

Capitalist Decay and Anti-Labor Offensive



Death on the Tracks

Howard Simmons/NY Daily News

New Jersey commuter train crash, February 9, killed three and injured dozens. Recent rash of train accidents is the result of capitalist profit-gouging.

For close to 45 minutes, the people trapped inside the burning first car of the Maryland commuter train scraped and banged against the windows, shouting "Get me out!" From the outside, people who had poured out of a nearby apartment building in a desperate attempt to rescue survivors tried to smash the shatter-resistant windows, to no avail. One recalled with anguish, "The agony stopped at some point, and then I heard them die." The train car became a steel coffin. Among the eleven killed in the February 16 crash were eight passengers, all young Job Corps trainees, two conductors and an engineer.

As with every transportation accident, the rail bosses immediately blamed the train crew. Headlines screamed about the train speeding past signals, and even

while the dead engineer's body was warm they were obscenely testing his blood for drugs and alcohol. But it was capitalist criminality that led to the deaths of these eleven people. The CSX corporation which controls the track removed a signal—to cut costs—that would have warned the Maryland commuter train (MARC) engineer of the Amtrak train speeding his way. Seven of the youths and a conductor perished from burns and smoke inhalation, because there were no functional emergency exits in the first car. A friend of one of the conductors who died called it a "senseless, stupid accident that never should have happened."

The Maryland collision was far from the only senseless, stupid rail accident last month. On February 1, two crew

members died when the brakes on their Burlington Northern-Santa Fe freight train failed and it careened into a railyard at Cajon Pass in Southern California. On February 9, two crew members and a passenger were killed as two New Jersey Transit commuter trains collided near Jersey City. On February 15, nine railway workers were injured when another Burlington Northern freight train lost its brakes and barreled into a railroad yard in St. Paul, Minnesota. Less than a week later, another brake failure near Leadville, Colorado led to the deaths of two workers and the spillage of 27,000 gallons of sulfuric acid onto a nearby highway.

On top of that, there has been a spate of deadly subway accidents, most recently a January 6 collision in Washing-

ton, D.C. Engineer Darel Callands was killed when his Metro train, speeding through ice and snow, slammed into a spare train parked on the tracks. Callands could have lived if he had been allowed to override the failure-ridden computerized system and taken manual control. Seconds before the crash, the helpless engineer radioed that his train was running at 75 mph. But management refused his repeated requests to take control, on the grounds that manual braking increased wear and tear on the wheels! Moreover, the spare train Callands hit was sitting there because it was cheaper than moving it into the yard.

The latest rash of derailments and collisions has thrown a spotlight on the abysmally unsafe conditions on this country's

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Imperialist Hue and Cry After Gusano Provocation

U.S. Hands Off Cuba!

On February 24, two small planes operated by the Miami-based Cuban *gusano* (counterrevolutionary) group "Brothers to the Rescue" were shot

down by Cuban Air Force fighters just off the coast of Havana. This was a legitimate defensive measure against a brazen provocation. In a retaliatory move, the Clinton administration is cutting off air travel and financial transfers to Cuba. The Republican right and Cuban exiles, meanwhile, are predictably screaming for intensifying the economic embargo, cutting off all diplo-

matic ties and even a naval blockade, an act of war. We denounce the hypocritical outcry from the sinister forces who for the last three and a half decades have sought by invasion, assassination and every imaginable "dirty trick" to undo the Cuban Revolution.

The U.S. claim that the planes were over international waters is nothing but "cynical lying," as Ricardo Alarcón,

head of Cuba's National People's Assembly, responded. The pilot of the lead plane admitted they were in Cuban air space, as do U.S. intelligence officials; and debris from the two downed Cessna 337s fell well within the 12-mile limit. For that matter, Democratic Congressman Robert Torricelli, a prime mover of the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba, says he has personally flown inside Cuban air space with the "Brothers." In mid-January, after an earlier incursion by the same group, Cuba declared the area below the 24th parallel a defense area; the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration warned all aircraft to stay out of the zone. A few weeks later, Cuban chief of staff General Ulisses Rosales del Toro let

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Hands Off Cuba...

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visiting U.S. military experts know such planes were at risk of being shot down. On February 24, Havana air control warned the planes of their danger, ordering them to turn back, and a Cuban MIG gave a warning pass before bringing down the intruders.

Equally phony is the pretense that these were "defenseless civilians." These counterrevolutionaries don't go to the corner bodega unarmed, much less on one of the 1,800 Cuba "missions" they brag of having flown. "Brothers to the Rescue" was formed by veterans of the 1961 U.S./gusano Bay of Pigs invasion which shattered against the determined resistance of the Cuban working masses. "Brothers" leader José Basulto who led the doomed flight but returned unharmed, is a former CIA agent. The outfit was set up in 1991 supposedly to

rescue "rafters" at sea—actually, to foment a mass exodus from the economically besieged island. But particularly since Washington stopped automatically admitting Cuban refugees last year, "Brothers" has turned increasingly to inciting internal subversion, dropping anti-Communist leaflets over Havana in January. The clear intent was to provoke an incident between Cuba and Washington, as they have now succeeded in doing.

As revolutionary internationalists, we Trotskyists defend the Cuban Revolution against all imperialist military attacks and provocations. We oppose the U.S. economic embargo. The gusano flights are clear counterrevolutionary acts, whose ultimate purpose is to bring back a neocolonial banana republic to exploit the Cuban working people. The Cuban government took appropriate measures against these reactionary brigands and (sometimes rogue) agents of Yankee imperialism. However, the bureaucratic Stalinist regime of Fidel Castro, which promoted the illusion of "socialism in one island," is today push-

ing through the piecemeal introduction of capitalist "reforms," dangerously undermining the collectivized economy.

Defense of the Cuban Revolution requires mobilizing the working people, under the leadership of a Trotskyist party, to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy in a proletarian political revolution on an internationalist program. With the counterrevolutionary destruction of the

Soviet Union, the Cuban deformed workers state cannot long survive in its Caribbean isolation. As we wrote last fall (WV No. 630, 6 October 1995): "The future of the Cuban Revolution stands in the balance of class struggle outside the Caribbean island, and this fact underlines the urgent necessity for revolutionary struggle here in the U.S., in Latin America, and elsewhere." ■

Letter

On Guerrilla Struggle

24 January 1996

To the editor:

Workers Vanguard's reply to a letter on Che Guevara's attitude toward workers democracy (WV No. 635, 15 December 1995) includes powerful examples demonstrating that the Cuban workers state was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. However, the statement that "the program of seeking to overthrow the capitalist state through peasant guerrilla warfare, if successful, necessarily leads to a state apparatus based on the petty-bourgeois cadres of the guerrilla army, not democratically elected organs of proletarian power" actually gives too much credit to the Cuban guerrillas. They, like the Stalinist-led guerrilla forces in China, Vietnam, etc., never had any program to overthrow capitalism.

Castro's July 26 Movement called for a liberal bourgeois government to replace the vicious U.S. puppet Batista. Once in power, the nationalist Castro/Che regime faced unremitting hostility from U.S. imperialism, compelling it to expropriate capitalist property in 1960-61. Similarly, while Mao's forces in China were engaged in guerrilla war against Chiang Kai-shek throughout most of the 1930s and '40s, Mao called on Chiang's Guomindang party to join in a popular-front coalition, i.e., a capitalist government. Likewise, the North Vietnamese Army/NLF called for a coalition with the remnants of the South Vietnamese bourgeoisie right up to the day they marched into Saigon in 1975 and sent them packing, sealing their tremendous victory over bloody U.S. imperialism.

A necessary condition for smashing capitalist rule in these countries was that the local bourgeoisie was too weakened by corruption and civil war to

accept the Stalinists' proposals. However, in Algeria, black Africa and other areas, nationalist struggles have resulted in the maintenance of capitalism in a neocolonial framework. In all cases, the guerrilla movements brought to power anti-working-class regimes. This underlines the importance of the point made in the reply that defense of the Cuban Revolution against capitalist counterrevolution is linked to the struggle for "proletarian political revolution to sweep out the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy and establish the rule of workers councils as part of a fight for international socialist revolution."

Comradely,
R.B.

WV responds: Comrade R.B.'s point was elaborated in the 1963 document, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International," of the Revolutionary Tendency, forerunner of the Spartacist League, in its fight inside the Socialist Workers Party against the SWP's tailing of Fidel Castro and other petty-bourgeois forces. The RT document emphasized: "Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime."

The RT statement was counterposed to the SWP majority's 1963 document, "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," which was the tool for the reunification of the SWP and its international followers with the International Secretariat of Michel Pablo and Ernest Germain (Mandel) to form the United Secretariat. We deliberately paralleled the language of Joseph Hansen, the author of the SWP document, with opposite conclusions. And 33 years later, who was right? ■



TROTSKY

For Free Abortion on Demand!

This year as we commemorate International Women's Day, March 8, the fight for women's most basic rights, including safe, legal and free abortion on demand, remains a key task. Since the 1980s, the assault on abortion rights has been an ideological cutting edge of anti-communist reaction in Europe and North America. It was the young Soviet workers state which first granted the right of abortion to women. However, in the 1930s, the conservative Stalinist bureauc-



LENIN

racy overturned this and other fundamental gains for working people, as Leon Trotsky pointed out. With the "liberalization" of the Stalinist regimes in the 1950s and later, abortion was once again legalized. Today, the destruction of the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states of the USSR and East Europe through counterrevolution has led to a wholesale attack on women's rights.

Even the optimistic *Pravda* is sometimes compelled to make a bitter confession: "The birth of a child is for many women a serious menace to their position." It is just for this reason that the revolutionary power gave women the right to abortion, which in conditions of want and family distress, whatever may be said upon this subject by the eunuchs and old maids of both sexes, is one of her most important civil, political and cultural rights. However, this right of women too, gloomy enough in itself, is under the existing social inequality being converted into a privilege....

Having revealed its inability to serve women who are compelled to resort to abortion with the necessary medical aid and sanitation, the state makes a sharp change of course, and takes the road of prohibition. And just as in other situations, the bureaucracy makes a virtue of necessity. One of the members of the highest Soviet court, Soltz, a specialist on matrimonial questions, bases the forthcoming prohibition of abortion on the fact that in a socialist society where there are no unemployed, etc., etc., a woman has no right to decline "the joys of motherhood." The philosophy of a priest endowed also with the powers of a gendarme.... But here the highest Soviet judge informs us that in a country where "life is happy" abortion should be punished with imprisonment—just exactly as in capitalist countries where life is grievous. It is clear in advance that in the Soviet Union as in the West those who will fall into the claws of the jailer will be chiefly working women, servants, peasant wives, who find it hard to conceal their troubles. As far as concerns "our women," who furnish the demand for fine perfumes and other pleasant things, they will, as formerly, do what they find necessary under the very nose of an indulgent judiciary.... These gentlemen have, it seems, completely forgotten that socialism was to remove the cause which impels woman to abortion, and not force her into the "joys of motherhood" with the help of a foul police interference in what is to every woman the most intimate sphere of life.

—Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and with a 3-week interval in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 41 Warren Street, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116. Spartacist Publishing Company has 3rd class privileges, imprint #4167.

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

The closing date for news in this issue is February 27.

No. 640

1 March 1996

JUST OUT!

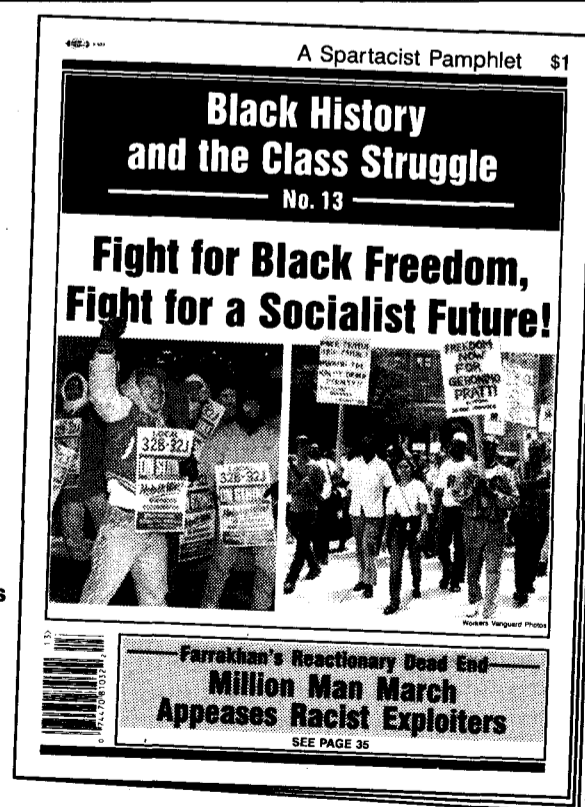
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Bloody Army/Cop Assault on Student Protesters in Argentina



Scores were wounded and nearly 250 arrested in vicious police repression against February 20 student demonstration in La Plata.

A brutal, premeditated army and police assault on student demonstrators in Argentina left scores wounded and almost 250 arrested in La Plata, capital of the province of Buenos Aires. On the morning of February 20, the government surrounded the site of a protest demonstration with infantry and gendarmerie troops, armored vehicles and water cannons, arresting students as young as 13 years old. Later in the day, as supporters gathered outside the place where the students were being held, the uniformed thugs let loose with tear gas and rubber bullets, assaulting demonstrators with clubs and rifle butts. In an outrageous provocation against opponents of rightist terror worldwide, police beat Hebe de Bonafini, leader of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, an organization famed worldwide for its courageous search for the "disappeared" victims of the military's "dirty war" against leftists in the 1970s. Bonafini required hospital attention for head injuries.

In a statement issued the next day, the Partisan Defense Committee called on labor and student organizations, and all opponents of rightist repression, to mobilize in the U.S. and internationally to protest the bloody attack on the La Plata students and demand immediate freedom for all the victims of rightist government repression in Argentina. On February 22, an emergency demonstration called by the PDC and supported by the Spartacist League was held in front of the Argentine consulate in New York City. Demonstrators chanted, "Stop police terror against Argentine students!" and "For mass workers action to defend La Plata students!" The next day in Mexico City,

supporters of the Grupo Espartaquista de México soapboxed and leafletted at three schools of the National University (UNAM), agitating for support to the Argentine students. The PDC statement was printed in the Mexico City daily *El Día*.

The police violence on February 20 shocked even the purveyors of official public opinion. Journalists lying wounded after the military/police assault were beaten by troops, and television cameraman Hernán Ramos received emergency surgery after seven rubber bullets hit him in the legs. Leaders of the La Plata students compared the attack with the dark years of the military dictatorship. Indeed, the military assault on young protesters—for the "crime" of demonstrating against school fees—was a sinister echo of one of the most infamous massacres carried out under the dictator Onganía: the "Night of the Pencils," when high-school students in La Plata were "disappeared" by the dictatorship after a student demonstration. Once again in evidence on February 20 were the plainclothes cops and unmarked Ford Falcons, the trademark of the death squads. The students were held in one of the military's former secret detention centers.

The February 20 demonstration in La Plata was called against "reforms" aimed at the "elitization" of the educational system, which student leaders denounced as obeying "the demands of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank," which have imposed starvation austerity programs throughout Latin America. The Argentine government of Carlos Menem has sought to distinguish itself as the most uncondi-

tional follower of Washington's dictates. At the PDC protest in New York, demonstrators chanted, "Menem is a U.S. tool! Down with bloody IMF rule!"

This latest assault is an escalation of the savage wave of repression by the Menem government against leftist and worker militants throughout Argentina. In April 1995, police killed the worker Víctor Choque while repressing a protest by unionists at a television factory in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego. In October, government forces broke up a demonstration of unemployed workers in the city of Neuquén and arrested their leader, Horacio Panario, a member of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), who

remains in jail on frame-up charges that could bring a ten-year sentence. Union activists and members of several other left groups have also been the targets of repression. And in late October, Argentine leftist leader Enrique Gorriarán was illegally deported from Mexico to Argentina where his life is at risk.

On February 21, several thousand workers and students demonstrated in La Plata protesting the government crackdown. As a result of protests there and in Buenos Aires, later that day most of the 237 officially detained were released. However, 12 students were still being held. The NYC protest the next day demanded: Free all the arrested La Plata students now! Drop the charges! Free Horacio Panario! Free Enrique Gorriarán! Stop the witchhunt against left and labor activists in Argentina! Spartacist demonstrators chanted, "No new 'dirty war'—Workers power is what we're for!" and "Defeat IMF austerity—Wall Street no, obreros sí!"

Mobilizing the powerful Argentine unions is key to fighting the vicious crackdown by Menem and his provincial satraps. As the Grupo Espartaquista de México noted in a 10 November 1995 statement, "Hands Off Argentine Leftists and Worker Militants!": "This crackdown comes in the context of escalating repression against unionists and leftists from Bolivia to Mexico. In addition to the state of siege decreed to crush the Bolivian general strike, in Brazil the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso called out the army to break the oil workers strike, while in Rondônia landless peasants were massacred. In Mexico the government dissolved the bus drivers union, which it saw as a nucleus of potential militant opposition, firing all 13,000 workers and jailing their leaders. The urgent need is for internationalist struggle, extending to the powerful North American proletariat, against the brutal austerity and repression dictated by Latin American capitalist regimes and their senior partners in Washington and Wall Street." ■



Partisan Defense Committee-initiated protest, February 22, outside Argentine consulate in NYC demanded freedom for victims of Menem government terror.

Vicious Skinhead Attack in Orange County

LOS ANGELES—Just after midnight on February 3, a 20-year-old Native American man sitting on Huntington Beach with two friends was brutally attacked by a gang of three racist skinheads. The victim, who understandably wishes to remain anonymous, was stabbed 27 times with a large hunting knife in an attack so frenzied that one of the attackers was stabbed in the eye by his partner. The attack left the young victim in critical condition, fighting for his life after his heart had stopped and was restarted by paramedics on the way to the hospital.

In recent years, the "surfer paradise" of Huntington Beach has become notorious as a staging area for the fascist scum, who target minority residents and others who come to enjoy the beach. This latest attack, following the skinhead murder of a black Huntington Beach man a year ago, points to the urgent necessity for L.A.-area labor and minorities to mobilize to teach the Nazi skinheads a lesson in the power of the integrated working class that they won't soon forget.

Prior to the latest attack, the skinheads had spent the evening hunting for a victim, shouting racist obscen-

ities and menacing a Latino couple, an Asian woman and a Jewish woman on the Huntington Beach Pier. Shortly after the attack, cops arrested the three thugs. But it is the racist cops who have set the tone for attacks on minorities in "HB" with routine sweeps and harassment of black and Latino youth to "stop gang infiltration" of the area, while Nazi scum are tolerated as "locals."

Across Los Angeles and Orange County, blacks, Latinos and immigrants are facing intensified racist cop terror. Early in January, a phalanx of 60 heavily armed LAPD cops in riot

gear swept down on a poetry/hip-hop workshop at a music and arts center in L.A.'s Leimert Park which is popular among black youth, beating artists and participants and arresting two, on the pretext that the center was "overcrowded."

The chauvinist frenzy whipped up over California's anti-immigrant Prop. 187 in 1994 and the subsequent campaign to destroy affirmative action are fueling "White Power" fascist attacks and racist police repression. It is vital for the labor movement to organize in defense of immigrants and minorities, and to clear out the Nazi filth.

Britain: Scargill's SLP and the Labour-Loyal Left

LONDON—The British Labour Party has long served as the vehicle for tying the working class of this country to their capitalist rulers, falsely promising "democratic socialism" to be achieved within the framework of "Her Majesty's Parliament." A massive system of public welfare was proffered by the post-World War II Labour government to console those at the bottom of this system of brutal exploitation, particularly to ward off the possibility of any serious social struggle.

Today, in the aftermath of the capitalist counterrevolutions that have destroyed the rotten bureaucratically deformed workers states in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the ruling classes internationally feel they have free rein to grind the working class and the poor without much need for the mediating influence of the social-democratic and Stalinist-derived misleaders of the mass reformist parties. So Tony Blair's "New" Labour Party is seeking to recast itself in the mould of the openly capitalist Democratic Party in the U.S., pushing to rupture Labour's historic ties with the trade unions and dumping any pretence to socialism, like the famous Clause IV with its call for "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

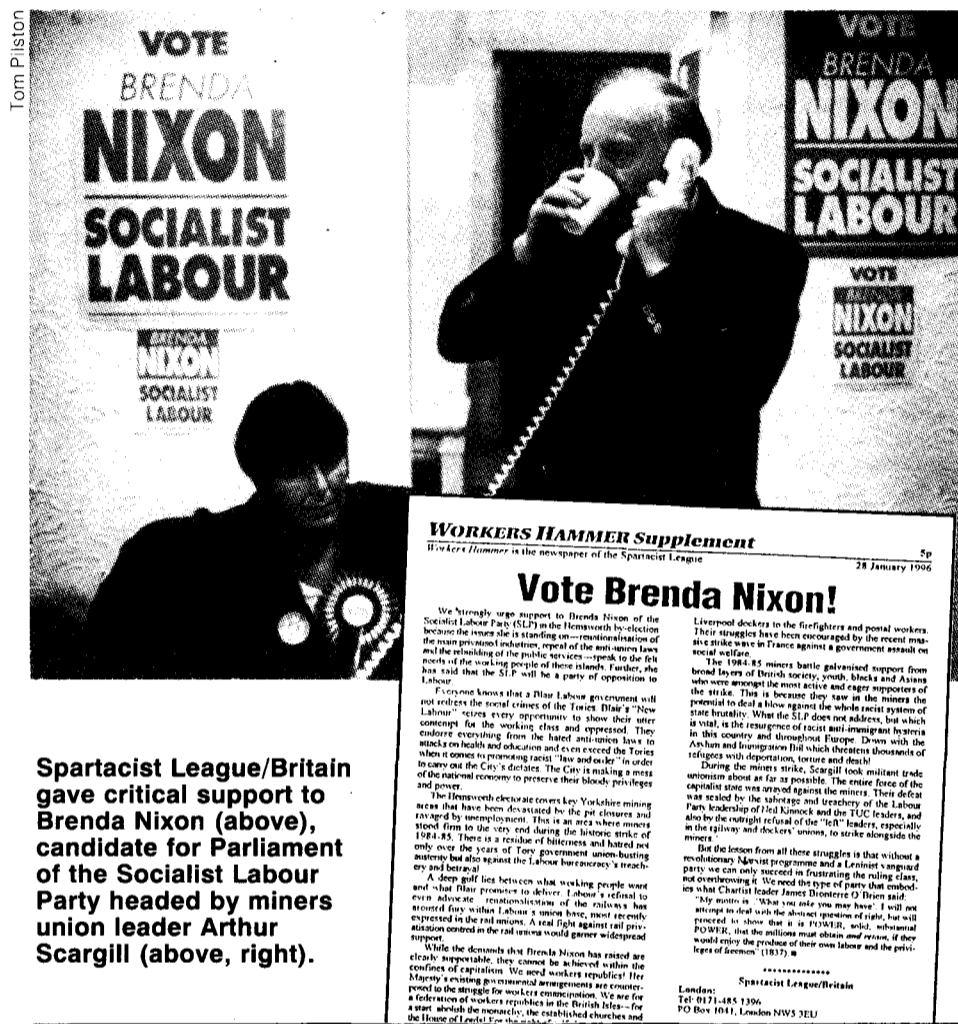
In opposition to the Blairites, the gutsy Arthur Scargill, leader of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), announced the formation of his Socialist Labour Party (SLP). Although the programme of Scargill's SLP is simply that of the "old" Labour Party, this split represents a potential opening for breaking the stranglehold of Labour over the workers movement. While the Labour Party leaders sneered that Scargill's party would be no challenge to their authority, most recently more than half of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union leadership have joined the SLP.

On 1 February, in the Hemsworth by-election, the SLP ran its first candidate for Parliament, Brenda Nixon of the Women Against Pit Closures movement. She won 5.5 per cent of the vote, good enough to prevent losing her electoral deposit, the usual benchmark of success in a campaign of this kind. During the campaign, Nixon stated, "We are saying to voters that they don't have to vote for Labour because it's the lesser of two evils" (*London Times*, 22 January). This violation of the "eleventh commandment" of the British left—"Thou shalt vote Labour to keep the Tories out"—was met with howls all the way from the Labour shadow cabinet to the "far left."

Break with Labourism, "Old" and "New"! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The Spartacist League/Britain called for critical support to the SLP's candidate, stating in our leaflet, "Vote Brenda Nixon!": "The issues she is standing on—renationalisation of the main privatised industries, repeal of the anti-union laws and the rebuilding of the public services—speak to the felt needs of the working people of these islands" (see

paid for—which included a call for "an end to unemployment" through measures such as "the introduction of a four-day working week with no loss of pay"—cannot be addressed in the absence of hard-fought struggle, which pursued to the end must shatter the framework of capitalism. Taken together with her statement of being a party of opposition to



Spartacist League/Britain gave critical support to Brenda Nixon (above), candidate for Parliament of the Socialist Labour Party headed by miners union leader Arthur Scargill (above, right).

"Britain: Election Challenge to Tony Blair's Labour Party," WV No. 638, 2 February). Members and supporters of the SL/B actively campaigned for Nixon in Hemsworth, going door to door with her election material. At the same time, we sought out miners welfare clubs, as well as leafletting and selling on local street corners and at Leeds University with our own revolutionary propaganda.

We wanted Brenda Nixon to be elected to Parliament and held to the programme on which she ran. The issues Nixon cam-

the Labour Party, this provided an opening for communists to intervene to demonstrate to the working class the need for an authentic workers party—one imbued with the understanding that the only guarantee of labour's welfare lies through the destruction of a system based on the exploitation of labour.

The 1984-85 Miners Strike and the Hemsworth By-Election

Hemsworth, a former stronghold of the NUM, has been devastated by the pit closures which were the vindictive revenge of Margaret Thatcher and her successors against the heroic 1984-85 coal strike. The miners strike was defeated by the Tory government, its cops and courts, with the active connivance of Neil Kinnock's Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress bureaucrats. To prevail against the full force of the capitalist state meant spreading the strike to other key sections of the working class. But the trade-union misleaders, including the so-called "left," actively sabotaged the very real possibilities of strike action by other unions.

The unity of Tony Benn, Scargill and other "lefts" behind Kinnock's Labour Party facilitated the isolation and strangulation of this massive class battle, despite massive support in all sections of the oppressed, in Britain and internationally. Black and Asian communities

were the best allies of the strikers. The Irish Republican population in Belfast welcomed British miners with a huge sign reading, "Victory to the Miners!" From the former Soviet Union to South Africa, labour solidarity was mobilised in financial support to the NUM. The strike also highlighted the key role of working-class women: with their militant marches and rallies and confrontations with scabs and cops on the picket lines, the miners' wives were the backbone of the strike.

Today, Scargill's SLP turns its back on these "constituencies." Not only does it have not a word to say in opposition to the escalating anti-immigrant racism codified in the Asylum Bill, but the SLP's constitution would prohibit membership to asylum-seekers and recent immigrants by confining membership to those who have "resided in Wales, Scotland, England or Ireland for more than one year." Not a word has yet been expressed against the British Army occupation of Northern Ireland. And international working-class solidarity is sacrificed on the altar of "little Englandism." Scargill's discussion paper, "Future Strategy for the Left," calls only for a reduction in the armaments budget of bloody British imperialism. We say: Not a penny, not a man for the bourgeois army! British troops out of Northern Ireland and out of the Balkans now! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!

Workers Power: "New" Labour Socialists

The launch of the SLP and its decision to run Brenda Nixon as a candidate against the Labour Party in the Hemsworth by-election set the cat among the pigeons of the so-called "far left" in Britain. The idea of splitting with Labour is a violation of faith for the Labourite left. Even those groups like Militant Labour and Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party who called for a vote to Nixon were not breaking from loyalty to Labour. Thus, the SWP's *Socialist Worker* (20 January) argued that "it would be a mistake for the SLP to stand in every constituency especially in marginal areas where Labour is challenging the Tories."

The SLP and Nixon campaign caused especial pain for the ever more rightward-moving centrists of Workers Power (WP). In the end, they resolved their agony by shamelessly calling for a vote to Blair's Labour candidate in the Hemsworth by-election. Workers Power first dabbled with the idea of being a loyal opposition within Scargill's new party, claiming "Our aim is the construction of a revolutionary Socialist Labour Party" (*Workers Power*, December 1995). Hardly. In fact, WP couldn't even stomach the idea of a party in opposition to Labour. The same article argues that "a revolutionary SLP" would "call for a vote to Labour in any constituency where there was no revolutionary candidate and continue to demand that Labour acts in the interests of those workers!"

This was posed as the means to ensure that "revolutionaries in a new party are not cut off from workers who have yet to break from Labour"—i.e., by maintaining the allegiance of said workers to Labour by sowing illusions that the Labour Party can be pressured to act in the interests of the proletariat. By January, Workers Power could see the door into the SLP being closed in its face, when Scargill made clear that no other organisations, outside of "bona fide" trade unions, would be allowed into his party.

By February, *Workers Power* was accusing Scargill's SLP of the "worst practices of Stalinist bureaucratic centralism," pouting, "Workers Power members and supporters will not be voting for the SLP in Hemsworth. We will vote Labour." Trying to put some left gloss on supporting a candidate who even they noted was "a trusted right winger," "hand-picked by the Blair leadership,"

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Northern Ireland: Imperialist "Peace" Fraud Breaks Down

IRA Renews Bombing Campaign

The following article is adapted from *Workers Hammer* No. 149, February/March 1996, published by our comrades of the *Spartacist League/Britain*.

At 5:30 p.m. on Friday, 9 February, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced the end of their 17-month ceasefire. Ninety minutes later an IRA bomb packed into a flatbed lorry exploded in an underground car park in East London's Canary Wharf complex, killing two people and injuring over 30. Within hours the sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was demonstratively patrolling the streets of Belfast with rifles and body armour. Police dragnets were quickly mounted within Britain and 500 more troops were dispatched to Northern Ireland. Within ten days, another IRA bomb exploded in a London bus, killing one person (presumed to be the bomb carrier) and injuring several passengers. Throughout Northern Ireland, both Catholics and Protestants live in fear of renewed sectarian violence; Catholics particularly dread a resumption of murder by Loyalist death squads.

The capitalist media howled about IRA "terrorists" jeopardising the "peace process," but said not a word against the main terrorist force stalking these islands, the British Army, behind whom stand the RUC and Loyalist terror gangs. From the standpoint of proletarian revolutionaries, the Canary Wharf bombing was indefensible—in no way a blow against the forces of British imperialism. Instead, it indiscriminately targeted civilians who simply happen to live or work in London's Docklands.

Terrorism as a method of struggle reflects the aims of its petty-bourgeois practitioners to become a new ruling class of "their" people, by sowing nationalist hatred of another people that will last generations. It is antithetical to the task of mobilising the proletariat against its imperialist oppressors. Nonetheless, when the IRA strikes a blow against the forces of British imperialism or fascist Loyalist killers, we defend the perpetrators of such acts against the capitalist state. But we take a fundamentally different attitude to indiscriminate terror. From

a proletarian perspective, these are criminal acts which serve only to deepen hatred between Catholic and Protestant, English and Irish workers.

We demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland as a precondition to any resolution of the "troubles" in Northern Ireland. As we warned: "Any imperialist 'deal' will be bloody and brutal and will necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either" (*Workers Hammer* No. 138, November/December 1993). From the start of the IRA ceasefire, the British imperialists have been provocative and arrogant. Having been forced, finally, by the Clinton White House, Prime Minister John Major has sought to exploit genuine war-weariness and hatred of murderous sectarianism to make the IRA give up its arms.

While the annual Loyalist marching season went ahead last summer under virtual martial law in Catholic neighbourhoods of Belfast and Portadown, the British government demanded that the IRA "decommission" its weapons as a precondition for negotiations with Sinn Féin. Major has been backed at every point by Tony Blair's Labour Party, and also finds allies among the venal ruling class of the Irish Republic who, along with the Irish Labour Party and Democratic Left, act as loyal servants of British imperialism in the North while brutally oppressing women and attacking the working class in the South.

Rejecting the U.S.-sponsored Mitchell Commission proposal that talks should proceed (and "decommissioning" would follow later), Major adopted the Unionists' demand for elections in Northern Ireland before any "talks." The vista of a return to Unionist-dominated provincial rule in the North sent shivers through the entire Catholic population.

The differences between U.S. and British imperialism are merely tactical. The U.S. considers that the best way to disarm the IRA is to exploit the divisions between the "ballot" wing of Gerry Adams and the more hardline Republi-



Aftermath of February 9 bombing by IRA of London's Canary Wharf complex, which signaled end of U.S.-brokered "cease-fire." Polak/Syigma

cans. A week before the Canary Wharf bombing, former U.S. Senator George Mitchell publicly warned of the danger of a "fracture" in the nationalist camp. Minutes after the IRA declared an end to the ceasefire, Gerry Adams telephoned the Clinton White House to say he had heard "some very disturbing news."

The "armalite" and the "ballot box" wings of the IRA/Sinn Féin are symbiotic, reflecting two sides of a desperate nationalist strategy which has no perspective outside the framework of capitalism and looks to imperialism for a "solution." Having built up illusions in an imperialist-brokered settlement, the IRA ended their ceasefire complaining that "instead of embracing the peace process, the British government acted in bad faith," while still calling for an "inclusive, negotiated settlement."

The destruction of the Soviet Union through counterrevolution and the breaking of imperialism's Cold War anti-Soviet consensus led to increasing inter-imperialist rivalries. The Sinn Féin leadership saw in this the possibility to enlist the "good graces" of U.S. imperialism to pressure the British to negotiate. Such illusions in U.S. imperialism are deadly dangerous, the fruits of which have been witnessed from killing fields in Iraq, to U.S. troops mowing down black women and children in Somalia, to the terror bombing of the Serbs.

From the beginning, we have warned against any illusions in imperialist-brokered deals from South Africa to the Middle East to the Balkans. In Northern Ireland, within the framework of imperialism, the door is open to a "Bosnian solution" predicated on undoubtedly bloody forced population transfers. Under such a scheme, given their proportional weight in the population of Northern Ireland, the Protestants would get the bulk of the land centred around Belfast and the Catholics would get the area around Derry. To realize such an "ethnic cleansing" move is quite expensive, at least if it is to look "humane" to the viewers of CNN. The British don't have the money to do it, and the Americans won't spend the money to do it. But such a move would fit with Germany's drive for mastery of Europe, except

that the Fourth Reich is currently a little overextended after eating the former East German deformed workers state. In the absence of the shattering of the capitalist system, such is an idea of the options that are open.

The Catholics are an oppressed minority in Northern Ireland, but they live in the same territory as the Protestants who are a distinct community which very much fears becoming a minority that in turn would be oppressed and discriminated against in a capitalist united Ireland.

An old Irish saying recounted in a recent letter in the *London Guardian* says: "Anyone who has a solution to the Irish Question is not in possession of all the facts." That's because no just solution is obtainable within the status quo. In such situations of interpenetrated peoples, there can be no equitable resolution to national oppression outside of the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule.

We oppose both the forcible reunification of Ireland or the establishment of an "independent Ulster." We fight for an Irish workers republic as part of a federation of workers republics in the British Isles, forged through the revolutionary unity of the working class across national and religious boundaries, leaving open the question of the future development of the Protestant community. Integrated workers militias—incorporating both Catholics and Protestants, under a communist leadership—are vital in Northern Ireland to combat imperialist and Loyalist rampage as well as sectarian terror from any quarter—Orange or Green.

Genuine justice and equality will only come through working-class rule on both sides of the Irish Sea, through an internationalist struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, and which will also bring down the sectarian Orange statelet in Northern Ireland and the clericalist capitalist state in the South. As we said when the ceasefire was first declared: "What is critically necessary is the forging of Leninist parties on both sides of the Irish Sea, rooted in the proletariat of all the peoples of these isles" (*Workers Hammer* No. 142, September/October 1994). ■

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“Greensboro: A Requiem”

A Review

A documentary play by Emily Mann

It was a bright Saturday morning, 3 November 1979, and the anti-Klan demonstrators were gathering outside a black housing project in Greensboro, North Carolina for the start of their march. The KKK/Nazi caravan of death drove slowly into the project, parked their cars and calmly proceeded to take weapons out of the trunk of a car. In the ensuing 88-second fusillade, they deliberately cut down five leftists, blacks and labor organizers, members of the Communist Workers Party (CWP). It was the bloodiest fascist attack in the U.S. in decades, conceived and carried out with the direct knowledge, complicity and active participation of numerous government agents, including the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF), the FBI and the Greensboro police. In the aftermath, two trials by all-white juries acquitted the Nazi/KKK killers.

Carried out as the Democratic Carter administration whipped up its anti-Soviet “human rights” crusade abroad, the Greensboro massacre was the opening shot of the Reagan years. It marked a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis, who saw an opening to crawl out of their holes and don their white sheets. That their murderous terror is carried out in concert with the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state was shown in the Greensboro conspiracy. Locally, the CWP civil rights workers and labor organizers were viewed as a threat in the racist, anti-union “open shop” atmosphere of the (not so) “new” South.

Emboldened by this bloody massacre, the Klan attempted to parade their fascist terror on the streets of America’s big cities. When the KKK/Nazis announced plans to “celebrate” their blood-drenched “victory” in Greensboro by marching in Detroit the next week, the Spartacist League joined with workers at Ford’s giant River Rouge plant to organize a labor/black rally to stop the fascists—which it did. The anti-Klan demonstrators carried signs calling “For the Right of Southern Black Armed Self-Defense!” Over the next several years, the SL and Partisan Defense Committee uniquely launched labor/black mobilizations around the country that thwarted the fascists’ plans. From San Francisco (1980) to Chicago (1982), Washington, D.C. (1982) and Philadelphia (1988), such mobilizations—based on joining labor’s power together with the masses of the oppressed—were key in keeping the fascist filth off the streets during this period.

Greensboro—the very name cries out for justice, for vengeance. From the first hours after news of the assassination reached us and in the decade and a half since then, the Spartacist League has attempted to sear this hideous massacre into the consciousness of the working class. As the enormous government role was exposed, we reported on this and on the whitewash “trials” that left the murderers unscathed. On anniversaries of the 3 November 1979 slaughter we have run commemorative notes in *WV*, as we do with the date of another heinous crime: 13 May 1985, the police bombing of the MOVE commune in Philadelphia, where eleven black people, including five children, were murdered and a black neighborhood turned to ash in a racist government vendetta.

Now a documentary play on the Greensboro massacre has been produced. *Greensboro: A Requiem*, by Obie-winning playwright Emily Mann, opened this month at the McCarter Theater in Princeton. Mann’s earlier works include *Still Life*, in which characters give witness to the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and American racism, and *Execution of Justice*, about the murders of San Francisco gay city councilman Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone. The playwright’s father

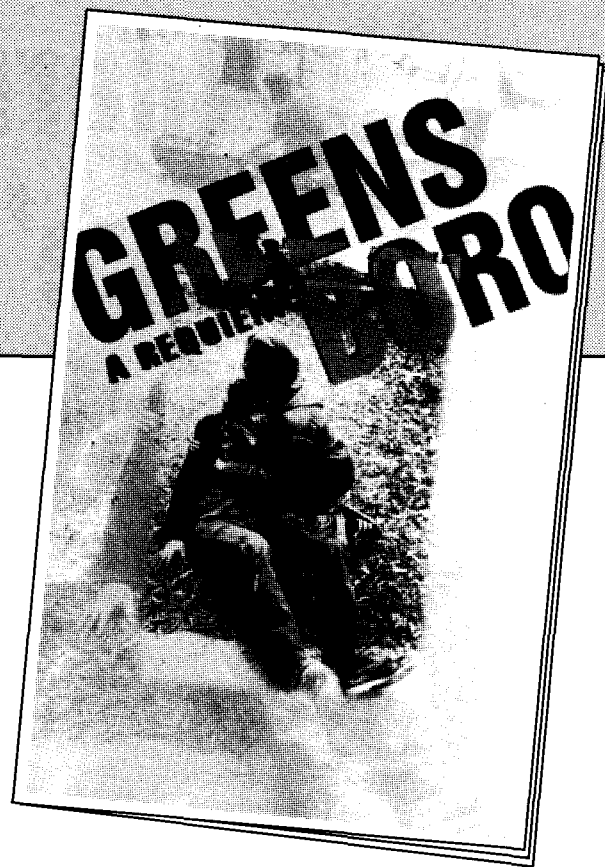
was head of the American Jewish Committee’s oral history project on the Holocaust.

Mann calls her approach “theater of testimony,” and carried this method into *Greensboro: A Requiem*. The play centers on counterposing the “testimony” of Nelson Johnson, a black survivor of the massacre and a central organizer of the CWP, and Edward Dawson, the “former” FBI informant in the Klan. She notes that the entire play is crafted from verbatim interviews, newspaper accounts, court transcripts and personal testimony. Through this technique the vast government conspiracy and what has happened in the lives of the survivors in the intervening years are recounted. Mann originally began writing *Greensboro* as a movie-of-the-week courtroom drama commissioned by NBC. When the TV network backed out, she continued to pursue the project.

The play brings to light much important information about the government’s deep involvement in the plot against Nelson Johnson and his comrades. But ultimately, the play’s message is an affront to the memory of the Greensboro martyrs who fell in the cause of fighting fascism and for emancipation of the exploited and oppressed. The play ends in a final grotesque scene of “reconciliation” in which Johnson, now a Baptist minister, reports how he went to the home of the KKK “grand dragon” where they knelt down in common prayer.

Author Mann adds her own liberal pacifism to the demoralization of many of the survivors—fitting right in with the “death of communism” lie. Thus the *New York Times*’ theater critic Vincent Canby could praise Mann’s “postmodern” drama for transcending “agit-prop literature” and “isms” to present Greensboro as “more complex” than a simple “miscarriage of justice.”

The author and the survivors, as they told their stories, have tried to combat the most crude anti-communist slanders about Greensboro. At the time, the bourgeois press obscenely labeled the Klan/Nazi attack a “shootout



McCarter Theater

between extremist groups.” The play deals scathingly with this theme. But the play’s liberal message, “Words Have Meaning,” comes down to a “politically correct” version of the same murderous equation. This slogan is the centerpiece of the playbill, which features a two-page spread of quotations ranging from fascistic L.A. detective Mark Fuhrman’s talk of “beating up a n---r” to a CWP call for “armed self-defense.” Ultimately the message is that both fascists and communists engage in “hate speech” that kills.

The message is spelled out in a preachy quotation in the playbill from the play’s director, Mark Wing-Davey, again under the title “Words Have Meaning,” that such “rhetorical” language to “express feelings of anger” is used to “dehumanize people.” This same slogan is flashed on a screen on stage in a scene where Nelson Johnson is testifying in court. The fascists’ lawyer quotes CWP slogans of “Smash the Klan” and “Death to the Klan,” and then says to Johnson: “Words have meaning. You wanted violence.” Despite the protestations of many of the characters who appear on stage, the play’s pacifist theme in its own way condemns both fascist murderers and those who struggle to sweep away the lynchers and cross-burners for “violence.”

This comes up in the treatment of the China Grove incident in July 1979, where the CWP broke up a Klan “recruitment” rally in a heavily black area near Greensboro, setting the stage for the KKK’s deadly attack in November. Sally Bermanzohn, one of the survivors, criticizes the CWP’s chanting of “Death to the Klan,” saying: “The Klan used our words as an excuse to open fire and kill us. And clearly in retrospect, our slogan was a big mistake.” She adds: “We made mistakes. We did not commit crimes. The Klan and Nazis committed crimes. They murdered five people.” We have noted that the CWP went in for impotent posturing. Certainly, it was foolhardy to taunt these vicious killers—especially where the fascists had all the guns. But the dangerous and false lesson the play infers from this is that the “mistake” was the sharp struggle to smash the Klan.

Bloody November 3

Greensboro: A Requiem gives much new information about the government conspiracy to set up the CWP—before, during and after the shooting. It turns out that the Jewish Defense Organization (JDO) got information prior to the massacre that the Nazis were going to go to Greensboro with the Klan on November 3 to “kill some people.” JDO leader Mordechai Levy called the FBI in North Carolina the day before; the agent he contacted later stated that the information was grudgingly passed on to the FBI in Greensboro. Of course, nothing was done, since the FBI was in on it from the beginning.

The play opens with gospel songs and chants followed by extended bursts of gunfire echoing through the theater. The actor who plays Nelson Johnson begins by explaining

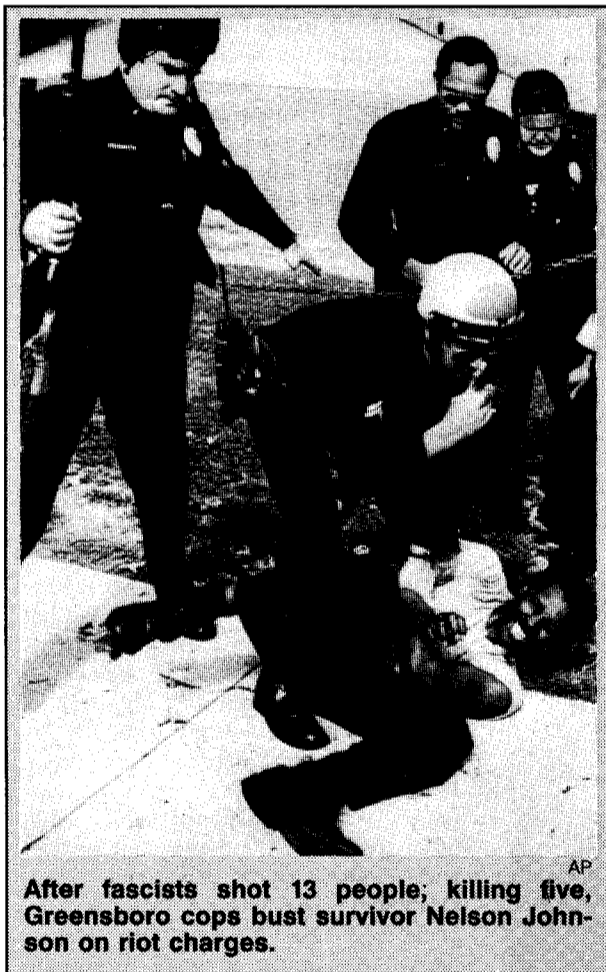


Nelson Johnson, wounded in 1979 Klan attack, kneels by his dying comrade Jim Waller.

the key role of Dawson in the events. Dawson had been a member of the Klan's "Inner Circle"—its murder squad—since 1969. Twice convicted for cross-burnings and nightriding, Dawson was an informer for the FBI for eight years while actively participating in the Klan. He was "officially" terminated by the FBI in the late '70s. But when the Workers Viewpoint Organization (precursor to the CWP) began organizing against the Klan in 1979, the Greensboro cops decided to monitor the Klan from the inside and went to Dawson. Johnson sums up, "So you have to understand, he recruited, organized, and led the Klan, fully armed, to Morningside Homes while he was working for the Greensboro police."

On that morning, 35 Klansmen and Nazis climbed into nine cars, in a motorcade of death. Dawson's supervisor in police intelligence was shadowing the Klan caravan all morning and transmitting his information back to police headquarters. He photographed the Klan's arrival at the house of one of the fascists, and he photographed the weapons car joining the caravan at a "Y" intersection a few miles from Morningside Homes. Dawson, who was pulled off the caravan at the last moment, was rushing around to the homes of the Klansmen trying to get them all to Morningside Homes by 11 a.m. The reason? "Because, at 10:57, 'someone' at police headquarters gave the police officers the order to leave the Morningside area," Johnson notes.

The Klan caravan entered the projects unimpeded by the authorities. As they drove slowly past, Paul Bermanzohn looked up and saw the guns. They hollered out the window, "You asked for the Klan, you communist sons of bitches, you got the Klan." As demonstrators began to block the KKK cars, Klansmen poured out of the vehicles, opening up with guns and knives. The anti-fascists tried to defend themselves with whatever they had at hand. Thirteen anti-Klan demonstrators were shot when the fusillade was over, five fatally. Paul Bermanzohn was shot in the head but survived. Nelson Johnson, who had been over on the side of the

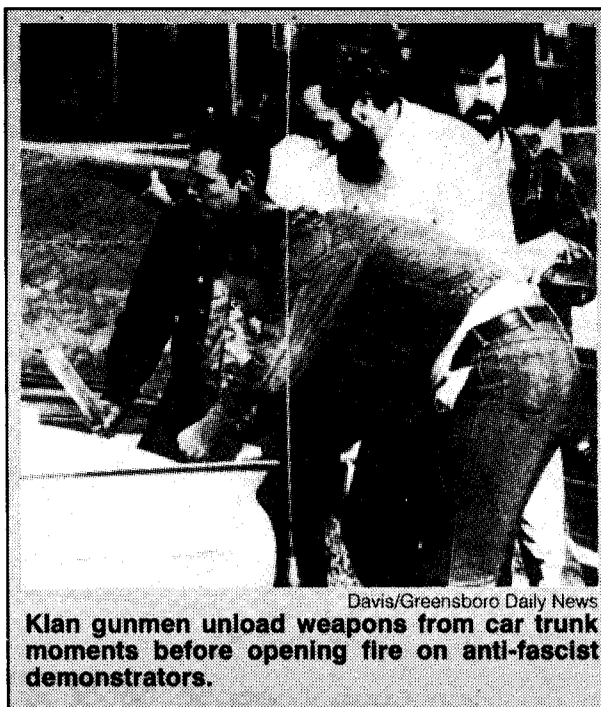


AP
After fascists shot 13 people, killing five, Greensboro cops bust survivor Nelson Johnson on riot charges.

project, received knife wounds. Johnson held Jim Waller in his arms as he died. A survivor recounts how Sandi Smith had been bashed in the head, but ignoring her wounds was herding children back into the project and away from the line of fire. Then she was shot between the eyes.

We have earlier noted in *WV* the similarities between the government/KKK operation in Greensboro and FBI/Klan attacks on civil rights workers such as in Alabama in 1961, where local cops were also "out to lunch" as freedom riders stepped off the buses into an ambush by the Klan. The Greensboro police had it in for Nelson Johnson since the days when he was a student civil rights activist at North Carolina A&T, and when he became a radical, the cops really went wild. In one of the most chilling scenes of the play, the character who plays Johnson tells what happened the day he went to pick up the permit for the demonstration:

"I'll never forget this one cop—Gibson—who gave me the permit for November 3rd. There I was at the Greensboro Police Station, he was handing me the permit—which was also a guarantee of police protection, by the way—he looked me in the eye—there was a lotta hate in those eyes—and he said: 'So you gonna be armed?' I said: 'Do you always ask people wanting a parade permit if they're gonna be armed?' 'Well are you?' he said. 'It's not illegal to carry unconcealed weapons,' I said. 'No, but the permit states for you to be unarmed.' 'Yeah,' I said, 'we'll be unarmed. Why? Are you expect-



Davis/Greensboro Daily News
Klan gunmen unload weapons from car trunk moments before opening fire on anti-fascist demonstrators.

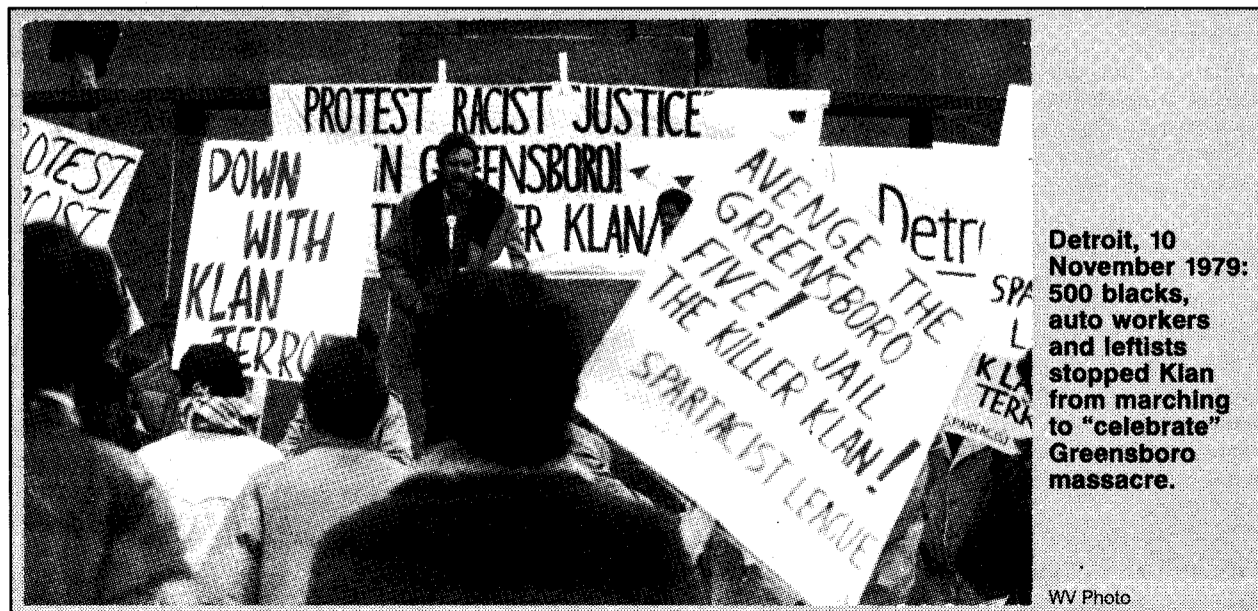
ing trouble?' 'Nope.'... When we were shot down on November 3rd, that scene flashed through my mind. I knew at that moment, I knew we were set up."

WVO/CWP: Substitutionism and Popular-Front Reformism

The Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) in North Carolina brought together local civil rights activists and a group of radical doctors at Duke University. In the late 1970s, they went into the textile plants and began to organize, particularly over the issue of brown lung disease, which was endemic in the textile mills. Among the victims, *Jim Waller*, a pediatrician from Duke, took a job at the Cone Mills Haw River plant where he led a wildcat strike in 1978. *Bill Sampson*, a former Harvard Divinity student, left medical school to work in the mills. *Mike Nathan* was chief of pediatrics at Lincoln Community Center in Durham, and had earlier been a member of Progressive Labor. *Sandi Smith*, Nelson Johnson's companion, had been a student leader at Greensboro's Bennett College and had also gone into the mills to organize. *Cesar Cauce* had been a Duke University history student and CWP local organizer.

The martyred activists had a long record of militancy that was somewhat incongruous with their allegiance to Jerry Tung's Maoist outfit based in New York's Chinatown. The WVO/CWP was one of the most hysterically disoriented of the Maoist/Stalinist groups, known for stupid substitutionism, verbal insurrectionism and vicious sectarianism. They simultaneously launched thug attacks on other left groups—particularly the Spartacist League—who were protesting the murder of their comrades, while engaging in Communist Party-style popular-front "unity" fests with the Democrats. As we wrote at the time: "If on Monday WVO is capable of holding a 'Death to the Klan' rally, they are on Tuesday capable of holding a 'Death to the Trots and Down with Russia' rally." "But," we added, "that is not the reason the Klan gunned them down in the streets. For the Greensboro Klan, Workers Viewpoint was the 'commie' organization in town.... Those who saw the WVO cadre shot down knew well it could have been any of us" ("For Labor/Black Mass Mobilizations—Smash KKK Killers!" *WV* No. 243, 9 November 1979).

Grotesquely, while the Klansmen rode off from the site of their massacre unscathed, the victims who survived this assault were arrested and charged with "felony riot" and conspiracy. In a state trial in 1980, the KKK/Nazis were acquitted of murder charges by an all-white jury. Four years later, in a federal trial on civil rights charges, also before an all-white jury, the killers were let off again. The civil suit launched by the survivors was finally settled in 1985 when the fascists were found "liable for the wrongful death" of



Detroit, 10 November 1979: 500 blacks, auto workers and leftists stopped Klan from marching to "celebrate" Greensboro massacre.

WV Photo

Mike Nathan. However, conspiracy charges were dismissed against 45 people, including some 36 Greensboro cops, two FBI informers and the BATF agent.

The CWP did not long survive the massacre. With most of their leading Greensboro cadres dead (the KKK/Nazis deliberately targeted the leaders), their resources had to be poured into legal defense work and combatting the furious anti-communist campaign directed against them. During this period, the heyday of Reagan reaction, the CWP turned sharply to the right. The terminal crisis of American Maoism was a consequence of the deepening ties of the bureaucracy of the Chinese deformed workers state to U.S. imperialism. Soon the CWP was deeply ensconced in straight Democratic Party politics, climbing aboard the Jesse Jackson bandwagon. In 1985, the CWP formally ended its existence and entered the NYC Village Independent Democrats with their local candidate Margaret Chin, who was heavily red baited by the tabloids in 1987 and again in her 1991 bid for New York City Council.

Sweep Away the Klan/Nazis with Workers Power!

The play makes much of the surviving Greensboro CWPer's retreat from leftist politics. Sally Bermanzohn says, "I don't consider myself a Marxist anymore." Paul Bermanzohn states, "I no longer have any central political beliefs." Many were middle-class professionals who returned to a more private life. But playwright Mann perceptively contrasts their options with a soliloquy by another survivor, a poor black woman from Greensboro, Doris Gordon, who says:

"I'm a child of the movement.... I remember 6-7 years old, me and my sisters looking in at those A&T students—standing outside Woolworth's, looking through the windows. The first sit-ins. We were scared to go in but we knew something exciting was going on.... "What my friends died for, should be going on full force today. They really believed in what they were doing, and they put all they heart and soul in it.... Why did everybody drop everything?"

The answer to Doris Gordon's question lies in an understanding of the failure of the liberal-led civil rights movement, and of the bankruptcy of the Stalinists, the fake-communists who were in fact bound hand and foot to the Democratic Party, which from Franklin D. Roosevelt with his "Dixiecrat" allies to "New South" Democrats like Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton is a bulwark of racist American capitalism.

Greensboro: A Requiem opens on a critical question: "How do we fight these dogs?" "Do we stay home behind closed doors and tremble" in the face of the hooded cross-burners? What about the need for armed self-defense against the racist killers? To the degree these vital questions are answered in this play, the answers are wrong. The answer is not adventurist actions like China Grove, where isolated groups manage to burn a couple of Confederate flags and broadcast their presence (and weakness) to the KKK/Nazis and the cops; the Greensboro massacre showed what that can lead to. It certainly is not to be found in "dialogue" with the fascists; racist terror will not be ended by praying with the KKK "grand dragons." It is the strategy of labor/black defense, the mass mobilization of the oppressed based on the power of labor, that is key to stopping the fascists.

This is the program of the Spartacist League, which fights for the communism of Lenin and Trotsky. Black oppression won't be "overcome" by simply legislating equal rights, as was demonstrated by the failure of the civil rights movement when it went North: racism is rooted in the bedrock of American capitalism. Likewise, the government's role in aiding and protecting the fascists in Greensboro is no aberration: to root out the KKK and Nazis you have to sweep away their capitalist masters, from the county courthouses and state houses to the White House. The fundamental fact is that black liberation can only come through socialist revolution, overthrowing the existing social order. And this poses above all the need for the key element, the

Continued on page 12

Young Spartacus

Youth today are being told from all points on the political compass that the failure of communism is an incontrovertible historical fact. It is not only right-wing ideologues and social democrats who denounce Marxism and Leninism as at best utopian and at worst deeply evil, but also erstwhile leading figures of the Stalinized "Communist" movement.

The Stalinist bureaucracy—which arose in the Soviet workers state under conditions of economic backwardness and isolation when the post-World War I revolutionary wave failed to bring the workers to power in any of the advanced capitalist countries—traded on the misidentification of its repressive rule with the authority of the Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin's Communist International. The Stalinist usurpers, grave-diggers of revolutionary opportunities throughout the world, claimed they were going to build "socialism in one country"—an impossibility, as Leon Trotsky explained, since socialism is necessarily international in scope. When the Soviet bureaucracy finally collapsed under the pressure of imperialist militarism and of the world capitalist market on the mismanaged collectivized economy, the

by Joseph Seymour

Stalinists blithely proclaimed—eagerly echoing the ideologues of the triumphalist bourgeoisie—that "communism is dead."

It is understandable that many leftist youth coming to political consciousness in the post-Soviet period express sympathy for anarchism as they understand it. Here is a doctrine and set of beliefs which appears uncompromisingly hostile to the capitalist system, which poses as an alternative to the Stalinist "Communism" that has so recently and dramatically collapsed, and whose own decisive testing by history—in key events such as the 1917 Russian Revolution and the revolution and Civil War in Spain in the 1930s—lies buried in what for today's youth is the remote past. And since there has never been a successful revolution led by anarchists, they can claim that their system, unlike Marxist communism, has never really been tried.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anarchism meant a definite program based on the doctrines of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and others whose theories were widely discussed and debated on the left. But today, many participants in the broad milieu which express sympathy for anarchism—for instance the German and Italian "autonomous" activists—are not really partisans of the doctrines of Proudhon, Bakunin or Kropotkin.

Many if not most of those calling themselves anarchists are rather expressing a characteristic set of mainly negative attitudes: hostility to existing governments and in general the present-day bourgeois order; militant opposition to the right, especially the fascists and other violent racists; contempt for parliamentary politics, which they identify with every kind of reformist sellout; rejection of the Marxist program of proletarian dictatorship and centralized economic planning which they identify with Stalinist tyranny; and mistrust of all parties, including a Leninist revolutionary vanguard party.

Given the decline among the masses of identification of proletarian socialism

MARXISM vs. ANARCHISM

From 1848 to the Bolshevik Revolution

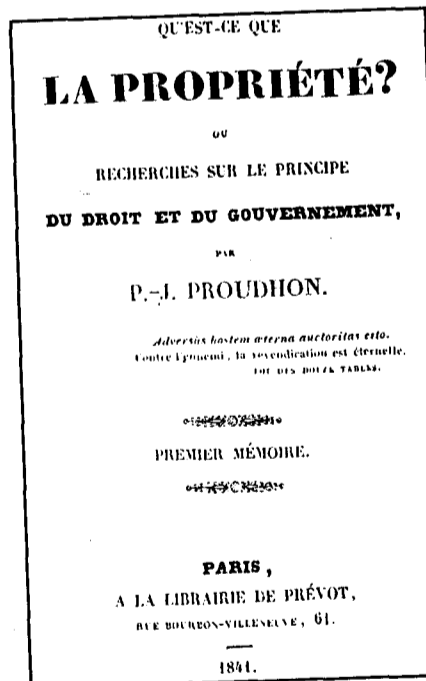
with the possibility for human liberation, there has been an upsurge of sympathy for anarchism, which is at bottom a version of radical-democratic ideology. Anarchism originated in the mid-19th century as a form of resistance to the shift from petty commodity producers—artisans and peasants—to wage laborers. The movement was strongest in Latin Europe, especially Spain—a late-developing capitalist country where, moreover, a series of brutal dictatorships foreclosed much possibility of parliamentary reformism. With the industrial-

recounts his first meeting with an anarchist militant while in a Moscow prison around the turn of the century: "He avoided discussions of theory. But once when I pressed him to tell how railways would be managed by autonomous communities, he answered: 'Why the hell should I want to travel on railways under anarchism?'" Similar discussions can be had with today's anarchist-minded youth, for example, the transport of oil by sea.

In the era of Proudhon and Bakunin, the difference in the economic condi-

Part 1

The Origins of Anarchism



Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who first coined the term "anarchy" in his 1840 *What Is Property?*, was later described by Marx as purveyor of petty-bourgeois fantasies.

ization of Latin Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anarchism gave rise to syndicalism, a movement which advocated management of a collectivized economy by the trade unions.

While the anarchistic youth of today are certainly not the continuators of classic anarchism, they do share certain attitudes and values with the followers of Proudhon and Bakunin. Among these are indifference or hostility to technological progress and to the needs of a complex industrial economy. In his autobiography, *My Life*, Leon Trotsky

tions of workers and peasants in Europe and those in the colonial world was far narrower than today. So it was understandable that anarchists and early socialists conceived of establishing an egalitarian society within a national or, at most, Europe-wide context. Pro-anarchist youth today have to be acutely aware of the hideous poverty in Third World countries compared to the relative wealth of West Europe and North America. Indeed, many are in the forefront of defending immigrant workers and asylum-seekers from these countries

against fascist and government attacks.

Yet key elements of anarchism as an economic program—extreme decentralization and technological standstill—could only perpetuate the division between the imperialist countries and the neocolonial Third World. How could a world system based on autonomous communes ever bridge the gap between rural Mexico and India on the one hand and the German Ruhr or California's Silicon Valley on the other? Only global exchange on terms favorable to the "underdeveloped" nations and centralized economic planning on an international scale can narrow and eventually overcome the gulf separating the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America from the U.S., West Europe and Japan.

The classic anarchists and pre-Marxian socialist tendencies (except for Saint-Simon) envisioned an egalitarian society on the basis of the then-prevailing standards of living. Proudhon, in particular, preached that the workers should not aspire to live like the wealthy classes but should rather cultivate the Spartan virtues of self-restraint and self-reliance. "The essence of our dignity," he proclaimed, "is to do without the aid of others" (*Justice in the Revolution and the Church* [1858]). Such a message, shared on today's political spectrum with the "Green" petty-bourgeois and bourgeois movements, will obviously find little resonance among the oppressed neocolonial masses for whom a world socialist revolution leading to a vast increase in energy and technology is required even to secure the things that working people in the advanced countries usually take for granted: electricity, decent housing, literacy, clean water. Indeed, "self-restraint" is the program cynically preached by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to the masses of Bangladesh and South Africa.

With the history of the anarchist movement and the views of its leading figures so little known even on the left, today's radicalized youth can invest the anarchist tradition with all manner of revolutionary virtues and high-minded idealism which it did not in reality possess. The original theorist of anarchism, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, was an anti-Semite, a racist who supported the slaveholding South in the American Civil War and a gross male chauvinist. These repugnant views were not just a personal peculiarity but reflected the characteristic prejudices of petty proprietors and smallholding peasants in the France of his day. Mikhail Bakunin, the founder of the anarchist movement, at one point appealed to Tsar Nicholas I to bring about the "final liberation of all the Slav tribes from the foreign yoke." Here again this was not just a personal idiosyncrasy but coincided with widespread illusions among Russian peasants at the time in the good will of "their" Tsar.

Peter Kropotkin, the late 19th century's foremost anarchist spokesman, became an ardent supporter of British and French imperialism against Germany in the First World War. The Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno, who led a peasant-based military force during the Russian Civil War of 1918-21, carried out pogroms against Jewish communities and blocked with White counterrevolutionary armies against the Bolsheviks. During the Spanish revolution of the mid-1930s, the anarcho-syndicalist leaders became ministers in the popular-front (i.e., capitalist) government which provoked and then suppressed a workers' uprising in Barcelona.

Even those who explicitly solidarize with well-known historical stands of the anarchist movement often have little familiarity with the real history. For instance, a sine qua non for hard-core anarchist spokesmen is to denounce Trotsky for suppressing the 1921 Kronstadt mutiny. But at the time, many former anarchist and syndicalist militants who

The fundamental differences between anarchism and Marxism go beyond the basic question of the state to encompass a different conception of the relationship between nature and society. Proudhon asserted that "man has a constant, unchangeable nature." Bakunin similarly maintained that "human society is, after all, nothing but the last great manifesta-

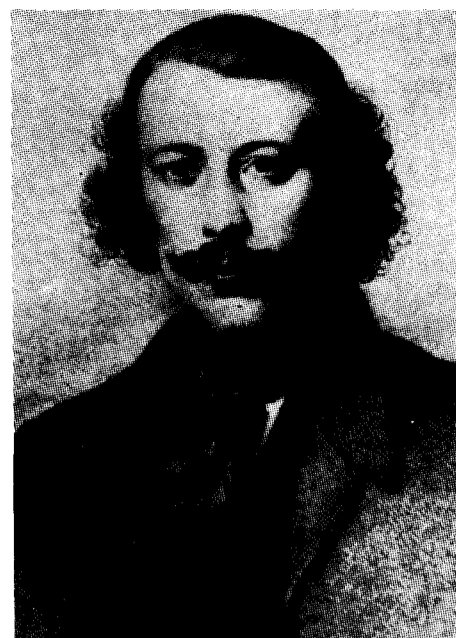
another important respect, literally so in the Spanish Popular Front government of the mid-1930s. Despite its hostility to authority and the bourgeois order, anarchism is at its theoretical core a doctrine of *class collaboration*, not class struggle. The wealthy and powerful can participate in "the ethical progress of man"—to use Kropotkin's phrase—no less than the downtrodden and exploited workers and peasants. As a Trotskyist historian of the Spanish revolution, Felix Morrow, wrote at the time:

"Class collaboration, indeed, lies concealed in the heart of anarchist philosophy. It is hidden, during periods of reaction, by the anarchist hatred of capitalist oppression. But, in a revolutionary period of dual power, it must come to the surface. For then the capitalist smilingly offers to share in building the new world. And the anarchist, being opposed to 'all dictatorships,' including the dictatorship of the proletariat, will require of the capitalist merely that he throw off the capitalist outlook, to which he agrees, naturally, the better to prepare the crushing of the workers."

—*Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* (1938)

Marx and Engels maintained that after the social revolution a workers state (proletarian dictatorship) was necessary in order to suppress the dispossessed bourgeoisie, who would strive to restore their property, privileges and power. The anarchists projected that the former propertied class would undergo a moral regeneration and become productive members of the new, egalitarian social system. Hence they envisioned a social revolution that after some short-lived initial violence would be essentially harmonious. These differences between Marxists and anarchists could not be resolved simply through debate and polemical exchange. They could not be tested so long as the European bourgeois order remained stable. Moreover, in the era before World War I, the social-democratic "mainstream" of supposedly "orthodox" Marxists, typified by Karl Kautsky, obfuscated Marx/Engels' position that a proletarian revolution would have to *smash* the existing bourgeois state apparatus. Instead, they projected that the working class could attain political power within the framework of parliamentary democracy.

It was the experience of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution which convinced many anarchist and syndicalist militants that proletarian dictatorship was indeed necessary and not a product of Marx's supposedly "authoritarian" prejudices. It was not so much the workers' insurrection in October 1917 that exploded the anarchist notion of a harmonious social transformation but rather the subsequent Civil War and the military interventions/economic blockades against Soviet Russia by the Central (German-led), Western (Allied) and Japanese imperialist pow-



History Today

Mikhail Bakunin, once a pan-Slav nationalist, founded the anarchist movement in the 1860s.

ers. Alfred Rosmer, a leading French syndicalist who became a founder of the Communist International, explained:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat, hitherto a theoretical question, was now posed as a concrete problem—in fact, as the most urgent problem. Yet this transitional period, this passage from capitalism to socialism, had never been studied in depth.... The transition had been seen as a leap from capitalist society into a ideal society to be constructed at leisure. Even syndicalist militants such as Pataud and Pouget, in a book called *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution*, had not made any precise contribution to the problem of the transitional period, though they were committed to doing so by the very title of their book. A short general strike, and the régime would collapse...after a few days of agitation, and with minimal violence, the syndicalists would peacefully proceed to the building of the new society. But this was the realm of fairy-tales. In Moscow, in 1920, we were facing reality."

—*Lenin's Moscow* (1971)

Rosmer's political evolution was in no way exceptional. The Bolshevik Revolution brought about a fundamental realignment and regrouping of the international left, which had already begun with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The war produced a deep and irrevocable *split* in the anarchist and syndicalist movements, as it did in the socialist movement, with the right wing of both currents becoming social-chauvinists supporting their "own" imperialist states. Kropotkin, who became a champion of "democratic" Britain and France, was now denounced by his longtime colleague Errico Malatesta as a "government anarchist." Léon Jouhaux, head of the French syndicalist trade-union movement, joined the "*union sacrée*" (sacred union) in defense of the French bourgeois

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Der Spiegel

German Autonome battling cops. With the collapse of Stalinism, anarchism has become attractive among radicalized youth.

came over to Bolshevism, such as Victor Serge and Alfred Rosmer, recognized that a victory for the "anarchist" mutineers could only have led to a bloody capitalist counterrevolution against the besieged Soviet Russian workers state.

Anarchism and Marxism: The Fundamental Difference

While it is necessary to debunk the idealization of the anarchist tradition among radicalized youth, it is also important not to equate the classic anarchists' espousal of individual freedom with the present-day "free market" right wing, especially its "libertarian" component. Proudhon and Bakunin were not precursors of Milton Friedman and Margaret Thatcher! A central theme of classic anarchism was the denunciation of possessive individualism glorified by bourgeois ideologues then and now. Proudhon attacked "egoism, disguised under the false name of liberty." "Bourgeois individualism," declared Kropotkin, "cannot exist unless the masses are oppressed." The anarchists believed in a just, harmonious and *egalitarian* society. Anarchism and its offshoot syndicalism were thus tendencies within the left and workers movement.

How could an egalitarian society be maintained if independent producers were free to act as they chose without any coordination or control by a central political authority? Would not such a system reproduce the conditions of "free market" capitalism? No late 19th century syndicalist imagined a collective of railway workers acting like a capitalist monopoly to charge all that the traffic would bear. But what would prevent them from doing so?

The anarchists answered in a word: morality. Harking back to Rousseau, the classic anarchists believed there existed a natural moral order which had been corrupted and debased by class divisions maintained by a repressive state. Bakunin spoke of "the idea of justice inherent in man." Kropotkin's journal *Freedom* stated: "We dream of the positive freedom which is essentially one with social feeling; of free scope for the social impulses, now distorted and compressed by Property, and its guardian the Law" (quoted in George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism* [1991]).

tion or creation of Nature on earth" and that "social solidarity is the first human law" (*The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution* [1871]). Likewise, Kropotkin asserted that "nature is the ethical teacher of man."

For Marx, society was not determined by the innate psychological properties of Homo sapiens but by *mankind's self-development through labor*, leading to progressively higher levels of productive forces. As he wrote in his early polemic against Proudhon, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847): "M. Proudhon does not know that all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature." A socialist transformation—in both its objective and subjective aspects—becomes possible only with the emergence of an industrial economy, originally a product of capitalist development.

For Marxists, human history is the story of the desperate struggle not to be slaves to the "natural order" but to master through labor the harsh world of nature. The early human societies lived constantly on the brink of extinction: you were old at age 20 and typically dead by 30. The first advances in production—the development of agriculture and the domestication of animals—opened the road to conquering the tyranny of nature, also ushering in the development of inequality and class divisions in the fight for control of the newly created surplus. Only with the overcoming of scarcity through the further development of the productive forces can the antagonism between individual self-interest and collective well-being be transcended. And only then will the state wither away: in Engels' words, the government of people will be replaced by the administration of things.

Although anarchists think of themselves as polar opposites of Stalinism, in its theoretical premises Stalinism is actually closer to anarchism than to Marxism. Both anarchism and Stalinism attribute to the state a nearly omnipotent capacity to shape social, economic and cultural life. Both Bakunin and Stalin asserted that collectivist consciousness could be established under even the most miserably impoverished economic conditions once the bourgeois state and capitalist property had been done away with.

Anarchism and Stalinism converge in



Spartaco

In Italy, neo-syndicalist COBAS (workers rank-and-file committees) have been in the forefront of militant class struggle in post-Soviet period.



During Spanish Civil War, anarchist leaders Juan García Oliver (far left) and Federica Montseny joined Stalinists and social democrats as ministers in Popular Front government, which sabotaged and suppressed armed workers struggle against the capitalist order. Right: Madrid workers detachment leaving for the front.

Marxism vs. Anarchism...

(continued from page 9)

state as did the "orthodox" Marxist leader Jules Guesde.

At the same time, the revolutionary syndicalists Rosmer and Pierre Monatte collaborated closely with the Russian revolutionary Marxist Trotsky, then in

obviously shaped by his personal experience. Proudhon was born in the rural Jura region of eastern France. His father was a brewer of beer and a cooper (barrel maker) of an unusually honest and upright nature. When this region was besieged at the end of the Napoleonic wars, most brewers took advantage of the situation to raise their prices. Not so Claude-François Proudhon, who declared: "So much for my raw materials plus so much for my work, that's my price" (Edwards Hyams, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind and Works* [1979]). This formula would become a key element in Proudhon's economic program, which he termed mutualism.

Because young Pierre-Joseph was highly intelligent as well as devoutly religious, a local clergyman secured for him a place in the best school in the district. His classmates were the sons of the bourgeoisie and landed nobility. However, upon graduation Proudhon was again plunged into the working class. He became a printer and as such suffered the insecurity and periods of abject poverty typical of European artisans in that era. At one point, the young Proudhon scraped together enough money to go into partnership in a small print shop. But his partner was irresponsible and ruined the business before committing suicide. Left with debts he couldn't pay, Proudhon was forced to sell his shop and once again work for wealthier, more successful publishers.

These experiences underlay Proudhon's worldview, as was noted in an introduction to his *Selected Writings* (1969) by the British scholar Stewart Edwards:

"At the heart of all of Proudhon's writings on social questions there is this concern for the small-property holder. His proposals for monetary reform, his idea of a land bank, his mutual-insurance schemes, all reflected the ideals of the *petite-bourgeoisie*, their constant preoccupation with obtaining credit and their envy of the large-scale capitalist."

Proudhon himself summed up his program thus: "It is when all people are owners of property that fortunes are most

equal and there is work for everyone." This vision was attractive to many workers, for France was still basically a preindustrial society. The overwhelming majority of wage laborers were the children of peasants, shopkeepers or artisan proprietors. Many, like Proudhon, had once owned small businesses which were driven into bankruptcy by increasing debt.

Proudhon invested human nature with the psychology of a peasant smallholder or artisan proprietor. Man, he proclaimed,

ers whose business it is to transfer the products from one room to another, and so forth. All these workers, men, and women and children, are obliged to begin and finish their work at the hours fixed by the authority of the steam, which cares nothing for individual autonomy.... Wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power loom in order to return to the spinning wheel."

This, in substance, was the program of Proudhon's mutualism: "Where there is perfect Mutualism, each producer



Proliferation of anarchist journals in Europe includes *Alternative Liberaire* and *No Pasaran!* in France.

exile in France, in building the antiwar Zimmerwald movement, whose left wing prefigured the Communist International (Comintern). Lenin, by restoring and modernizing the genuinely revolutionary and liberating content of Marxism, was able to win the best anarchist and syndicalist militants to the banner of communism. Hence, with some important exceptions such as Spain, the anarchist movement tended to disappear—the right wing exposed as chauvinist, the left wing deserted by its most vital elements who broke in the direction of the Comintern. But after decades of betrayal by Stalinists and social-democratic reformists, anarchism regained a certain following among anti-capitalist youth. With this revival of anarchist sympathies, it becomes useful again to review the history of the anarchist movement from its origins in the mid-19th century through its demise in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.

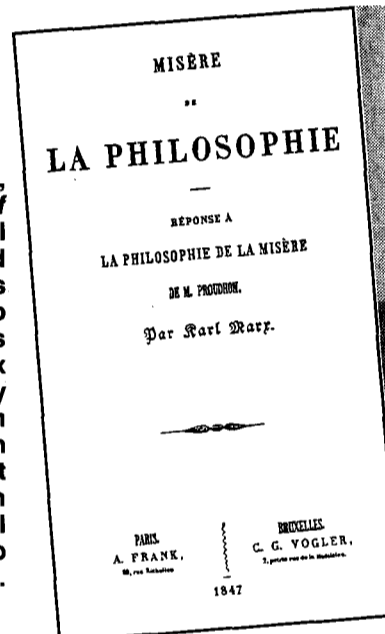
Proudhonism: A Petty-Bourgeois Utopia

More so than in the case of most social theorists, the doctrines of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon—who first coined the term "anarchy" in 1840—were directly and

Under the impact of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, French left-wing syndicalists Pierre Monatte (left) and Alfred Rosmer were won to Marxism and became founders of the Communist International.



In his 1847 polemic, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Karl Marx denounced Proudhon's opposition to working-class struggle. Marx argued that only proletarian revolution can open the road to a just and egalitarian society, in which all can freely develop their potential.



"wishes to labor when he pleases, where he pleases and as much as he pleases" (*What Is Property?* [1840]). But how can workers in a steel mill, electric power plant or railroad labor when, where and as much as they please? Industrial technology requires the strict coordination of many different types of labor. As Engels explained in his classic anti-anarchist polemic "On Authority" (1873):

"Let us take by way of example a cotton spinning mill. The cotton must pass through at least six successive operations before it is reduced to the state of thread, and these operations take place for the most part in different rooms. Furthermore, keeping the machines going requires an engineer to look after the steam engine, mechanics to make the current repairs, and many other labour-

must, in accepting a certain obligation toward others, who for their part obligate themselves in the same way to him, retain his full and complete independence of action" (*The Political Capacity of the Working Class* [1865]). A basic economic principle of mutualism is that goods will be exchanged on the basis of equal labor input: "All products will be paid for by products that have cost the same in effort and expense."

Such a system presumes a *static technology* available to all producers. Let us say that a small number of shoemakers introduce new machinery which cuts the time needed to produce shoes by a third. If they correspondingly reduce the exchange value of their shoes by a third, all other shoemakers will have to sell below their own labor costs or no one will buy their shoes. But if the more efficient producers maintain the old exchange value of shoes, they will be selling above their labor cost, thereby making a profit. Either way, the principles of Proudhon's mutualism stand in flat contradiction to technological progress. But what will really happen? Will producers embrace "mutualism" and renounce technological progress? Hardly: the more efficient will simply drive the less efficient out of business.

Proudhon Against Class Struggle

Proudhon's first work, *What Is Property?*, written in 1840, was a powerful, if somewhat abstract, denunciation of

Musée Social photos

capitalist exploitation. There was not much explication of his own positive program, doubtless because it was not yet fully developed. Consequently, *What Is Property?* was appreciated by almost all socialists of the day, including the young Karl Marx. When Marx was in Paris in



Julien Bolly

Prominent French woman socialist and writer George Sand denounced Proudhon's gross male chauvinism and anti-communism.

1844-45, he established friendly relations with Proudhon and later claimed he had introduced the French radical to Hegelian philosophy. However, Proudhon's views were already too well developed and too divergent to be influenced by the future founder of scientific socialism.

In 1846, Marx, then in Brussels after having been expelled from France, invited Proudhon to become part of an international socialist committee of correspondence. In response, Proudhon effectively broke off relations with Marx

primarily because he opposed the revolutionary overthrow of the French, Prussian and other European monarchical governments, which Marx considered a necessary precondition for the socialist reconstruction of society. Proudhon wrote:

"Perhaps you still hold the opinion that no reform is possible without a helping *coup de main*, without what used to be called a revolution but which is quite simply a jolt. I confess that my most recent studies have led me to abandon this view.... I put the problem this way: *How can we put back into society, through some system of economics, the wealth which has been taken out of society by another system of economics?* In other words, through Political Economy we must turn the theory of Property against Property in such a way as to create what you German socialists call *community*." [emphasis in original]
—"Letter to Marx" (17 May 1846), in *Selected Writings*

What concretely did Proudhon mean by using property against property? He advocated a "people's bank" which would provide "gratuitous" (interest-free) credit to any worker who wanted to buy his own business. The initial capital of the bank would come from taxes on the wealthier classes. At one point he even appealed to Louis Napoleon—then president and soon-to-be emperor of France—to found a "people's bank." As Marx wrote concerning Proudhon: "to regard *interest-bearing capital* as the *main form of capital* and to try to make a particular form of the credit system, comprising the alleged abolition of interest, the basis for a transformation of society is an out-and-out *petty-bourgeois fantasy*" ("On Proudhon," January 1865 [emphasis in original]). Yet as long as large-scale industry was not yet predominant in France, this fantasy was attractive to many workers, since only a relatively modest amount of capital was required



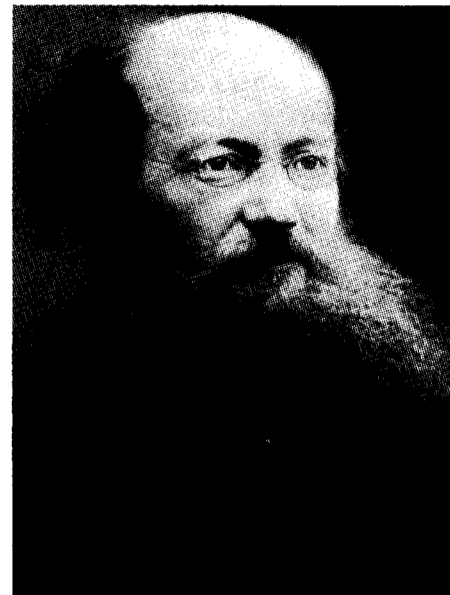
Wide World

Leading anarchist spokesman Peter Kropotkin (inset) supported British and French "democratic" imperialism in World War I.

to buy and operate a small farm or workshop.

The real beginning of the industrial revolution in France dates from the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon in the 1850s and '60s. The partial liberalization of the Bonapartist regime in the early 1860s also allowed the development in France of trade unions of a more or less modern type. Proudhon was hostile to the emergence of a real workers movement. His last work, *The Political Capacity of the Working Class*, published posthumously, is in large measure an attack on the new trade-union movement: "We will soon have heard the last of association, mutualism and progress if the workers, following the example of the great monopolists, succeed in substituting extortion for free competition."

Like many early socialists, Proudhon believed in the so-called "iron law of wages": that any increase in money wages would always be quickly fol-



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lowed by a proportional increase in prices. Hence he denounced strikes—all strikes—as futile if not harmful to the working people's interests:

"While threatening to strike, some of them [unionists], indeed the majority, have demanded an increase in wages, others have demanded a reduction in working hours, and still others both at the same time. Surely they have always known that increased wages and reduced working hours can only lead to a general price increase."

Almost 20 years earlier, Marx had debunked and refuted "the iron law of wages" in *The Poverty of Philosophy*. His most developed, scientific explanation of how trade-union activity can under certain circumstances reduce the rate of exploitation and increase real wages is to be found in *Value, Price and Profit* (1867).

Proudhon's belief that trade unions and strikes could not benefit and might well be harmful to the working class was commonplace among the socialists of his day. But his position on the woman question was singularly reactionary and was criticized as such by friends and colleagues on the left, not to speak of opponents like the prominent woman socialist and novelist George Sand. The theoretical founder of anarchism was an unashamed male chauvinist: "I do not know which woman it was who was shocked to discover that we men think a woman knows enough if she knows enough to mend our shirts and cook us a steak. I am one of those men" (quoted in Edward Hyams, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*). Even Hyams, a sympathetic modern biographer, acknowledges: "Every illiberal, every cruelly reactionary notion ever used against female emancipation by the most extreme anti-feminist, is to be found in Proudhon's *Pornocratie*."

Of extremely puritanical temperament, Proudhon was horrified by the idea of women achieving sexual freedom and fulfillment:

"As for equality in the matter of the senses, its inevitable consequences are free love, condemnation of marriage, condemnation of womanhood, jealousy and secret hatred of men, and, to crown the system, inextinguishable lechery; such, invariably, is the philosophy of the emancipated woman."

Such were the views of a man who is often held up, in contrast to Marx, as an apostle of "anti-authoritarian" socialism based on individual freedom.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Drop Charges Against Jacksonville Three!

In Jacksonville, Florida a group of young activists against racist cop terror are themselves facing vicious repression at the hands of the police. On January 12, two dozen jackbooted SWAT cops in black fatigues stormed the home of four members of the Youth Action Movement and the Anarchist Black Cross Support Group, using as a pretext a traffic violation by member Rob Cluesman. Cluesman was hauled off for interrogation by the Police Intelligence unit, then jailed for three days. Youth Action Movement members were held at gunpoint in their home as the cops conducted a warrantless three-hour search, photographed group members, and confiscated political pamphlets as well as two legally owned shotguns. Cops questioned members about their political activities, demanding to know the sources of money used to distribute free food to the homeless and to publish literature.

This cop provocation was retribution for the Youth Action Movement's courageous defense of Winston Dixon, a 21-year-old black man whose home was invaded by the cops. On 12 December 1995, cops kicked down Dixon's door while he slept. As Dixon explained later, he thought that he could not surrender because he feared that, as a black man, he would have been harmed. Dixon tried to defend himself. He has been charged with first-degree murder in the killing of one of the cops. Youth Action Movement members had defended Dixon by

distributing literature calling for his freedom, stating "Self Defense Is Not a Crime."

The January 12 SWAT team which raided the Youth Action Movement home included a cop who was the best friend of the officer Dixon is accused of slaying. The raid was followed up on January 24, when Youth Action Movement members Chris Harden and Justin Tichy were ostentatiously arrested at work, costing them their jobs. They and Rob Cluesman were jailed for three days and face *five years* in prison on trumped-up charges of "felony criminal mischief" based on false allegations of spray-painting political slogans! The court has offered a plea bargain deal, provided that the group does community service. But a spokesman told *YSp* that the group has rejected this deal: "We're supposed to apologize for being raided!" Their next court date is March 7.

Racist cop terror is the order of the day in America. The cops are the armed fist of the capitalist state. Their war on "crime," "drugs," and "terrorism" is used to jack up the repressive apparatus of the state as it targets blacks, leftists and labor. The Youth Action Movement distributes leftist and anarchist literature and has rallied support for political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal. Members identify with the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, which stood for the right to armed self-defense and organized free breakfast programs for poor youth.

The Panthers were destroyed by police terror and murderous internal factionalism inflamed by the FBI's dirty tricks. For opposing racist cop terror, the Youth Action Movement is in turn now in the cross hairs of the state.

The cop attack on the Youth Action Movement bears certain similarities to the fascistic cop assault on the Leoncavallo youth center in Milano, Italy in December 1995. There, an army of cops laid waste to the center for anarchist activists in an ominous message to the entire left and the workers movement (see *WV* No. 636, 5 January). The police assault on Leoncavallo reminded many people of the late 1960s and '70s, when fascists and various secret police forces worked hand in glove terrorizing Italy. Here at home, the police and fascist Ku Klux Klan are often interpenetrated, especially in the American South. If the cops succeed in victimizing these leftist youths today, they will be emboldened. It is in the interest of all working people, particularly the longshoremen's union of Jacksonville, with its strategic concentration of black labor, to defend these activists against the trumped-up charges. An injury to one is an injury to all! Hands off Winston Dixon and the Jacksonville Three!

The Partisan Defense Committee has sent a letter of support and a contribution toward legal costs. Send donations toward legal defense and letters of support to: Youth Action Movement, Suite 20, 3628 Park Street, Jacksonville, FL 32205.

Defend Affirmative Action—Fight for Open Admissions!

LOS ANGELES—A militant, integrated crowd of 800 students demonstrated at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) on February 21 in defense of affirmative action and in opposition to the racist, misnamed California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), which qualified for the November ballot on that day. The demonstration was organized by the Affirmative Action Coalition, which includes the leaders of the Chicano student group, MEChA, the African Student Union, Asian Pacific Coalition and the teaching assistants union, SAGE.

After a brief rally, the protesters marched across campus to Bunche Hall. Amid chants of "Student Power!" and "Hey hey, Ho ho! UC Regents gotta go!" the SYC offered a revolutionary perspective with a few chants: "1,2,3,4, Time to finish the Civil War! 5,6,7,8, Forward to a workers state!" and "Break with the elephant, break with the ass! Build a party of the working class!" The protest charged into the building and promptly occupied several floors. In response to a call by the coalition leadership to clear the building of faculty and staff, a supporter of the Spartacus Youth Club proposed that staff and faculty be asked to join the sit-in and that a delegation be sent to the several unions representing campus workers. We stressed that any victory against the assault on the right to a decent education requires students linking up with L.A.'s multiracial working class, whose children are the principal target of the racist rollback of affirmative action in education. Thus we called for a fight for open admissions with no tuition to open up higher education for all who want to attend.

A member of Teamsters Local 63 who had been active in the campaign to free class-war prisoner Teamster Jesse Acuna joined the protest, and during the march a nurse from the UC hospital carried one of our signs reading: "Abolish U.C. Administration/Regents: Agents of Racist Capitalism! For Labor/Student Mobilizations to Defend Affirmative Action!" While protesters applauded the SYC's call for allying with campus workers, the student bureaucrats quashed any talk of spreading the protest, claiming to already have a plan—as it turned out, a plan to derail the protest!

UCLA Students Sit In

When cops entered the building, the coalition leaders ordered a full-scale evacuation, without any explanation and without any order from the cops, surprising even some of their own marshals. Protesters then occupied the first floor of Murphy Hall, the main administration building, while a delegation went to the office of Chancellor Chuck Young. The chancellor replied that he couldn't legally go against implementing the Regents' decision or spend university money opposing CCRI, but that he would fund remedial and retention programs, and speak out against CCRI.

Young has presided over fee increases of 300 percent in the past decade, which have already resulted in a sharp decline in minority enrollment. It was Chuck Young who called out the campus cops and Los Angeles police in 1993 against students who were demanding a Chicano Studies department. It was Chuck Young who also used the cops to repress widespread student protests against anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in the fall of 1994. Coalition leaders claim Young's worthless promises represented a total victory. But there can be no illusions in the university administration and Regents—they are on the other side. Those Regents who say they want to maintain affirmative action simultaneously push fee hikes which ultimately have the same effect—a racist purge of the UC system.

With the tremendous decline in the manufacturing base in America, the Regents—and the capitalist class they serve—have little need for educated black and Latino youth for whom there are fewer jobs. But the capitalists still look to groom a tiny layer of the so-called "talented tenth" to administer the ghettos and barrios. Even a modicum of wealth and education, however, does not allow relatively privileged black and Latino youth a chance for full integration into American society, much less a chance to "make it big" as CEOs in the echelons of the ruling class. The permanent precarious status of black youth in particular

highlights that black people in the U.S. are a *race-color caste*, integrated into the economy at its bottom layers but socially segregated. We defend affirmative action in education precisely because it's a small opening to oppressed minorities to have some shot at survival. But only a socialist revolution, sweeping out the system of racist capitalist inequality, can lay the basis for black equality and the actual liberation of all the oppressed. For minority youth under attack at UCLA and in the ghettos, the way to fight racist oppression lies in siding with the multiracial working class, which alone has the power to get rid of capitalism. It will take a revolutionary workers party that serves as a tribune of the oppressed to lead this fight.

One bizarre left group at the UCLA sit-in, the Maoist International Movement (MIM), misses this reality entirely. While they defend affirmative action as "progressive, but severely limited," they raise no demands to open up the universities to the majority of blacks and minorities. Echoing odd pseudo-nationalist dogma, MIM says that blacks are a "colonial nation" and writes off the working class, dismissing the U.S. proletariat as a reactionary part of an "oppressor nation." But black people constitute an oppressed minority whose main impetus for struggle since the time of slavery has been to fight toward full integration—not some "colonial liberation." Black people helped build the wealth of American society first as slaves and today as a strategic layer of the working class.

In fact, the multiracial proletariat in L.A. has played a major role in recent struggles. Many of the university students who today are protesting CCRI were protesting Prop. 187 with L.A. labor when they were in high school. Thousands of high school and junior high students were walking out of classes every day in opposition to anti-immigrant racism. The anti-Prop. 187 struggle contains important lessons. On 16 October 1994, 80,000 students and workers, including contingents from key L.A.

unions, demonstrated against the measure in downtown L.A. The mobilization of workers and youth was diverted into bourgeois electoralism, particularly voting for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Brown, who pushed for the murderous militarization of the U.S. border (as Clinton's White House is now doing). Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein opposed 187 because it "makes no provision whatsoever to deport illegal aliens and reduce their number"(!).

The Democrats cannot fight racism because they are a bourgeois party committed to maintaining capitalism, a system whose bedrock is racial inequality. The SYCs oppose the racist rollback of affirmative action in college admissions, but these measures inherently pose no challenge to the racist status quo and were never more than a paltry concession offered by the bourgeoisie in response to the mass civil rights struggles and Northern ghetto explosions of the 1960s. The civil rights movement stalled because its liberal leadership sought to use the frustration and rage of the masses to pressure the Democrats. The fight for black liberation, including defense of reforms like affirmative action, is key to revolution in the U.S., and can only be won outside the framework of the Democratic Party.

Against the race and class bias of higher education, the SYCs raise a program for open admissions, no tuition and a living stipend for all students. Such demands expose the limits of what is possible within the bounds of capitalist society and become a part of the struggle to eradicate racism and all forms of oppression. Activists who want to win the fight for free, quality education for all should check out the Marxist program of the Spartacus Youth Club. As the youth auxiliary to the Spartacist League, we seek to win students and young workers to a lifetime of struggle on the side of the working class in the fight for socialist revolution. Students must be drawn into an alliance with the working class, which has the strategic weight and interest needed to break up this rotten capitalist society. The youth club is the training ground for the revolutionary communist leadership necessary to direct and win this fight. Join us! ■

Scargill...

(continued from page 4)

Workers Power argued: "Arthur Scargill is a reformist.... He does not believe the working class needs a revolution." True enough. But one can only marvel at the hypocrisy of these snivelling Labour loyalists.

Not Labourism but Communism

As communists, we seek to politically resolve the contradiction that is the British Labour Party and win its working-class base to a revolutionary programme. Brenda Nixon's campaign in opposition to the Labour Party offered an opening to advance such a perspective. That does not translate into any kind of promise of critical support in the future to the SLP, which could equally well seek to advance its electoral opportunities through some kind of popular-front alliance like that of the SLP's equivalent in Scotland, the Scottish Socialist Alliance. This is an alliance of Labourites, ex-Stalinists, Militant Labour and elements of the bourgeois Scottish National Party.

More fundamentally, the SLP tacitly accepts the framework of capitalist exploitation, national oppression, racism

and war, looking not towards a revolutionary future but to a social-democratic past. At a "Defend Clause IV" rally in London last year, Scargill pointed to the post-war Labour Party as having the most radical programme ever seen. A spokesman for the Spartacist League responded:

"If you look at 1945 or any of the Labour governments—the Labour Party has never touched a hair on the head of capitalism...if you leave power in the hands of the capitalists, if you don't actually destroy their state—if you want to talk about Marxism, that is the conclusion Marx drew from the Paris Commune of 1871, that we have to destroy their state machine.... We have to destroy it and construct our own workers state."

We seek to build a revolutionary workers party, one that understands that "Her Majesty's Parliament" is no road to socialism but rather an instrument for the suppression of the working class and oppressed national and ethnic minorities. We call for the abolition of the monarchy, the established church and the House of Lords, leading—as the relationship of forces permits—to confrontations over the institution of the House of Commons and the City of London financiers and capitalists it represents. What is needed is a sweeping social revolution culminating in the workers in power, opening a new line of historical development. ■

Greensboro...

(continued from page 7)

Leninist/Trotskyist party, to act as champion of all the oppressed, as the memory of the working class, drawing the lessons of past struggles, and as its organizer in the revolutionary class battles to come.

At the time of the explosive struggles against Jim Crow segregation in the early 1960s, our predecessor, the Revolutionary Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), noted that the "new level of militancy reached by the Negro people in their struggle for equality" presented "the first significant breakthrough for participation of revolutionary socialists, especially youth, in struggle since the post-war reaction" (see "The Negro Struggle and the Crisis of Leadership," August 1963, in our *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5). The RT fought to create "a Trotskyist tendency in the broad left wing of the movement," calling for "organized self-defense movements in southern cities," and to send party members to the South to work with the new militant organizations which grew out of the sit-ins and freedom rides. But the SWP refused to intervene, instead tailing after the liberal preachers like Martin Luther King while glorifying

Malcolm X, who however was far more militant than they were.

The SWP's failure to build a revolutionary pole in the Southern black struggle helps explain how a strange Maoist outfit like the WVO/CWP could come to be seen as the communists in Greensboro. The CWP's adventurist posturing, attempting to take on the fascist murderers with its own limited forces, was doomed to failure. But the Spartacist program of *revolutionary integrationism*, of mobilizing working-class power in the fight for black freedom, shows the road to really smashing the Klan and Nazis. In November 1982, our call to "Stop the KKK" in its tracks struck a chord in black Washington. With the backing of key area unions, over 5,000 turned out for a labor/black mobilization in the shadow of the Capitol. They carried signs proclaiming, "No More Greensboros! Fascists Off the Streets!" The triumphant demonstrators took the route the Klan had threatened to march. It was black and red, and in their action there was a taste of workers power.

We honor the memory of the Greensboro martyrs as we build an authentically communist party to lead the struggle to sweep away the fascist terrorists and their masters in the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, through workers revolution. ■

Israel: Ethiopian Jews Protest Racist Blood Scandal

When the nearly 60,000 black Jews who had emigrated from Ethiopia to Israel learned that their blood donations were systematically thrown away by the Zionist authorities, it was the last straw. On January 28, some 10,000 Ethiopian immigrants converged on "Labor" prime minister Shimon Peres' office in Jerusalem to voice their outrage over years of unrelenting racist discrimination and ghettoization. Israeli cops responded with the treatment regularly meted out to the subjugated Arab population of the Occupied Territories. Women, children and elderly demonstrators were beaten over the head with clubs and blasted with water cannon, rubber bullets, tear gas and percussion grenades. Dozens were injured as protesters fought back with rocks in a battle lasting several hours.

The government simultaneously tried to deny any knowledge of the racist blood ban while justifying it with the argument that Ethiopians were more likely to carry the HIV virus than the general population. But health authorities test all donated blood for HIV, and the decision to dump Ethiopian blood goes back at least nine years, well before AIDS was deemed to be a major health concern in Israel. As one black protester said, "This isn't about AIDS, it's racism." Even a former head of the Ministry of Health, Knesset (parliament) member Yoram Lass, denounced the policy as "racist and unfounded scientifically." He caustically noted that despite the higher incidence of AIDS in the U.S., the authorities would not dream of banning blood donations by American Jews.

The ferocity of the Ethiopian immigrants' protest shook Israel's rulers. "It was like the *intifada* all over again," said Jerusalem's chief of police, referring to the Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories which began in the late 1980s (*Jerusalem Post*, 10 February). In response to the *Intifada*, Israel increasingly sealed off the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. Today the Palestinians are confined to impoverished ghettos under the nominal control of Yasir Arafat's puppet Palestinian Authority. At the same time, the Israeli bourgeoisie has moved to displace Palestinian labor, concentrated in construction and agriculture, by importing thousands of foreign workers from as far away as Romania and Thailand.

Coincidentally, the Ethiopians' protest occurred 20 years after a March 1976 Israeli Arab demonstration in which six were killed by a brutal police assault. The hundreds of thousands of Arabs who are resident in Israel are at best second-class citizens. The Ethiopians, although a small and somewhat marginal sector, are part of Israeli Jewish society itself. The recent anti-racist protest represents a crack within the Israeli garrison state and a potential fracturing of the chauvinist Zionist consensus.

The "ingathering" of the Ethiopian Jews in melodramatic airlifts like "Operation Moses" in 1984 and "Operation Solomon" seven years later was held up by the Zionist rulers as ultimate proof that Israel was the homeland for all Jews everywhere. But from the day they arrived, these black Jews have been demeaned, humiliated and insulted by their self-styled saviors. Families were broken up and shipped off to desolate "development towns" on the edge of the desert, where many continue to live in trailer parks, subsisting on miserly government welfare payments. To satisfy the dictates of the Orthodox rabbinical



"This isn't about AIDS. It's racism," said Ethiopian immigrant at 10,000-strong protest against Zionist authorities' dumping of blood donations. Below: Police charge Ethiopian demonstrators in Jerusalem.



hierarchy, Ethiopian men who were already circumcised were forced to undergo humiliating symbolic "conversions" and young children were separated from their parents and carted off to religious boarding schools. Many Ethiopians have not even been able to marry, as the semi-theocratic Zionist state does not recognize secular ceremonies and rabbis refuse to ordain weddings involving Ethiopians.

A banner at the January 28 demonstration denounced "Apartheid in Israel." A black army reservist, Benny Mikonen, explained bitterly: "We live in separate neighborhoods, we go to separate schools." In many cases, they have been banned even from public swimming pools, and Ethiopian families moving into white neighborhoods have been confronted by racist mobs. Not surprisingly, among the most conspicuous in their bigotry are the racist American Jews who moved to Israel in order to live in a "white Jewish only" society.

The plight of the Ethiopian Jews is a reflection of the deeply and historically racist character of Israeli society, premised on the conquest and subjugation of one people by another. Zionism's founding fathers, like Theodore Herzl, were West European petty-bourgeois intellectuals who shared the racist, colonialist outlook of the imperialist rulers. Their

cynical appeal for colonizing Palestine—"a land without people for a people without land"—was suffused with the view that the Arab inhabitants of the region were not people at all.

At the same time, Herzl & Co. viewed with contempt the impoverished "Ostjuden" of Russia and East Europe, whom they sought to use as human fodder for their scheme to create a "normal" (capitalist) "Jewish state." Indeed, but for relative handfuls of ideological Zionists, Jewish migration to Palestine/Israel has always been propelled by a combination of manipulation and coercion, from the post-World War II influx of Holocaust survivors to the latest wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

A 1945 survey of Dachau concentration camp survivors showed that only 10 percent wanted to emigrate to Palestine. But Zionist leaders like David Ben-Gurion colluded with anti-Semitic imperialist immigration authorities to cut off other options for the Jewish refugees (*Jerusalem Post*, 15 April 1995). And the post-1948 *aliya* ("ascent") of Near Eastern "Oriental" Jews, the *Mizrachi*, was largely fueled by a deliberate campaign of provocation and terror—including synagogue bombings!—orchestrated by the Israeli Mossad secret police.

This fact, much denied by the Zionists as an anti-Semitic calumny, is confirmed

even by an ideological adviser to former right-wing *Mizrachi* Likud politician David Levy. In a recent article in *Ha'aretz* (20 October 1995), Sami Sheerit wrote that "the *Mossad*, in its early days, established a 'Moslem' underground in Arab countries to threaten and harass Jews. In a number of cases these same Zionists even used live ammunition in order to prod and hasten Jews to immigrate to Israel" (translated in *News From Within*, January 1996).

While the Israeli rulers treat the Arab population as "subhuman," the Hebrew-speaking oppressor nation is itself divided not only by class but by caste, with the European-derived Ashkenazi elite at the top and the Oriental Jews—who, to this day, continue to be described as "human dust"—at the bottom. Far from being welcomed to the "promised land" as the fulfillment of a mythical "messianic legacy," the Oriental Jews were forced to Israel to provide a pool of cheap labor to compete with and replace Arab workers.

In many cases, their hostility to the Ashkenazi establishment and their social position just a notch above the Palestinians has led Oriental Jews to embrace the ultrachauvinist Likud. The fascist who assassinated former "Labor" prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, for example, is a *Mizrachi*. So, however, is Mordechai Vanunu, the courageous nuclear technician who revealed the massive scale of Israel's nuclear arsenal and has languished in solitary confinement for his humanitarian act. In the early 1970s, disaffection with Ashkenazi racism led to the formation of radical *Mizrachi* groups like the Israeli Black Panthers.

Against various New Left and pseudo-Trotskyist currents who in order to tail Palestinian nationalism wrote off the entire Hebrew-speaking proletariat as a "colonial-settler" population, the Spartacist tendency has insisted on the need for workers revolution to destroy the Zionist state from within. We insist that the national rights of both the Hebrew-speaking and Palestinian peoples can only be equitably achieved in the framework of a socialist federation of the Near East.

The bankruptcy of Palestinian nationalism is symbolized by PLO chief Yasir Arafat's accommodation with the Zionist rulers in enforcing the phony "peace accords." The PLO's capitulation to the Zionist rulers has provided an opening for reactionary Islamic fundamentalist outfits like Hamas, which has responded to unremitting Zionist oppression with a campaign of indiscriminate terror against Jews. Criminal acts such as the February 25 "suicide bomb" detonated on a bus in Jerusalem, killing 23 people—in response to the Israeli secret police murder of Palestinian nationalist Yahya Ayyash—only serve to harden Israeli Jews' support for the racist rulers.

The key lies in breaking Israeli workers from the stranglehold of Zionist chauvinism, as well as breaking Palestinian Arabs from petty-bourgeois nationalism, and winning them to the banner of a multinational Trotskyist vanguard party which champions national justice for the Palestinian Arab people as part of the struggle against the many-sided oppression and exploitation that defines Israeli capitalism. Israel out of the Occupied Territories! For a socialist federation of the Near East! ■

Tracks...

(continued from page 1)

railroads and mass transit systems. As railroad magnates scramble for ever greater profits—and the government at all levels slashes away at everything from welfare to health care to public transportation in order to boost corporate America's bottom line—the lives of workers and passengers have increasingly become an expendable commodity. "New Jersey Transit placed dollars ahead of lives," charged a lawyer representing victims and survivors of the Jersey City crash. It's the same everywhere, from municipal bus and subway systems to giant freight carriers like CSX to the dangerously decrepit, undermanned and outmoded air traffic control system.

Work on the railroads can be dirty and dangerous even in the best of circumstances. Rail industry spokesmen and their government patrons congratulate themselves on their safety record, crowing that "only" 13,000 rail workers were seriously injured and 31 killed on the job in 1994. The conditions created by corporate greed and capitalist decay ensure that accidents are waiting to happen. John DeCurtis, one of the engineers in the New Jersey collision, with 39 years on the job, had been working a nearly 15-hour nighttime split shift when he was crushed under the roof of his cab. The automatic braking system that could have saved his life had been removed—to save on maintenance costs.

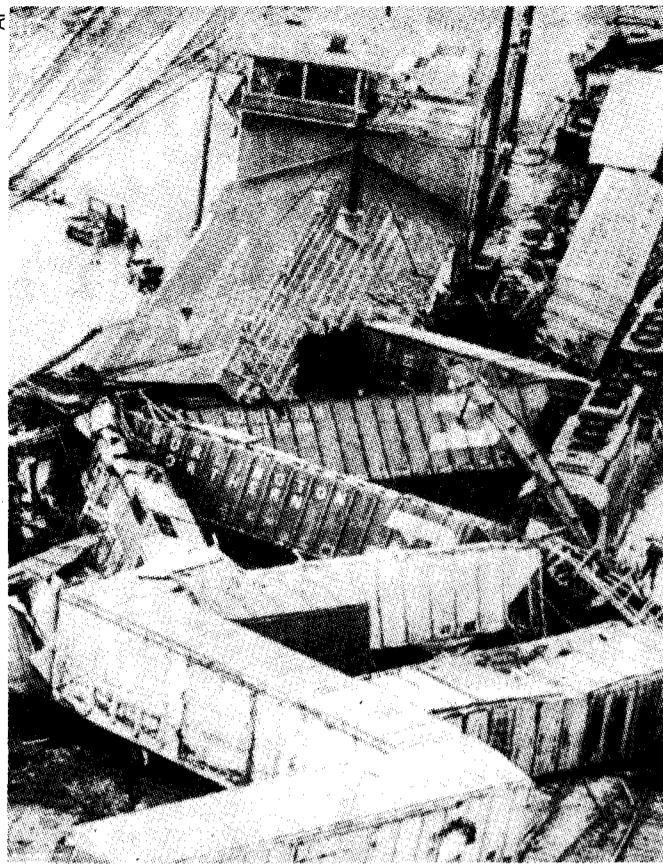
Looking at transport safety, it could not be clearer that the bourgeois state, viewed by reformists as a neutral arbiter between capital and labor, acts as the executive committee of the capitalist class. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), supposedly entrusted with overseeing safety, is "in bed with the railroads," remarks a lawyer who specializes in rail safety. Many FRA inspectors are former railroad employees whose old jobs are held open for them as rewards for not causing trouble. Reagan's mass firing of striking PATCO air traffic controllers in 1981 opened the way for a massive speedup and deterioration of conditions in airport traffic management. A year earlier, under Democrat Jimmy Carter, the 1980 Staggers Act deregulating the freight rail industry provoked a frenzy of layoffs and speedup: between 1980 and 1993, nearly three out of five rail jobs were eliminated—and the bosses continue to slash away.

The underlying reasons for the slaughter on the rails can be summed up in a few statistics: since World War II, the annual freight tonnage carried by the railroads is up by 30 percent, the amount of track is down by half, and the workforce has been slashed to barely a quarter of its former size. This has meant a bonanza for the bosses—1993 profits totaled \$2.25 billion—and dangerous traffic congestion and horrendous speedup for the workers. It's a recipe for disaster.

In response to questions about the latest wave of accidents, a spokesman for Clinton's Department of Transportation said that no safety measure should cost more than \$2.6 million for every life it is expected to save (*New York Times*, 25 February). Even this cynical calculus of death is utterly arbitrary and highly suspect. MARC is now promising to shell out \$1.6 million to install emergency exit windows on its trains—some \$200,000 each for the eight people, mainly black youths, who died because they couldn't get out of the burning wreck. NJ Transit says that eliminating nighttime split shifts will cost it about \$67,000 for each of the three fatalities in its crash. And the "two-way end of train" braking systems that could have stopped the runaway trains in Cajon Pass and Leadville cost only \$7,000—that's \$3,500 per dead worker!

In any rationally organized society, cheap, safe mass transit—like decent and affordable housing and free, quality health care and education—would be

Automatic braking device could have prevented St. Paul, Minnesota freight train crash.



considered a necessary public service. But capitalism, with its frenzied competition for profits, is hardly rational. Only under a socialist, planned economy can there be a rational distribution of resources—democratically determined by elected workers councils (soviets)—to harness modern technology with the aim of providing public services to society as a whole.

Drug Witchhunt and Industrial Murder

Virtually without exception, after every transport accident these days the bosses, along with their government and media spokesmen, point the finger at "human error," trying to blame the workers whose deaths they themselves caused. In an article on the January 6 Metro crash, a *Washington Post* (2 February) headline charged, "Drugs Found In Blood of Train Driver." A *New York Times* (12 February) piece on NJ Transit driver John DeCurtis declared, "Engineer in Fatal Collision Had a Record of Running Signals." Likewise with the Maryland crash, where the *Washington Post* (18 February) reported, "MARC Train Was Speeding Before Crash, Signal Unheeded."

The "drugs" found in Metro driver Darel Callands' blood were minimal doses of a cold medication. And the other attempts to grotesquely scapegoat the dead workers had even less substance to them. DeCurtis had earned a number of official commendations for safety and punctuality, and the dead MARC crew members all had spotless records ranging over 25 to 30 years' service. DeCurtis had been disciplined twice in a 39-year career for missing red lights, but numerous rail workers at both the New Jersey and Maryland lines told of hundreds of cases of faulty signals, showing red where it should have been green or vice versa, leading to near-collisions or trumped-up disciplinary measures against engineers.

As for the MARC train, there was no signal to "heed" in time to prevent a collision. Engineer Richard Orr was going just over 60 mph when a red light appeared through a heavy snowfall. But that was the "home signal" located at the junction, where the collision occurred. The pre-junction warning (or "distance") signal, which may have showed yellow (indicating a maximum speed of 30 mph) or green (70 mph), was located before the train's last stop at Kensington station, three miles back. In fact, at one time there had been a warning signal approaching the junction, but it was removed three years ago as part of a CSX track "upgrade"—to save money!

This Orwellian form of "upgrading"—in which safety is downgraded—is today the norm on U.S. rail lines. A wide range of modern technology exists to make high-speed rail traffic safe. For example,

"automatic train control" (ATC) continuously monitors train speed and track conditions using computers, electronic sensors and on-board signals. *But it is not being used.* On the contrary, over the last few decades, existing older safety devices have been torn out and discarded.

The 1920 Signal Inspection Act—passed in the wake of the deadliest rail accident in U.S. history, a 1918 crash in Nashville that killed 101 people—mandated that major passenger rail lines be equipped with a braking system which automatically stopped a train after going through a red signal. In 1947, this "automatic train stop" (ATS) was extended to all passenger trains going faster than 80 mph. The railroad bosses' answer to this was not to install the safety devices, but to order a top speed of 79 mph. And on top of this they have systematically removed such devices where they existed. ATS was installed on New Jersey tracks, for example, in the 1930s—but removed in the 1960s! Today, only 9,600 miles of track across the U.S. is equipped with some sort of automatic braking, largely restricted to (relatively) high-speed lines like Amtrak's Boston-Washington corridor.

At the same time, there has been a massive decline in the workforce. In the 1950s and '60s, the rail barons and government teamed up in a union-bashing campaign against "featherbedding" and "job-trusting." Between 1946 and 1984, the number of freight rail jobs was slashed from nearly 1,400,000 to 323,000—resulting in a 650 percent rise in labor productivity. Well under 200,000 jobs remain. The kind of split shift worked by John DeCurtis the night he died is widespread throughout the industry—

even more so for freight engineers—despite numerous studies and even more numerous fatal collisions caused by "acute and chronic fatigue." Working hours are still regulated by a 1907 law that allows 16-hour shifts and 112-hour workweeks! Union Pacific engineer Jack Bokay, who works 70 hours per week in shifts lasting 10 or 12 hours on an unpredictable, rotating schedule, told *Trains* magazine (June 1995): "I stay awake because I'm scared to death."

For Union Safety Committees!

Transport safety goes hand in hand with union power. Workers must be able to shut down unsafe equipment and work-sites with the full backup—including strike action—of the unions. Particularly in the rail industry, long overtime hours are not only onerous but downright deadly. With stagnant or declining pay scales, it's no wonder that even high-seniority workers routinely accept absurd amounts of "voluntary" overtime. The fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay is not only necessary to combat layoffs, but is literally a question of life and death for rail workers. Every real measure to defend jobs and working conditions means a bitter fight against the rail corporations and the bosses' state—and a political struggle against their labor lieutenants.

The rail unions are hamstrung by misleaders who bow to the government's arsenal of anti-labor laws and promote divisive craft unionism. Since the 1894 Pullman strike led by socialist Eugene V. Debs, which was crushed by federal troops and legions of armed strikebreakers, the capitalist rulers have developed and invoked every kind of law to prevent rail workers from striking. The Railway Labor Act of 1926 virtually outlaws strikes by locking unions into endless "cooling off" periods and government-imposed "mediation." Now Congress is threatening legislation along the lines of New York's Taylor Law, which would ban all strikes by public transit workers. Far from fighting against such slave-labor laws, the union bureaucrats hide behind them as an all-purpose excuse to prevent and sabotage struggle.

In an industry where every strike immediately confronts coordinated company and government opposition, rail workers are saddled with a slew of backstabbing bureaucrats, each with his own ax to grind. On the Soo Line, for example, a workforce of less than 5,000 is divided among 17 different unions. Craft divisions doubly undermine union power, reinforcing the racial and sexual discrimination which is notorious in the rail industry. A class-struggle leadership would fight for a union hiring hall and implement measures to reach out to and train minority and women workers. What is needed is the single industrial union of railway workers that Debs fought for in his day.



Depression-era billboard. "What's good for GM is good for America"? Auto industry magnates have made billions by sabotaging mass transit.

Margaret Bourke-White

Oakland...

(continued from page 16)

teachers and students called by Advocates for African American Students. Black teachers held up a banner reading "We Demand Quality Education." The school board is trying to prey on the desperation of poor black parents, for whom schools are little more than lousy childcare centers for their children and for whom the idea that an education might be a ticket out of a life of poverty is a cruel joke. Now they are trying to play off the heavily black flatlands against the largely white Oakland hills, where support for the teachers strike has been stronger, reflecting those who can still have aspirations that better schools will translate into a better life for their kids. To bridge this divide, which reflects both race and class, the fight for free, quality, integrated education for all must be actively championed in fighting to win the Oakland teachers strike.

But the OEA leadership has back-pedaled on even its original demands. In January, the union withdrew its demand for a retroactive pay increase for 1994-95, offering a redesigned pay raise package that would give more to the higher-paid teachers and less to those with lower seniority. This came together with a proposal for an enhanced retirement package designed to get rid of older, more experienced teachers. "You get rid of the highly paid employees and bring in younger employees. That saves the district money," boasted Ward Rountree, co-executive director of the OEA (*Oakland Tribune*, 12 January). The school board wasn't buying, and the OEA leadership was forced into a strike that

they obviously didn't want.

Rather than mobilizing mass integrated pickets of the teachers and their supporters, scab "substitute" teachers (who are paid twice the wages of regular substitutes) are allowed to walk across the picket lines with no trouble. But if the OEA leadership is weak-kneed, the leadership of the Alameda County Central Labor Council (CLC) are downright traitors. At a labor history conference last weekend on the 1946 Oakland general strike—an AFL-organized action which was stabbed in the back by the Teamsters abetted by the then-separate CIO—Owen Marron, current president of the Alameda CLC, argued that the vital lesson was not to let petty jurisdictional disputes get in the way of "labor unity." What hypocrisy when he refuses to support the OEA strike!

Echoing the divide-and-rule tactics of the school board, Marron hides behind the "concerns" of the other school unions that more money for the teachers will mean layoffs for them. This was put most baldly by Morris Tatum, chief steward of AFSCME Local 2078, which represents school janitors. Attacking the teachers for pushing for bigger raises than the other school unions had been given, Tatum argued that in order for the district "to come up with the money they'll have to lay off classified employees" (*Oakland Tribune*, 22 February). This is the typical line of business union bureaucrats, who pit one sector of the workers against another in vying for a bigger share of the limited pie offered by the bosses.

For Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!

Although not directly analogous, the attempt by the Oakland school board and

its "community" allies to play the race card for the purpose of strikebreaking is evocative of the 1968 New York teachers strike. In the name of "community control," black nationalists, New Leftists and liberals stood together with the Ford Foundation and the city administration in trying to set the ghetto poor against striking teachers.

In the 1968 NYC strike, the Spartacist League called for victory to the strike, while not downplaying our denunciation of the racist union tops of the ilk of United Federation of Teachers (UFT) leader Albert Shanker. In a leaflet titled "Beware Liberal Union Busters," we called "for a radical alliance of teachers with the doubly oppressed black and Puerto Rican working people and the first steps towards building a labor party to lead united, militant struggle against the liberal union-busters." The leaflet emphasized: "No change in the structure of the school administration can 'reform' ghetto education without a revolutionary transformation of the society itself."

The OEA is certainly not equivalent to Shanker's UFT bureaucracy, which was utterly indifferent to the needs of the black community and which inflamed the situation by its own racism. Nor are those on the Oakland school board, the NAACP or black preachers identical to the black nationalists of the '60s, but they represent the same social strata. Theirs is the voice of a black middle class who were the beneficiaries of the "war on poverty" programs. Having "made it" themselves, they are looking to protect their positions in the over-bloated Oakland school district administration. While weeping crocodile tears for "the children," and preying on the

despair of the ghetto poor against the "greedy" teachers strike, they don't give a damn about smaller class sizes, providing current textbooks and decent education for the black poor and their children. On the contrary, they see any improvement in school conditions as a challenge to their share at the public trough.

But rather than fighting to wage the kind of social struggle that is needed, which would mean going up against the CLC labor bureaucrats and the Oakland black Democratic Party administration of Elihu Harris, OEA president Ben Visnick is banking on influencing the upcoming March Oakland city elections. Visnick is calling for "replacing recalcitrant school board members." Indeed, these elections seem to have attracted a whole slew of self-proclaimed leftists and wannabe bureaucrats who smell an opportunity to cash in their chips for the "big time" of city posts.

Oakland teachers are not the only ones under the gun. Across the state, urban schools are feeling Governor Wilson's racist cutback ax. Recently, San Diego teachers waged a one-week strike, which had strong public support, winning a 14 percent salary increase over three years. What we wrote in 1993 is still true today (WV No. 586, 22 October 1993):

"What is urgently needed is a broad social struggle—a statewide teachers strike, backed up by the power of all labor, to save California schools. To organize such a struggle requires forging a new class-struggle leadership in the union movement to break with the Democratic Party exploiters. In this epoch of capitalist decay, it is no less true than it was in Karl Marx's time that it is the communists who fight for universal public education. For the right of free, quality public education for all!" ■

Fundamentally, the union tops accept the economic dictates of the capitalist profit system and act as its enforcers. When Amtrak laid off 4,600 union workers a year ago, Transportation Communications Union president Scardelletti declared, "Amtrak doesn't have much choice when it's about to run out of money" (*AFL-CIO News*, 9 January 1995). Now, with a planned merger between Union Pacific and Southern Pacific threatening another 3,400 jobs, the bureaucrats offer nothing more than impotent appeals to Congressional Democrats to lobby against the merger. And while refusing to lift a finger against layoffs, the union misleaders buy into the racist, anti-labor "war on drugs" and promote class-collaborationist safety committees in which management has the upper hand.

High Tech and Capitalist Greed

The huge profit being made in freight rail, particularly containerized shipments, lies behind the Maryland and New Jersey collisions. Amtrak (like most commuter lines) uses track owned and controlled by the freight companies, under a 25-year "Basic Agreement" which expires on April 30. Federal legislation nominally giving passenger trains the right of way is routinely ignored by freight carriers trying to meet shipment deadlines, so there is a deadly scramble for use of the rails. Moreover, the long, lumbering freight trains get by with fewer signals—which are costly to install and maintain—and need flat track. So "extra" signals go by the board, as does "super-elevation" of the rails—akin to banking of highway turns—which allows trains to safely take curves at higher speeds.

None of these problems pose technological difficulties. In Japan and much of West Europe, there is genuinely high-speed rail service, like the Japanese "bullet train" and the French TGV, with cruising speeds around 180 mph. Despite a frequency of one train every few minutes, in 32 years of service the bullet train has never had a single accident. Passenger trains by and large ride on dedicated tracks, separated from slower-moving freight trains and isolated from

auto traffic by overhead bridges and tunnels. Now Japan and Germany, among others, are moving toward development of the next generation of high-speed rail service, the so-called maglev (magnetic levitation) trains, which ride suspended by magnets at speeds of 300 mph or more.

Why the difference with the U.S.? It's not simply a question of Europeans preferring rail travel while Americans like cars. It's a matter of capitalist priorities. The ruling classes of Japan and Germany determined that they need efficient, advanced railways both to facilitate economic development and expansion and for strategic military purposes (Germany's planned maglev line is projected to eventually extend to Warsaw and Moscow!). So they have invested the funds needed for research, development and maintenance. But the impact of capitalist decay and austerity is being felt in Europe as well. One of the issues which provoked the recent French strike wave centered on rail workers was a government plan to cut out unprofitable stops.

Sixty years ago, the U.S. had more, and more frequent, rail services running at speeds over 100 mph than it does today. Today, as the *New York Times* (18 February) remarked, "the railroad industry is still mired in its Industrial Revolution roots." Following World War II, the rail companies decided that passenger service was not profitable, so they allowed it to go down the drain. At the same time, the government determined that its defense interests and the overall development of U.S. capitalism were best served through a "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways." Despite the fact that the death rate per passenger-mile for car travel is some ten times higher than it is for rail, intercity and commuter trains today account for less than 2 percent of all passenger-miles traveled in the U.S.

What led to the predominance of highways over railroads was not economic rationality but a concerted campaign by sectors of the American capitalist class to destroy traction (rail) passenger transport. "The Great Transportation Conspiracy," as an article in *Harper's* (February 1981) called it, involved a years-long effort beginning in the 1930s to secretly

buy up electric-powered streetcar lines and commuter rail services—with the sole aim of dismantling them—in more than 45 cities, from New York to Los Angeles. The key players in this conspiracy were General Motors (in which DuPont had a controlling interest through the mid-1960s), Firestone Tire, Standard Oil and other auto-related and oil giants. At the same time, auto industry lobbying led to the creation of the Highway Trust Fund, which has provided mammoth subsidies for road transportation. This is what former GM CEO Charles Wilson meant when he boasted, "What's good for GM is good for America"! The lopsided influence of this particular sector of the U.S. bourgeoisie underscores the irrationality of capitalism.

By the late 1960s, passenger rail service had so deteriorated that the government was compelled to step in, with a 1970 law setting up Amtrak as a public corporation. Even so, with ever more stringent cutbacks in government funding, Amtrak has to compete on the capitalist marketplace. Today, it gets only 20 percent of its operating costs from government subsidies, the lowest of any rail passenger service in the world. This has meant sharp cuts in service and next to nothing for maintenance, upgrading and capital investment. Having instituted massive layoffs and the elimination of a third of its remaining daily runs only a year ago, the passenger carrier is now readying another round of cuts and layoffs, mandated by the Amtrak Reform and Privatization Act sponsored by professional union-haters like Staten Island Republican Susan Molinari.

More far-sighted spokesmen for American capitalism, like *Scientific American*, have long argued for major investment in an efficient mass transit system. But with the ruling class clamoring for a "balanced budget" at the expense of school lunches and vaccinations for poor and minority children, the U.S. is not about to invest the billions needed to provide decent transportation for working people. The bourgeoisie hasn't even invested in keeping up the country's air traffic control system, and while big-business CEOs may not take Amtrak, they do fly. With

congested airport traffic regulated by computer systems based on vacuum tube technology that hasn't been used even in household TV sets for decades, a major article in the *New York Times* (29 January) warned that all too often "skill and luck substitute for technology."

John DeCurtis, Richard Orr and the young Job Corps trainees who perished in the recent accidents were all victims of a callous system that sacrifices everything to inflate its profit margin. It will take workers revolution led by a Leninist vanguard party to provide efficient, safe mass transit and the other basic necessities of life for all working people. As we wrote a few years ago in "New York Bridges Are Falling Down" (WV No. 456, 1 July 1988):

"The resources to maintain and rebuild the infrastructure of this country cannot be squeezed out of an economic base increasingly made of junk bonds and junk food joints....

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

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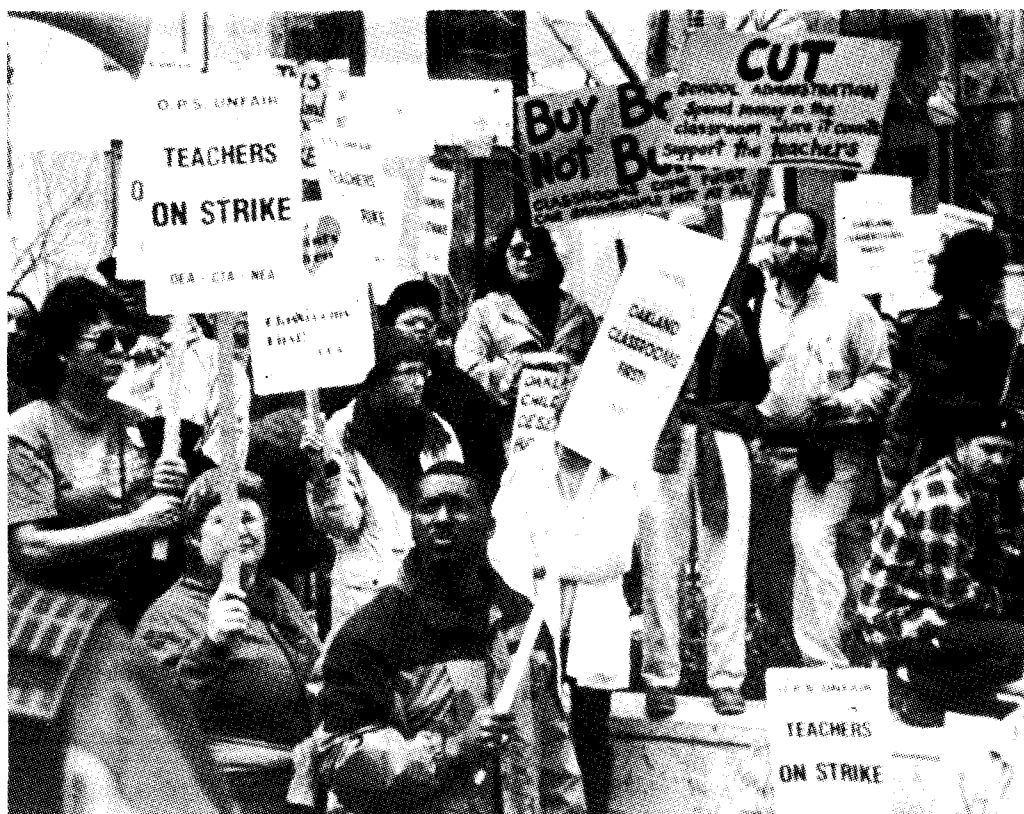
Victory to Oakland Teachers Strike!

OAKLAND, California—On February 15, some 3,500 classroom teachers and other school workers walked out in their first open-ended strike since 1986. The teachers, organized in the Oakland Education Association (OEA), have been without a contract since June 1994, and have not had a pay raise in five years! A two-day strike last November and a one-day strike last month did nothing to move the intransigent Oakland district school board. Pleading poverty, the board has offered the teachers a measly 3.73 percent wage increase, while dodging the union's vital demand to reduce class size. After the board again broke off talks on February 22, one of its negotiators accelerated her Jaguar through a line of strikers, injuring a teacher.

California, which used to boast of itself as the "education state," now ranks second to the bottom of the 50 states in the money it spends on public schools. This is the legacy of the 1978 Proposition 13 tax revolt of elderly white middle-class property owners who didn't want their "tax dollars" going to fund government programs seen as benefiting the young, especially the ghetto and barrio poor. In black Oakland, where minorities comprise 91 percent of the student population, the average pay for teachers ranks second to lowest in the state. Experienced teachers continually leave to go to other districts where they can make thousands of dollars more.

With not enough money for supplies, Oakland teachers routinely spend hundreds of dollars of their own money to buy books and other vital teaching material. Classrooms are grossly overcrowded. An English teacher told *Workers Vanguard* of having 51 students in her high-school freshman class. School buildings are falling apart. Last year parents at Lazear Elementary School, who are overwhelmingly Latino, kept their kids out for three weeks in protest over the 40-year-old "portable" classrooms with no windows, poor ventilation, leaking roofs and rats.

In this context, the teachers' demands have found a lot of resonance among



Oakland teachers strike rally, February 20. Teachers' battle must unite labor with black and Latino poor in fight against school cutbacks, union-busting.

parents, students and minority communities who want a decent education, not to have youth locked in overcrowded, undersupplied and understaffed holding pens. During the two-day teachers strike in November, the *Oakland Tribune* (30 November 1995) headlined its article, "Teacher Walkout Strikes a Chord." At the time, some 2,000 teachers, parents and students came out to protest in support of the teachers.

The current strike has had significant, integrated support. Well over 80 percent of the students and workforce stayed out of the schools in the initial days of the strike. Organized groups of students and parents have come out to striking teachers' rallies. On February 20, a 1,500-strong protest demonstration in support of the teachers marched through downtown Oakland. With California governor Pete Wilson going all-out in his racist drive to abolish affirmative action not only in university admissions but also

in employment, the Oakland teachers strike has the potential to mobilize the integrated unions in the East Bay together with the black and minority poor, parents and students in a real struggle against the gutting of public education.

Here are to be found the forces to build mass, integrated picket lines of the teachers and their supporters. Appeals should be made to all workers and unions involved in the school system: custodians and clerical workers, and also those who make deliveries to the schools. The OEA must also seek to mobilize high school and junior high students to join them in this struggle. *Build, respect and enforce the picket lines!*

But this is not the way the OEA leadership has been conducting the strike. Accepting the framework set by the school board, it simply campaigns to find money for the teachers through cutting the grotesquely bloated school administration. Scandalously, the Ala-

meda County Central Labor Council has refused to give official sanction to, much less support, the teachers strike. The excuse that the OEA is not an AFL-CIO affiliate has served as an alibi for outright scabbing on the strike by more than half a dozen other school unions. In doing so, the AFL-CIO unions in the school district are scabbing on the possibility for a better education for their children.

Race-Baiting and Strikebreaking

Both the potential impact of a teachers strike and the weakness of the OEA leadership, which dawdled for 19 months before finally calling a strike, were not lost on the Oakland school district bosses. Together with a prominent black preacher, the Rev. J. Alfred Smith Sr., and the new "black empowerment" head of the Oakland NAACP, Shannon Reeves, they tried to whip up opposition to the OEA strike by painting a picture of a black community being mugged by an allegedly "white" union. Yet more than one-third of the teachers are black!

At a public school board meeting in January, the new black school district president, Lucella Harrison, let loose against student supporters of the teachers, reviling them as "just rebellious white students from Berkeley" who were attacking "a predominantly black board" (*East Bay Express*, 26 January). When the teachers struck for one day, on January 30, Rev. Smith pontificated, "The Oakland Unified School District may have African American administrators, but the majority of teachers are white persons who live outside of Oakland" (*Oakland Tribune*, 31 January). Smith, who doesn't live in Oakland himself, was echoed by NAACP leader Reeves, who declared that it was "educational treason to tell students not to come to school" during the teachers strike.

The night before the strike began, this race-baiting, union-busting bid was challenged at a press conference/rally at the school administration building of

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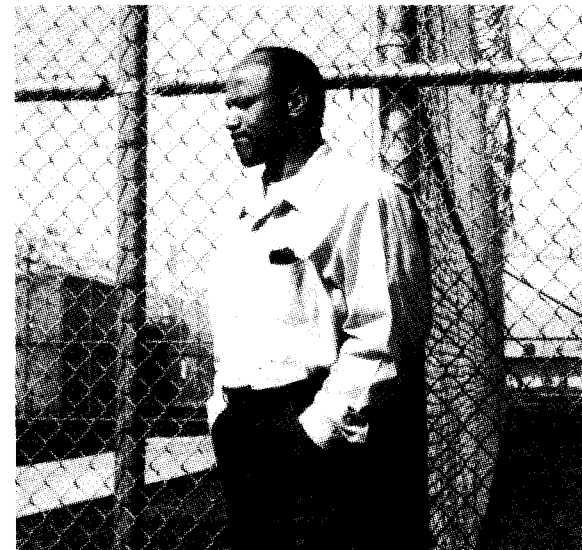
New Appeal Filed for Former Black Panther Free Geronimo Now!

LOS ANGELES, February 26—This afternoon, attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Stuart Hanlon announced the filing of a petition for a new trial for Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt). Noting that Geronimo has spent 25 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, a statement distributed at the L.A. press conference said, "He was a victim of the FBI's infamous COINTELPRO operation which worked hand-in-hand with the Los Angeles Police Department to convict an innocent man because of his leadership in the Black Panther Party." Geronimo has been denied parole 13 times. His last appeal for a new trial was dismissed in less than one day.

Among the speakers at the press conference today

were Jim McCloskey, a lay minister who uncovered new evidence linking the murder for which Geronimo was accused to two petty criminals on the fringes of the Black Panthers. Jeanne Hamilton, a juror in Geronimo's first trial, outlined the evidence that the state withheld from the jury. Also speaking was Wes Swearingen, a former FBI agent who testified that the FBI hid and likely destroyed wiretap transcripts proving Geronimo was 400 miles away from the crime, and Emory Douglas, one of six former Panthers who have recently come forward as witnesses for Geronimo.

This new legal defense effort must serve as a springboard for mass, labor-centered mobilizations to demand: *Freedom now for Geronimo!*



Jonathan Eubanks

Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), America's foremost class-war prisoner.