Month." Barbour replied that omitting a mention of slavery "doesn't matter



September 15 protest outside Mississippi state capitol in Jackson demands freedom for Scott sisters.

for diddly." He added that, as Republican governor of Mississippi, he joined bipartisan Confederate commemorations with the Democratic legislature that had "done exactly the same thing in Mississippi for years." Indeed, Mississippi did not ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, until 1995. The last segregationist Jim Crow laws were removed from the state books in 2009, deleted

without fanfare in fear of a politically embarrassing racist backlash.

It should also come as no surprise that the trial judge, Marcus Gordon, would treat the lives of these black women as simply trash to be disposed. The same Judge Gordon presided over the trial of notorious Klansman Edgar Ray Killen, the Klan organizer who ordered the 1964 murder of the three civil rights workers

Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman. For 41 years Killen was a free man. Then in 2005, at age 80, he was convicted on three counts of *manslaughter* and sentenced to serve 60 years. A grand jury member who had reviewed the evidence stated with confidence that Killen "was the one every order went out from." In sentencing Killen, an unrepentant race terrorist, Gordon said that "he took no pleasure in the task" (AP, 23 June 2005). Gordon showed no such regrets in sentencing the Scott sisters based on coerced witnesses.

*Workers Vanguard* readers are well aware of the brutally racist nature of the U.S. criminal injustice system. U.S. capitalism is based on black oppression—and its destruction will require a Third American Revolution, a socialist revolution. As we wrote in "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Black Liberation and the Fight for a Socialist America" (WV No. 955, 26 March 2010):

"From slavery to convict labor, from the chain gang to the assembly line, American capitalism has been built upon the lash-scarred backs of black labor. Any organization that claims a revolutionary perspective for the United States must confront the *special oppression* of black people—their forced segregation at the bottom of capitalist society and the poisonous racism that divides the working class and cripples its struggles."■

tools for the bosses. Such is the case with Gary LaBarbera, a top union official of the NYC-area construction trade unions. With at least 20 percent unemployment among unionized construction workers in New York City, LaBarbera told the *New York Times* (9 December 2010) that "without a fiscally sound environment, we will not be able to attract new businesses to the city," brazenly adding, "At times there will be competing interests between public- and private-sector unions."

Next door in New Jersey, Steve Sweeney, an Ironworkers union organizer and the president of the state senate, is a staunch advocate of right-wing Republican governor Chris Christie's drive to slash state workers' pay and benefits. The treachery of these labor traitors prompted the *Wall Street Journal* (4 January) to gloat about "the first stirrings of a true American class war: between workers in government unions and their union counterparts in the private sector."

Even to begin to turn around the anti-union offensive, there must be a struggle against the labor misleaders who aid the bosses' divide-and-rule schemes. *All* labor—industry, transport, construction trades, services—must defend the public employees unions, and vice versa: An injury to one is an injury to all! The

public sector unions must fight for their right to strike, currently barred under New York State's Taylor Law. Down with the Taylor Law!

With their large black and Latino membership, the public employees unions provide a living link between the labor movement and the ghettos and barrios. A fight by public workers to defend their hard-won gains could mobilize broad support among working people and the unemployed, all of whom have a vital interest in fighting against attacks on social services. Like the fight for free, quality health care and education, for free mass transit and other vital services, this requires hard struggle against the capitalist class, a tiny fraction of society whose obscene wealth is gained from exploiting labor. No less than the Republicans, the Democratic Party is a party of and for the capitalist class. While the Republicans openly appear as enemies of trade unionists, blacks, immigrants and the poor, the Democrats pretend to be their friends, only to end up doing the same thing. Break with the Democrats! Build a workers party that fights for a workers government!

Basing itself on the political independence of the working class from the Democratic Party and all other agencies of capitalist rule, a class-struggle labor leadership would fight for a shorter

workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work. It would call for a massive program of public works to rebuild the schools, hospitals, roadways and other infrastructure. By fighting for such transitional demands, a revived labor movement would win the support of the unemployed, of the ghetto and barrio masses, in struggle against the common capitalist class enemy. As revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky wrote in

the 1938 Transitional Program:

"If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."■

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## Cops Off Campus!

# Support the Puerto Rico Student Strike!

JANUARY 15—In the face of ongoing attacks by police as well as arrests and suspensions, students at the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) have been on strike for over

### Young Spartacus

a month against the imposition of an \$800 “special fee” that they say could force up to 15 percent of the students at this public university to drop out. This follows last spring’s strike, which, with broad support from the Puerto Rican working people, beat back the government and university administration’s attempts to privatize sectors of the university and eliminate tuition exemptions for students receiving Pell Grants. On June 21 of last year, UPR students voted to strike again if the administration went ahead with its fee hike. (See “Student Strike Shakes Puerto Rico,” WV No. 963, 27 August 2010.)

The university administration and the Puerto Rican government, with the backing of their colonial overlords in Washington, spent months gearing up to smash the current student strike. The university administration hired private thugs from Capitol Security to occupy the campus and demolish the gates to the university, preventing students from barricading them as they had done last spring. The government sent in riot police, SWAT teams, snipers and police helicopters, turning Río Piedras practically into a war zone. On December 13, the Puerto Rico Supreme Court ruled that the students could not strike. Last week, an appeals court upheld the administration’s ban on protests on campus, relegating students to Orwellian off-campus “free speech” zones. One striker told *Young Spartacus* that the UPR administration has forbidden groups of four or more people to congregate on campus.

December marked the first time police have been on the UPR campuses since 1981, when they brutally suppressed a student strike against the tripling of tuition. On December 20, the Shock Forces riot police viciously attacked protesters at Río Piedras, arresting 17 people and sending four to the hospital. Outrageously, eight victims of this vicious police assault face trumped-up charges, including felony weapons possession and “violence and intimidation against an officer.” On January 12, ten strikers were arrested for passing out leaflets on campus, accused of “restricting the right of peaceful assembly and obstructing justice.” Dozens have been arrested for alleged “crimes,” such as defending the picket line and removing one of the administration’s “free speech area” banners.

The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, joined the APPU professors union, the HEEND campus workers union and other trade unionists



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**Above: Strike support rally at gates of Río Piedras campus of University of Puerto Rico, December 23. Left: December 20 police attack on student strikers.**

## Free Quality Education for All!

in condemning the police occupation of the UPR campuses, protesting in a January 2 letter to Governor Luis Fortuño that this was meant to “terrorize the students as well as campus workers, professors and trade unionists who solidarize with the strike.” **Drop all charges against the strikers! No suspensions! No reprisals!**

New Progressive Party governor Fortuño, a self-proclaimed “Reaganite,” is rightly hated for his attacks on the living standards of the population. In contrast, the capitalist Popular Democratic Party (PPD), which was soundly defeated in the last election, has taken the opportunity to posture as “friends” of students, workers and the left. But the last PPD government decertified the FMPP teachers union in retaliation for its nationwide strike in 2008 and rammed through price hikes in public services after the defeat of the 2005 UPR student strike against a tuition hike.

Key to the success of last spring’s strike was active solidarity from the Puerto

Rican working class. Professors and campus employees honored the strike. While limited by the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy’s efforts to maintain class peace, support from public workers deterred the government from smashing the strike. In contrast, now many professors and campus workers are teaching and working on campus. It is urgent that the working class, whose social power derives from its unique ability to shut down the means of production and bring the capitalist system to a halt, come to the aid of the student strikers.

The attacks on public education are part of the Puerto Rican government’s union-busting austerity campaign that has included the layoffs of more than 28,000 public employees. A successful UPR strike would not only deal a blow to the government’s scheme to make working people and the oppressed pay for the island’s \$3.2 billion deficit but also defend working-class families’ access to higher public education. **For open admissions, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all students! Abolish the adminis-**

**tration—for student/teacher/worker control of the universities!**

### State Repression and the U.S. Colonial Occupation

In seeking to crush the student strike, the venal Puerto Rican bourgeoisie is working in tandem with the Obama administration, which is waging its own union-busting war in the U.S. In particular, supporters of leftist organizations have been targeted. On December 22, FBI agents went after Víctor Balaguer of the Federación Universitaria Pro Independencia, a student leader who had participated in a recent protest at the UPR Mayagüez campus. Organización Socialista Internacional (OSI) activist Ovidio López was arrested and temporarily detained at the U.S. government’s Ramey base.

The close ties between the Puerto Rican colonial administration and the brutal U.S. imperialists are further illustrated by the case of Police Superintendent José Figueroa Sancha, who is overseeing the state of siege at UPR. Formerly the number two FBI agent on the island, Figueroa Sancha was “promoted” to become Puerto Rico’s top cop after the FBI’s 2005 political assassination of Puerto Rican independence fighter Filiberto Ojeda Ríos (see “Protest FBI Killing of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos!” WV No. 856, 14 October 2005). **All U.S. troops and federal agents out now!**

The police, the courts and the prisons are all part of the capitalist state, a machinery of organized violence to defend the capitalist class’s rule and profits against working people and all the oppressed. These agents of repression can only serve their masters—the Puerto Rican capitalist class and the U.S. imperialists. But there are widespread illusions to the contrary, including the nationalist illusion that student militants and cops have a common interest because they are “all Puerto Ricans.” While standing for the right of independence for Puerto Rico, we give no political support to bourgeois-nationalist forces, which seek to position the Puerto Rican capitalists to be the unfettered exploiters of their “own” working people.

The self-proclaimed “socialists” of the OSI, who are affiliated to the International Socialist Organization in the U.S., are also promoting suicidal illusions in the state. On December 7, a mob of some 20 guards assaulted student William Francisco Ayala. The next day, OSI member and strike leader Giovanni Roberto misled fellow strikers into fraternizing with the guards. *Socialist Worker* online (10 December 2010) glowingly reported this shameful episode:

“The students knew better than to see the young guards as their enemies. On the second day of the 48-hour stoppage, strike leader Giovanni Roberto got things started with a short speech in which he explained why the student strikers were fighting for demands that also served the interests of the newly hired guards. “‘If we win this strike, we *all* win—because we will have made this university more accessible to us, to you and to your brothers and sisters,’ said Roberto.

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