

## Military Terror, Islamic Reaction, IMF Austerity

# Civil War Bleeds Algeria

### For a Bolshevik Workers Party— For Permanent Revolution!

As one grisly massacre follows another in Algeria, the area south of the capital, Algiers, has become known as the "Triangle of Death." Hundreds of defenseless villagers have been killed and mutilated and scores of women kidnapped in recent weeks, bringing to more than 100,000 the death toll in the five-year civil war between the military-backed nationalist regime and Islamic fundamentalists.

The fundamentalist insurgency began after the army, fearing an electoral victory by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in early 1992, canceled a second round of balloting and outlawed the FIS. The regime responded to the revolt with a murderous state of siege. Commando units, known as "ninjas," terrorize the plebeian quarters of the cities while villages have been subjected to napalm bombing, helicopter gunship attacks and artillery barrages. For their part, the Islamic fundamentalists have particularly targeted unveiled women, trade unionists, teachers and journalists.

Algeria is today an unlivable hell for

ment figures range to 30 percent, and 150,000 more workers face layoffs as the government moves to privatize hundreds of public enterprises next year. Intent on achieving a stable "business climate" for exploitation of Algeria's vast oil and natural gas resources, the imperialist powers are pressuring President Liamine Zeroual and the military to form a coalition government with the FIS.

On September 24, the Army of Islamic Salvation (AIS), the military arm of the FIS, called on its followers to "stop combat operations" for the first time in the civil war. The unilateral truce was declared two months after Zeroual ordered the release of imprisoned FIS leader Abassi Madani and is reportedly part of a deal to integrate AIS *mujahedin* (holy warriors) into Zeroual's armed forces. Yet the bloodletting has only accelerated.

Both the rival fundamentalists of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and hardline "éradicateurs" in the army and police are intent on scuttling any deal between Zeroual and the FIS. The latest wave of massacres, mainly targeting villages in



"Ninjas," government commando units, terrorize poor quarters of Algerian cities.

the mass of the population. Amid the maelstrom of cruel atrocities on both sides, urban workers and poor peasants chafe under austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and enforced by the military-backed regime. Wages have plummeted by more than a third in the past three years, while necessities which were previously subsidized by the state have become virtually inaccessible. Masses of youth with no hope of a job line the streets of the cities, providing a ready audience for the fundamentalists' demagogic appeals. Even official unemploy-

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Survivors of September massacre which left 85 dead in Bentalha, near Algiers. Death toll has topped 100,000 in five-year civil war between army and Islamic fundamentalists.

and FIS bastion, the army stood by for several hours even though the source of the assault was plainly visible on the surrounding hillsides. And in at least one massacre, in Raïs, villagers accused the military of direct complicity. Survivors told reporters that tanks ringed the village while 300 people were butchered over the course of several hours and that uniformed soldiers fired on villagers who tried to flee.

In the past couple of months, there have been numerous accounts in the Western press charging that the army is itself behind many of the massacres. On November 10, thousands demonstrated in Paris behind the call for a "commission of inquiry" to investigate these charges. Endorsed by the French government, this "Day for Algeria" was in effect aimed at pressuring for an imperialist-imposed "peace" in line with France's current policy of seeking to bring the FIS into the Algiers government.

Under conditions of pervasive terror and repression, with reporters and other observers barred from massacre sites except under army escort, there is little way of knowing the truth behind these heinous atrocities. Whoever the perpetrators, it is notable that they have steered clear of any attacks on the vulnerable oil and gas pipelines which are deemed sacrosanct by imperialist concerns. One thing is absolutely clear: Marxists have no side in this bloodletting between reactionary forces, which are all deadly enemies of the Algerian proletariat, women,

ethnic minorities like the Berbers and all the oppressed.

Yet the parties of the Algerian left, historically characterized by servile tailing of the bourgeois-nationalist National Liberation Front (FLN), have hitched their wagons to one or the other side in the bloody civil war. The remnants of Algerian Stalinism—Ettahaddi (Challenge) and the PADS (Algerian Party for Democracy and Socialism)—march in lockstep behind the hardline *éradicateurs*. The Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs (PST—Socialist Workers Party), linked to the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USeC) of Alain Krivine and the late Ernest Mandel, likewise looks to the nationalist regime, while the Parti des Travailleurs (PT—Workers Party), followers of French reformist Pierre Lambert, has gone so far as to embrace the FIS. At bottom, these political tendencies place their faith in the good offices of the French bourgeoisie and particularly its current Socialist-led government, which enforces neocolonial exploitation in Algeria while presiding over vicious racist terror against North African and African minorities in France.

The International Communist League fights to build Trotskyist parties on both sides of the Mediterranean to sweep away French imperialism and its despotic lackeys in Algiers. Key to this is irreconcilable opposition to the racist, class-collaborationist popular front headed by Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin.

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Wall Street and the  
War Against Labor**



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## Zionism, Islamic Fundamentalism and the Arab Bourgeois Regimes

Los Angeles  
1 December 1997

Dear Comrades:

In "U.S. Out of the Persian Gulf!" (WV No. 679, 28 November), we wrote: "The U.S.-backed Zionist regime in Israel continues its bloody expansionist campaigns against the Palestinians, which have fueled the threat posed to Arab regimes like Mubarak's by Islamic fundamentalists." The sentence, in and of itself, is correct. The problem I find with it, however, is that it lets the Arab bourgeoisies far too easily off the hook.

While Zionist expansionism (as well as the PLO's acceptance of the "peace accords") has increased the credibility of murderous, fundamentalist outfits like Hamas among the Palestinians, what

Mubarak and the Egyptian bourgeois nationalists face in their land is, for the most part, their own doing. The massacre of tourists and Egyptians this November, as well as the terror experienced by the Christian Coptic minority in Egypt (especially in the rural areas) on a regular basis is, in the immediate sense, the responsibility of the fundamentalists who pull the trigger. In the historical sense, however, it is a reaction to the miserable failure of Arab bourgeois nationalism, identified in Egypt with the late nationalist leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. Outside the Occupied Territories, the rise of reactionary Muslim fundamentalism is fueled as much, if not more, by the Arab bourgeoisies as it is by bloody Zionism.



TROTSKY

### Red Purges and the U.S. Labor Bureaucracy

*The expulsion of "reds" and other militants from the trade unions during the anti-Communist witchhunt of the late 1940s and '50s laid the basis for the consolidation of the staunchly pro-imperialist Cold War labor bureaucracy in the U.S. In a 1951 article denouncing the purges in the CIO, written at the height of the McCarthy era, Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon noted that the Stalinist Communist Party had prepared its own isolation through its earlier betrayals, from helping to channel working-class militancy into the Democratic Party in the 1930s to strikebreaking on behalf of the imperialist rulers in World War II. The fight against capitalist state intervention in the unions must be part of a political struggle against the pro-capitalist union misleaders and for a revolutionary workers party.*

The patriotic labor skates have all the advantages in an unequal struggle. They enjoy the solid backing of the government, and are also supported by all the monopolized agencies for the manufacture of public opinion. The general atmosphere of reaction favors them. And they have been aided in no small degree by the witch-hunt and the brutal persecution of the Communist Party leaders, which the CIO Convention formally—but only formally—decried. For the moment, at least, the right-wing, pro-government faction of Murray and Reuther are the victors. Moreover, they continue to gain, directly or indirectly, from new betrayals and defections which afflict the Stalinists, even in their "independent" unions, like active hemophilia.

If one can contemplate the trade-union troubles of the Stalinist fakery with equanimity it is not because of indifference to the present trend of events. The over-all result is the consolidation of a conservative, pro-government bureaucracy which smothers the militancy of the unions created in struggle and harnesses them to the imperialist war machine. Revolutionary militants are bound to struggle against this course....

Losses and defeats can't be avoided in times of reaction, when the relationship of forces is unfavorable. This is true in all stages and phases of the class struggle, from trade-union activity to revolution. But there are defeats and defeats. Those which come in battle under honest leadership leave a tradition upon which the movement lives and later rises to victory. Other defeats which derive from cowardice and treachery bring demoralization and yield no moral capital for the future. Such is the defeat engineered by the Stalinists in the present internal struggle in the trade unions....

American labor radicalism has a great future, and its next upsurge very probably will not be long delayed. We should make no mistake as to where the troops are coming from. The next drive will be spearheaded by the young militants of the new generation who are soon to enter the arena with all the courage and ardor of the generation of the Thirties; and very likely in even more imposing numbers. They will avoid the fate of the preceding generation if those who have learned from the tragic experiences do their duty.

—James P. Cannon, *Notebook of an Agitator* (1958)



LENIN

Upon taking power in the early 1950s, Nasser immediately set out as a bonaparte, repressing leaders of the left and right. The strikes that erupted in Egypt following his coup were savagely suppressed, with several leaders of the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP)—which led many of the strikes—hanged. Henri Curiel, the founder and leader of the Communist Party, was deported to France in 1956. Also, the Muslim Brotherhood, the primary fundamentalist organization of the time, was banned, and several of its leaders imprisoned. The logic of the Egyptian nationalists was to fear first of all the proletariat and the threat it could pose at such a tumultuous time. This was despite the fact that the Stalinist ECP was class-collaborationist to the core, having fully supported Nasser, and having earlier formed unprincipled blocs with the fundamentalists against the occupying British forces (different variations on the "anti-imperialist united front").

On the other hand, the nationalists also realized the threat from the right, in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, against the coherence of Egyptian nationalism. Initially, Nasser wanted to court U.S. imperialism. When he was rebuffed by the United States, he turned to the Soviet Union. While Egypt was producing stamps with pictures of Lenin, the Egyptian ruling class was also persecuting, imprisoning and hanging trade-union and Communist leaders in the country.

The banning of the Muslim Brotherhood was immediately met mostly by apathy or indifference on the part of the population, which at that time was driven more by nationalism than by any form of fundamentalism. As time progressed and unemployment, the economy and poverty worsened, the fundamentalists came to be viewed by a growing minority of the population with sympathy.

This was also conditioned by the lack of any proletarian alternative to the economic woes ravaging the country. When Anwar Sadat took power following Nasser's death in 1970, he lifted the ban on the fundamentalists and put the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox church under house arrest. This basically gave the green light for the fundamentalists to organize and grow.

A considerable right-wing shift has since taken place in Egypt, as well as in all the Arab states, in regard to ideology, religion, culture and social issues. Most horribly oppressed in these parts of the world are women. While the veil and headscarf are not legally forced on Muslim women in Egypt, there is a sort of economic draft into the garb. Women who don't wear the veil or at least the headscarf are often considered "whores"; "whores" don't get married, at least not to "respectable" men. Without marriage and a family, a woman's position in society leaves much to be desired. While this may be less acute in urban areas like Cairo and Alexandria, much of Egypt is still rural. Also, female genital mutilation, in the form of removing the clitoris, has been on the rise, especially in the impoverished south.

It should also be kept in mind that the so-called "secular" Arab nationalists were never really that secular to begin with. The idea of separation of church and state was never seriously proposed, nor could it be by the bourgeois nationalists, given the extreme backwardness of the country economically and culturally and the fact that the local bourgeoisies were tied and subordinated in one form or another to foreign imperialism. This powerfully underlines the importance of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The masses in this part of the world still yearn for the democratic gains won in the

*continued on page 12*



AP  
Plebeian support for Islamic fundamentalism, as in this Cairo district, fueled by government repression, austerity.

## SWP Che Forum and the Gusanos

Los Angeles  
2 December 1997

Dear Workers Vanguard:

The article "SWP Welcomes Cuban Gusanos" in WV No. 679 (28 November) polemicalizes effectively against the politics of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) on Cuba. But there was a misstatement of fact in reporting that the SWP, after welcoming the *gusanos* into their Che commemoration forum on October 22 in Los Angeles, "politely translated their anti-communist diatribes." What the SWP actually did was politely stand by while the *gusano* speaker translated for herself, while they unsuccessfully tried to silence a speaker from the Spartacus Youth Club when she presented our internationalist program for defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialism and domestic counterrevolution and for proletarian

political revolution.

The SYC comrade correctly pointed to the dire results of the cutoff of Soviet aid to Cuba after the counterrevolutionary Boris Yeltsin came to power in 1991, criminally supported by the SWP. But the "perestroika" (market "reforms") policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy under Mikhail Gorbachev, which fueled the forces of internal capitalist restoration, had also cut the ground out from under the Cuban economy. In 1990 Gorbachev cut back the amount of oil that the USSR sold to Cuba and drastically raised the price to world market levels while slashing the price that Moscow paid for Cuban sugar. This betrayal undercut many decades of development, leaving Cuba even more endangered by the U.S. imperialists' starvation blockade.

Comradely,  
Jon Wood

## 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. E-mail address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net). Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116.

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

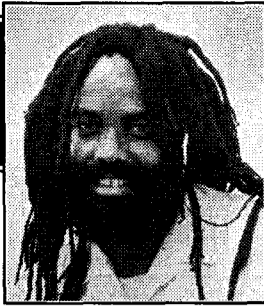
The closing date for news in this issue is December 9.

No. 680

12 December 1997

## From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

# Bureaucracy of Death



"As a general rule, a man is undone by waiting for capital punishment well before he dies. Two deaths are inflicted on him, the first being worse than the second, whereas he killed but once. Compared to such torture, the penalty of retaliation seems like a civilized law. It never claimed that a man who gouged out one of his brother's eyes should be totally blinded."

—Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion and Death* (1969)

Death row, for most Americans, is more than a reality most do not know. It is a reality that most don't want to know.

It is thus an abstraction, a phrase that is used in speech, but one generally ignored in real life. It is a place seldom seen, its inhabitants seen as subhuman at best, and perhaps monsters at worst, whose duty it is to die, preferably quietly.

To be more precise, their job is not to simply "die," but to be killed by state officials who are trained and paid well to do the killing.

American University scholar Robert Johnson writes in his newest book, *Death Work: A Study of the Modern Execution Process* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth [1998]), that the American way of death is intentional and premeditated torture, the purpose of which is to drive those on death row to a dubious relief in death. This drive to death, Johnson argues, is the objective of

every facet of the prison system, which seeks to maximize isolation of the condemned, from family, from community, from the prison population, from other death row prisoners, and finally from his very self.

Citing the length and nature of death row incarcerations, the isolation regimes, and the ever-present specter of death, Prof. Johnson finds it is torture, and as such, "inherently wrong":

"The goal of torture is never justice; torture seeks the destruction of the person, not his punishment.... Condemned criminals are not tortured because this is what they deserve. They are tortured because the destruction of their person is useful to their [state] torturers. It is the goal of destruction of the person that distinguishes torture from punishment and renders it gratuitous and hence immoral." (p. 219)

Turning to the area of international law, Professor Johnson found the U.S. in current and constant violation of U.N. accords and treaties.

More enlightened human rights law is emerging from places like Jamaica, Zimbabwe and Britain's Privy Council.

As long ago as 1989, in the *Sovering* case, the European Court of Human Rights outlawed extradition of a person to the U.S. to face a capital prosecution, as conditions on U.S. death rows, and the wait for death, constituted "inhuman and degrading pun-

ishment" in violation of Art. 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In the 1993 *Pratt* (Jamaica) case, and in a May 1993 decision of the Zimbabwe Supreme Court similar rulings were rendered, finding five years on death row violative of similar "cruel" articles of international law.

Prof. Johnson does not (surprisingly) address the June 1996 report of the International Commission of Jurists, which demonstrates how the U.S. signed but routinely violates Article 7 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which states, in part:

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

It is good enough for the European Community, for Jamaica, and Zimbabwe, it seems; but in the United States of America, it means nothing. Nothing at all.

31 July 1997

© 1997 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

**To join the fight to free Mumia and for the latest updates on his case, contact the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013-0099; phone (212) 406-4252. E-mail: 75057.3201@compuserve.com. Urgently needed contributions for Mumia's defense, which are tax-deductible, should be made payable to the Bill of Rights Foundation, earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense," and sent to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001. If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370.**

# Brutal Cop Attack on American Indian Protest

## Plymouth Rock

For 28 years, Native American Indians and their supporters have demonstrated on Thanksgiving Day at a site near Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts. In the past, these "National Day of Mourning" actions, protesting the genocide suffered by this country's indigenous peoples, have occurred largely without incident. But this year, the November 27 demonstration was met by a vicious cop rampage in which police beat and pepper-gassed protesters and arrested 25 on bogus charges of disorderly conduct and assault and battery on a police officer.

Several hundred demonstrators had been taking part in the protest march. Some carried a banner in defense of Leonard Peltier, an American Indian Movement activist who was framed up and sent to prison in 1977 as part of the FBI's bloody COINTELPRO (Counter-intelligence Program) campaign against radical leftists and fighters against racism, particularly targeting the Black Panther Party. But as the march progressed, the cops suddenly declared the streets off-limits to protesters and waded in with pepper gas and flailing batons, injuring at least a dozen people.

"We marched out onto the streets of Plymouth and a police riot happened," said one protester. The brutality of the cop assault was confirmed by several area residents who offered to testify on behalf of the demonstrators. Many residents rushed to help marchers who had been pepper-gassed. In a December 7 protest letter to Plymouth district attorney Michael Sullivan, the Partisan Defense Committee in Boston wrote:

"The Thanksgiving Day police rampage at the site of the Pilgrims' landing is a brutal reminder that this country was

founded on the theft of land and genocide. After fulfilling its 'manifest destiny' over the bones of the native peoples, America's capitalist rulers have condemned what remains of the Indian population to grinding poverty, discrimination and all-sided abuse....

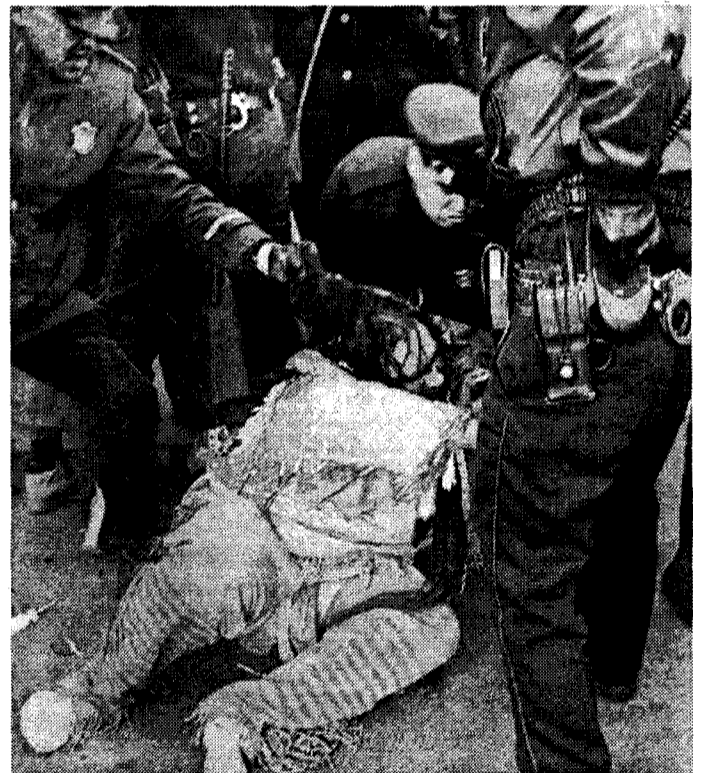
"We join with the many bystanders, residents of Plymouth and decent people across the state who have condemned this savage assault. We demand that all charges against the protesters be dropped."

The police rampage in Plymouth came against the backdrop of a bipartisan effort to reinstate the death penalty in Massachusetts. In late October, both the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate voted to restore capital punishment for the first time since the state Supreme Court struck down the last death penalty law in 1984. Among the supporters of the bill were eight House members (seven of them Democrats) who had formerly opposed the death penalty. After the initial House vote, both leading Democratic contenders for next year's gubernatorial election, Attorney General Scott Harshbarger and Patricia McGovern—a member of Massachusetts Citizens Against the Death Penalty—promised to enforce the death penalty despite their avowed personal opposition to it.

The attempt to revive executions in this bastion of "liberalism" was defeated only when Representative John Slattery changed his vote on November 6. Slattery explained that the murder conviction in Boston of British au pair Louise Woodward, a prim young white woman whose cause was widely popular among local residents, made him realize that those wrongfully convicted could also be executed. Following his turnaround, Slattery received numerous death threats, while the right-wing *Boston Herald* ran a slew of articles vilifying him.

Stoking the effort to restore the death penalty was the case of ten-year-old Jef-

**Cops beat, pepper-gassed and arrested dozens of protesters at Plymouth Rock on Thanksgiving Day.**



Adaskaveg/Boston Herald

frey Curley, who was found brutally murdered in October. According to police, Curley had been abducted from his street in Cambridge by two men who killed and sexually attacked him. The horrific crime touched off a tidal wave of calls for broader police powers to "fight crime," while petition and lobbying campaigns were organized to pressure legislators for the death penalty vote. A particular focus of the furor was the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), whose literature was supposedly found in the car of one of the alleged killers. NAMBLA supporters have repeatedly faced victimization for defending the right of consensual sexual relations with minors. We say: Hands off NAMBLA!

The capitalist rulers are steadily reinforcing their apparatus of repression—from the speedup on death rows across the country to the unleashing of racist cop terror—as they grind down working people, minorities and the poor. In Massachusetts, brutal austerity measures, including the virtual destruction of state welfare programs, have been accompanied by legal moves to drastically restrict bail and parole, widen guidelines for trying juvenile defendants as adults and establish a "sex-offender registry," echo-

ing similar efforts by state governments elsewhere in the country (see "Sex Offender" Dragnet Spawns Police-State Measures," page 4).

At the summit of this state terror apparatus is the death penalty. In Massachusetts 70 years ago, the execution of militant anarchist workers Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti was a stark demonstration of the death penalty as part of the machinery of repression aimed at suppressing the struggles of the working class and oppressed. In the U.S., with its legacy of black chattel slavery, this system of *legal lynching* is racist to the core. As Marxists, we are opposed on principle to the death penalty as punishment. We fight for a socialist revolution to sweep away the whole murderous, racist apparatus of cops, courts and prisons that constitutes the capitalist state. **Drop all charges against the Plymouth Rock protesters!** ■

## NOTICE

**Workers Vanguard skips a week in December.**

**Our next issue will be dated January 2.**

# "Sex Offender" Dragnet Spawns Police-State Measures

In an ominous escalation of state repression, federal and state governments have enacted a barrage of barbaric measures targeting supposed "sex offenders" in the last few years, ranging from incitements to vigilante terror to mandatory castration to "preventive detention." Several months ago, California began publicly circulating the names of thousands of people who had ever been convicted of "sex crimes." In May 1996, President Clinton signed a federal version of the "Megan's laws" which have now been enacted in all 50 states. Modeled on a 1994 New Jersey law named after seven-year-old murder victim Megan Kanka, these draconian bills require ongoing "registration" of "sex offenders" and, in most states, allow for notifying the communities where they settle after release from prison. The federal legislation dictates that such measures be enforced by all states as a condition for full federal "anti-crime" funding.

Seizing on the "family values" morality which has become the stock in trade of right-wing bigots and liberal Democrats alike, the capitalist state is setting the stage for a frightening array of new attacks on individual privacy and democratic rights. Measures aimed at the "mentally aberrant" (defined by the "morality" code of this racist, anti-woman, anti-gay bourgeois society) can easily be used to bolster attacks against the left, militant workers, immigrants, minorities—anyone deemed "deviant" by the capitalist rulers.

The anti-sex witchhunt has taken aim at everything from homosexual teachers to abortion rights, from "obscene" rock lyrics to adolescent sex, from *Playboy* and Internet pornography to art exhibits showing nudity and sexual situations. Under the new measures, someone convicted of "soliciting" in a men's room, for example, can be sentenced to lifetime surveillance and harassment and set up for hounding and attacks by bigoted mobs. Robert Campos, a former "sex crimes" prosecutor in Arizona and now a defense lawyer, notes that these laws make "no distinctions...between someone accused of molesting young girls or someone skinny-dipping in his own swimming pool who was accidentally seen by two 12-year-olds." The CD-ROM database issued in California this summer lists some 64,000 "sex offenders" and is available for public perusal at police stations and even such events as the L.A. County Fair! Alameda County has been widely distributing maps with triangles marking the street location of the homes of "sex offenders."

While the U.S. has been at the forefront of fomenting such social reaction, the anti-sex crusade is not unique to this

country. Lately, panics over "pedophilia" have swept through Europe. Late last year, Belgium was swept by huge demonstrations amid a climate of hysteria over the "Dutroux affair," in which young girls were kidnapped, raped and murdered, allegedly by a porn ring. In Britain, Labour Party prime minister Tony Blair has announced a new "Crime and Disorder Bill" which bans 110,000 former "sex offenders" from ever going anywhere near schools and playgrounds. In Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin's France, at least six people committed sui-

political life, writer Gore Vidal recently observed, "When Communism went away, sex came into its lurid own as the diversionary smear of choice" (*New Yorker*, 1 December). The murder of Megan Kanka was a savage crime, but what's being debated in legislatures throughout the country has nothing to do with protecting children. The sweeping measures being rushed through by politicians—along with ballooning budgets to fund proposals for arbitrary imprisonment and detention, police surveillance and increased government intrusion into

tion (NAMBLA) in a car belonging to one of the alleged killers, this provoked a renewed witchhunt against the persecuted organization, which defends consensual sex between men and boys. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation joined in the rush to denounce NAMBLA.

And in California, there are billboards everywhere threatening "statutory rape" charges against anyone having sex with an underage teenager. We oppose reactionary "age of consent" laws and advocate that the guiding principle in sexual relations should be effective consent—nothing more, or less. Unlike liberals and reformists, who systematically bow to bourgeois "respectability," the Spartacist League has consistently said: "Defend NAMBLA! Government out of the bedrooms!"

The refusal by mainstream gay groups and other defenders of gay rights to stand by vulnerable groups like NAMBLA is both craven and suicidal. It was not so long ago that all homosexual behavior was deemed to be pathological, and a large number of states still have "anti-sodomy" statutes on the books. In 1952, at the height of the McCarthyite witchhunt, homosexuality was labeled a "sociopathic personality disturbance" by the American Psychiatric Association. While today it is fashionable for Democratic Party politicians (and even some Republicans) to give lip service to gay rights, brutal attacks on gays continue to increase, people with AIDS are still stigmatized and persecuted and you can still be drummed out of the armed forces for being gay.

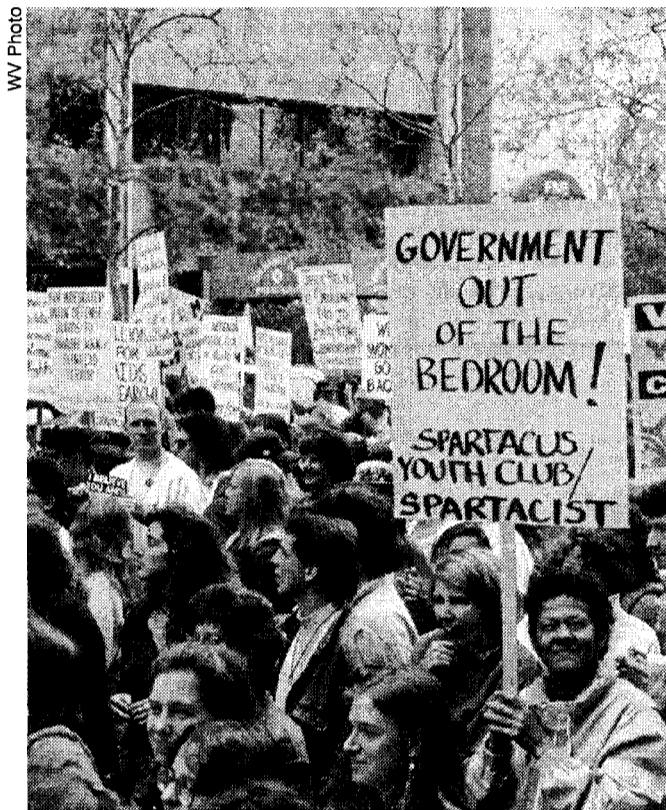
Again in California, one 76-year-old man found himself on the CD-ROM list for having had consensual sex with a sailor 40 years ago. While the state government now says it will delete the names of those convicted under laws which have since been abolished—after they have already been publicly branded—this underlines how the "sex offender" laws particularly target gays. In fact, some of the convictions went back as far as 1944—when all homosexual acts were criminal offenses—and as many as 60 to 65 percent of names and addresses on the list were inaccurate. Less than two weeks after the CD-ROM was released, a man was attacked by enraged neighbors in a case of mistaken identity. Near Los Angeles, a van owned by a convicted "child molester" was fire-bombed only days after his name was publicized.

The preachings of religious fundamentalists and sex-hating feminists aside, sexual relationships are complex—not least because one person's greatest joy may be somebody else's "perversion." The power to define who is "mentally abnormal" and what is a "personality disorder" is in the hands of cops and judges—and, often, social workers—who seek to apply a reactionary, conformist, anti-sex morality code. In Texas, an infant was recently removed from his foster mother simply because she is a lesbian. In Washington state, a woman teacher was sentenced to six months in prison for having a love affair with a teenage student; their newborn child has been ripped away from her and she has been barred from any contact with her lover.

## Behind the Anti-Sex Witchhunt

Following a brief hiatus conditioned by the mass struggles of the 1960s for black rights and against the Vietnam War, the bourgeoisie again revved up its

**March for abortion rights, San Francisco, 1992. Marxists oppose government attempts to regulate consensual sexual acts and state persecution of groups like NAMBLA.**



cide last June after being arrested and humiliated along with some 800 others suspected of being customers of a pornographic publisher. Raising the call "Down With the Witchhunt by the Jospin Government!" (*Le Bolchéviek* No. 143, Summer 1997), the Ligue Trotskyste de France wrote:

"Using the fear and anxiety created by the campaign to 'save our children,' the bourgeoisie criminalizes sex in general. It also tries to equate those who watch 'pedophile' videos with serial child killers like Dutroux. This is like the feminist campaign several years ago which said that watching pornographic films led to rape and other forms of women's oppression. But watching a pornographic or a pedophile film is only watching a film."

## Assault on Civil Liberties

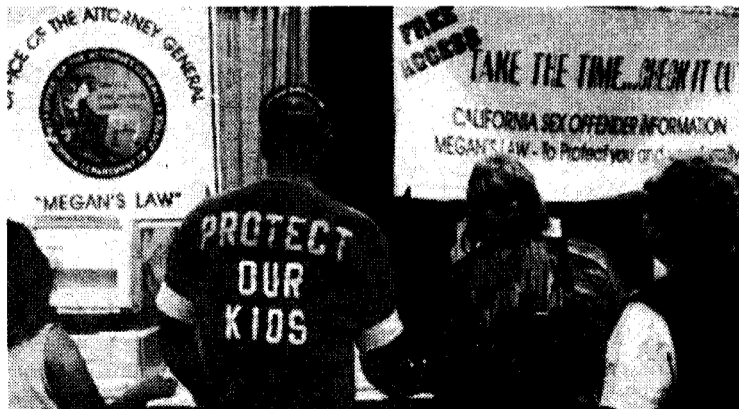
In the post-Soviet world, "child abuser" has taken its place alongside "terrorist" as a code phrase to justify all-sided attacks on civil liberties. Commenting in particular on how sex is used in American

private life—aim much wider than alleged "sex offenders."

Several bills currently before Congress threaten a mammoth increase in state surveillance. A measure designed to clamp down on "illegal" immigrants, dubbed "1-800-Big-Brother" by its opponents, would require that all job applicants have their Social Security numbers checked through a national database. Another vast new database set up to track "deadbeat parents," the National Directory of New Hires, was mandated by the same law which axed federal welfare programs last year.

In Massachusetts, one of the few remaining states without the death penalty, the media and politicians manipulated the hideous murder of ten-year-old Jeffrey Curley this fall to whip up a furor which nearly led to the reinstatement of capital punishment. When the cops claimed to have found literature of the North American Man/Boy Love Associa-

Meyer/SF Chronicle



Bigelow/Washington Post

**New laws impose lifetime surveillance, "preventive detention" and public listing of convicted "sex offenders," inviting vigilante terror. L.A. County Fair featured CD-ROM registry identifying 64,000 people, some convicted over 40 years ago for consensual gay sex.**

drive to regiment all aspects of social life. Behind this is an agenda of racist reaction and anti-working-class attacks at home and a reassertion of U.S. imperialist domination abroad. The anti-sex witchhunt in particular is aimed at reinforcing the institution of the family, the main source of the oppression of women in capitalist society.

One of the first offensives in this reactionary drive was the manufactured panic over "satanic ritual abuse" in day-care centers. Hundreds of people were railroaded to prison on the basis of bizarre charges when, in fact, no crime of any kind had even been committed. The full force of the capitalist state's apparatus of repression was employed in the service of literally demonizing day-care workers and working mothers with the aim of reinforcing the sanctity of hearth and home.

Soon after the infamous McMartin Pre-school case in California, which started in 1984 and dragged on for six years, a similar witchhunt ensnared the Amirault family of Massachusetts. In 1987, Violet Amirault, her son Gerald and daughter Cheryl were given sentences ranging from 20 to 40 years on absurd charges of sexual abuse of children at a day-care center owned and run by the mother. Gerald Amirault remains in prison to this day. The convictions of Violet Amirault and Cheryl were overturned in 1995 but were vindictively reinstated this year, shortly before the death of Violet Amirault. While the "satanic ritual abuse" scare has ebbed in recent years, dozens of its victims remain in jail. And some of the very same "child-abuse experts" whose testimony led to the convictions of the Amiraults are still regularly used as "expert witnesses" by state prosecutors, most recently in the Boston "nanny case." As one medical specialist noted in a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* (11 November):

"When one designates oneself a 'child-abuse specialist' rather than, for example, a pediatric neurosurgeon or an expert in the biomechanics of head trauma, that very designation suggests a predisposition to find abuse even where none exists. It is rather like the experts in witchcraft of bygone eras, who reliably found signs and symptoms of demonic goings-on in even the most natural of phenomena."

The legal grounds for the anti-sex witchhunt were set out in the 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. This Democratic-sponsored legislation, also known as the Mondale Act, had the ardent support of bourgeois feminists. Yet it was specifically designed to appeal to conservatives wanting to reinforce the authority of the patriarchal family and the influence of religion, a key ideological mainstay for the oppression of women and youth. It set up a national network of programs aimed at drawing in teachers, social workers and mental health professionals as snoops for



K. B. Khelifa

**After heinous murders of young girls in Belgium, "law and order" hysteria fueled huge marches demanding return of barbaric death penalty in 1996.**

the capitalist state. While a vast number of critically needed social programs have been gutted or entirely eliminated, funding and resources for the programs set up by the Mondale Act and laws modeled on it have been repeatedly and massively increased.

As a result, today there is a bloated bureaucracy in place to pursue "sex criminals." As we wrote in "Satan, the State and Anti-Sex Hysteria" (*Women and Revolution* No. 45, Winter-Spring 1996):

"The witchhunt's nationwide apparatus of sex cops, prying social workers and quacks, bolstered with millions of dollars, prestige and power, remains firmly in place.... Strengthened by increased resources and an atmosphere of mass panic, the state apparatus has tightened its grip on society and thus reinforced its ability to quash any challenge to its exploitative and oppressive rule."

### Preventive Detention and Racist Repression

Last year, by a vote of 51 to 8, California became the first state to enact a law mandating castration for twice-convicted "sex offenders," either through chemical or surgical means. The same reactionary Women's Coalition that lobbied for the barbaric castration law is now pushing legislation to have "sex crime" parolees permanently handcuffed. The California version of "Megan's Law"—and those in a number of other states—gives state officials the power to continue confining "sex offenders" who have already served their sentences. The only condition specified for this ongoing and arbitrary incarceration in state mental hospitals is that the former inmates are deemed "mentally ill," with no evidence of recent violent acts necessary. Such

ghastly measures are a throwback to the barbarous times when criminals were literally branded so that they could be punished for life.

The Arizona law is explicitly based on the premise that "sex offenders" cannot be "rehabilitated," specifying lifetime probation after release from prison. This means constant surveillance, court-ordered "therapy" sessions, and lie-detector, drug and alcohol tests. Among the tortures imposed by this law is a "test" by plethysmograph—attaching probes to the man's penis to measure his erection while tapes describing illicit sex acts are played. One has to seriously question who is mentally disordered here: the parolees or the program administrators.

Such blatant trampling on civil rights recalls the complete disenfranchisement of black people under the Jim Crow laws of the South, when the lynch rope was the only "justice" blacks were deemed to deserve. In fact, a significant proportion of black men *are* disenfranchised today because they have served time for felony convictions. By whatever name, "indefinite involuntary confinement" or "preventive detention" is in stark violation of the U.S. Constitution, in particular the provisions of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments regarding due process and double jeopardy.

It is a measure of the ferocity of this bigoted crusade that it is employing means normally used by capitalist governments in times of war or "counterinsurgency" operations. The most notorious instance of preventive detention in the United States was the racist incarceration of Japanese Americans in remote concentration camps during World War II. Under Executive Order 9066 signed by Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, over 120,000 people—mostly women and children and two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens—were torn from their homes, which were stolen from them, and imprisoned without trial as "poten-

tial" spies and saboteurs, solely on the "evidence" of their Japanese ancestry. Despite hypocritical apologies by politicians today, this disgusting episode was no "aberration"—plans for similar detention camps, for other groups of "undesirables," have been mooted many times since.

The intensified repressive measures being pushed through today will do nothing to stop the sort of heinous murders which are used to justify their implementation. The capitalist rulers cynically seize on individual crimes which are a reflection of the social pathology of this decaying system of exploitation and oppression in order to strengthen the state powers which defend that system. The massive extension of police powers, the rise in cop terror, the growth of prison construction, the speedup on death row—all these are aimed at protecting this truly criminal system by intimidating the mass of the population, particularly working people and minorities, as the bourgeoisie drives up the rate of exploitation while slashing social benefits. In a court system constructed from top to bottom to serve the interests of the capitalist class, "justice" is a myth.

Further, the state has no business legislating people's personal lives, however



AP

**Washington teacher Mary Kay LeTourneau, sentenced to six months in prison for love affair with a teenage student.**

messy they may be. As we wrote in "The 'Date Rape' Issue: Feminist Hysteria, Anti-Sex Witchhunt":

"While Marxists cannot decree either a just or a pleasurable solution to the ambiguities that arise out of the intersection of sex, race and class in this capitalist society, we can and do oppose all attempts to fit human sexuality into legislated and decreed 'norms.' ...

"To create genuinely free and equal relations between people in all spheres, including sex, requires nothing less than the destruction of this class system and the creation of a communist world. In a classless society social and economic constraints over sexual relations will be nonexistent, and in the words of Frederick Engels, 'there is no other motive left except mutual inclination'."

—*Women and Revolution* No. 43, Winter 1993-Spring 1994

## Women and Revolution

Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

NO. 45 WINTER-SPRING 1996

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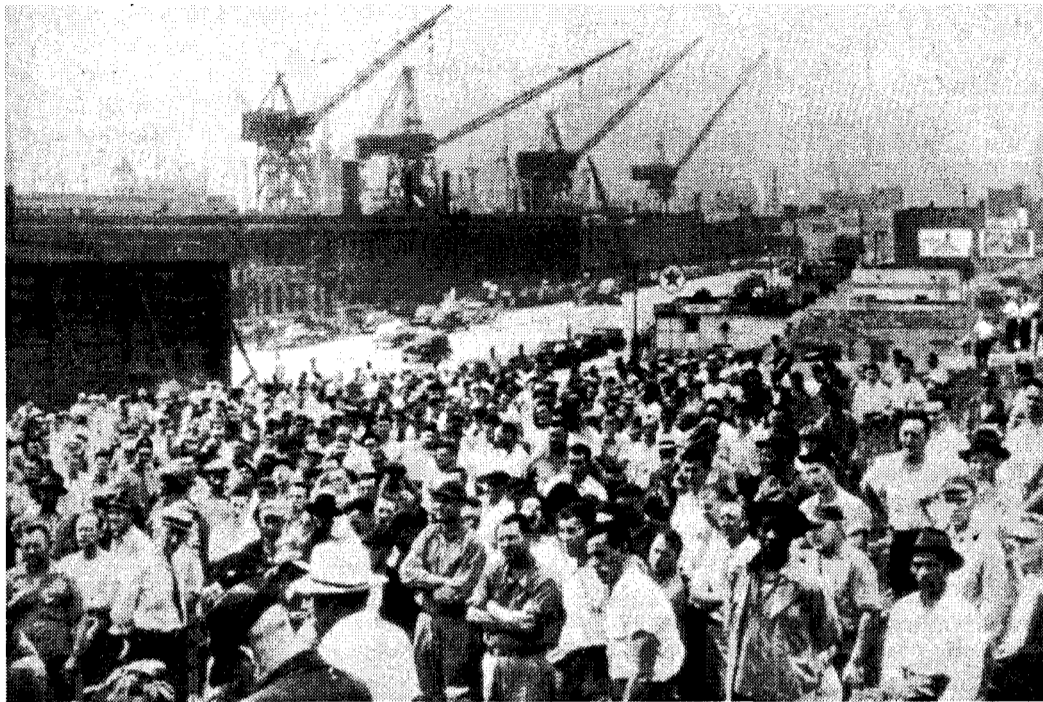
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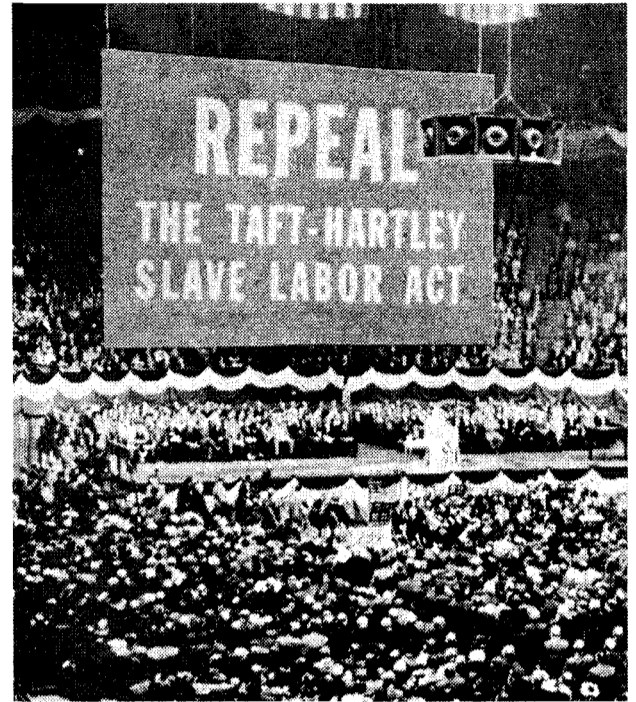
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# Wall Street and the War Against Labor



Labor Press Associates



AFL

Left: 84-day strike in 1947 by over 130,000 East Coast shipyard workers during largest strike wave in U.S. history. Right: 1947 labor rally in New York's Madison Square Garden against strikebreaking Taft-Hartley Act passed under Democrat Harry Truman.

Parts One, Two and Three were published in WV Nos. 676, 677 and 679, 17 and 31 October, and 28 November.

During the 1960s, a middle-aged white industrial worker typically believed in the "American Dream." His economic circumstances were much better and the prospects for his children far greater than when he grew up during the Great Depression of the 1930s. He drove a late-model car and lived in a suburban home with an affordable, government-subsidized mortgage. His children attended a state university or city college with low tuition and easily available, government-guaranteed student loans. He was likely a veteran of the Second World War "for democracy," in which the U.S. was victorious, and had perhaps himself benefited from the educational grants that the "GI Bill" extended to returning soldiers.

Today, the picture is very different and much bleaker. Real wages for blue-collar workers peaked in the early 1970s and have since fallen about 20 percent. Male high-school graduates just entering the job market are being paid almost 30 percent less and female high-school graduates almost 20 percent less than a generation ago. *The State of Working America 1996-97*, a detailed statistical study by the Economic Policy Institute—a left-liberal think tank partly funded by the trade unions—summed it up:

"American families are beset by a long-term erosion in wages, deteriorating job quality, and greater economic insecurity.... Our review of indicators suggests that

the changes in the economy have been 'all pain, no gain,' that the factors causing the pain of greater dislocation, economic vulnerability, and falling wages do not seem to be making a better economy or generating a 'payoff' that could potentially be

ism in the international arena. The AFL and CIO leaderships acquiesced to Taft-Hartley and other anti-union laws which crippled the labor movement, especially in organizing campaigns. The militant

and Japan had recovered from the devastation of World War II and were making deep inroads in world markets, including the American market. The competitive position and overall strength of the U.S. economy were further eroded by the long, losing colonial war in Vietnam. By the late 1960s, wages were stagnating and good jobs were soon to become scarce, especially for young workers. The "American Dream"—which was never intended to include blacks—was beginning to fade even for white workers.

With these changing conditions, racist demagogues like former Alabama governor George "Segregation Forever" Wallace appealed to the insecurities of white workers, blaming social welfare programs which supposedly benefited only the black poor for the country's increasing economic ills. The pro-capitalist AFL-CIO bureaucracy made common cause with right-wing politicians like Wallace and Richard Nixon in attacking black radicalism, for example, supporting the bloody suppression of the Black Panther Party by the FBI and local police forces. At the same time, radical black nationalists and most white leftist students wrote off the mass of the white workers as "bought off" by U.S. imperialism and incorrigibly racist.

The net result was the crushing of all militant struggle for black rights and the weakening of the trade-union movement, setting the political preconditions for the past two decades of union-busting, give-back contracts, two-tier wage systems, mass homelessness and the axing of almost every social program for the poor. There can and will be no effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people without the unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black and Hispanic poor. This requires a revolutionary workers party forged in counterposition to the capitalist Democrats and committed to the struggle for a workers government, which alone can bring about racial equality by providing a decent life for all through a planned, socialist economy.

## Labor and the Cold War

The prelude to the postwar assault on the unions was the deal worked out at the beginning of World War II between the Roosevelt White House and the AFL and CIO leaderships. The federal government accepted the unionization of the boom-

## Part 4: Liberal Union-Busting in the "American Century"

redistributed to help the losers. Rather, there seems to be a large-scale redistribution of power, wealth, and income that has failed to lead to or be associated with improved economic efficiency, capital accumulation or competitiveness."

The authors of this study, mirroring the views of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, blame this deterioration on "general deregulatory, laissez-faire shifts in the economy and forces that have weakened the bargaining power of workers." However, many of the key factors behind the current immiseration of the working class and the gutting of the labor movement were present even during the very period—the decade following World War II—when the "American Dream" looked most real.

The anti-communist witchhunt of the late 1940s and early '50s drove "reds" and other militants out of the trade unions and consolidated a labor bureaucracy that was openly pro-capitalist and identified with the aims of U.S. imperial-

tactics which built the CIO industrial unions in the 1930s—plant occupations (sitdowns), mass picketing, secondary strikes—could now be used only by *defying* the country's harsh anti-labor laws and challenging the union tops' ties to the Democratic Party.

One of the chief victims of the bureaucracy's fealty to the New Deal coalition, which tied the unions to Northern liberals and Southern Dixiecrats, was a drive to organize workers in the South in the late 1940s. Grottesquely named "Operation Dixie," it was abandoned after two years during which the anti-Communist CIO tops did more to destroy what interracial union organizations already existed, by driving out leftist militants, than to build anything new. The toll of this defeat is felt to this day by the labor movement, as many manufacturers began shifting their operations from the industrial Midwest in the 1970s to take advantage of non-union, low-wage labor in the South.

In general, blacks were excluded from the prosperity of the first two postwar decades. A large proportion still lived in the racist police states of the South. But even in the North, black workers were proverbially "the last hired and the first fired." In the mid-1960s, the average income of a black family was 60 percent that of a white family. Even a unionized black industrial worker in the Midwest or Northeast was more likely to live in an inner-city ghetto than in a tree-lined suburb. And he was far more likely to have a son in prison or a daughter on welfare than on a college campus.

The civil rights movement, the mass struggles for black democratic rights and social equality, peaked at a time when American capitalism could no longer afford significant improvements in the economic condition of its working class. The industrial economies of Germany



Liberal Democrat Robert F. Kennedy (left) spearheaded Senate attacks on Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa, 1957.

ing war industries; in turn, the labor tops—foremost among them supporters of the Stalinist Communist Party (CP)—vowed to enforce a ban on strikes and abide by government wage controls.

By the time the war ended in 1945, fully one-third of the country's nonagricultural labor force was unionized. At the same time, the labor bureaucracy's pact with the Democratic administration was coming undone. As the greatest strike wave in U.S. history swept the country, the ruling class responded with a carrot-and-stick approach. The carrot was a substantial improvement in the material conditions of the working class, made possible by the international dominance of American capitalism achieved through the devastation of its main imperialist rivals, Germany and Japan. The stick was political repression and the legal shackling of union power.

The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act barred anyone professing to be a communist from holding union office and outlawed a host of militant strike tactics, such as the secondary strikes which were key to organizing efforts. Although the AFL and CIO tops ritually denounced Taft-Hartley as a "slave labor" act, they nonetheless adhered to it. In 1949, the CIO bureaucracy expelled eleven "Communist" unions, almost 20 percent of its membership. Communist-led unions such as the United Electrical Workers (UE) were subjected to membership raids and reduced to a marginal existence, while a number of CP-linked officials in other unions, like Mike Quill of the Transport Workers Union and Joe Curran of the National Maritime Union, became rabid anti-Communists to secure their positions. Personified by Wisconsin Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, the anti-



Margaret Bourke-White



AP  
Depression-era bread line and Jim Crow segregation. The "American Dream" has always been a cruel hoax for black people.

dynasty describes the 1950s as the "high noon of industrial power, before the European economies rebounded or the Pacific rim threatened," when "the United States dominated automobiles, steel, oil, aluminum, and other heavy industries" (Ron Chernow, *The House of Morgan* [1990]). The men who ran Wall Street and the Fortune 500 corporations could thus buy class peace on terms inconceivable to their predecessors or successors.

The pattern of labor-capital relations in the early Cold War period was exemplified by the 1950 agreement between the United Auto Workers (UAW) and General Motors, which provided for an annual 3 percent "productivity" increase in wages and a cost-of-living adjustment to offset inflation. As leftist labor historian Mike Davis commented in *Prisoners of the American Dream* (1986): "In tandem with the seniority system and internal promo-

1960s and sought to overcome not simply the formal legal restrictions on black rights imposed by Southern Jim Crow but also the entrenched social segregation of the black masses. A mob of racist bigots stopped Martin Luther King Jr. from marching in 1967 against segregation in the lily-white Chicago suburb of Cicero. A decade later, the "tax revolt"—a reactionary movement centered on white suburban homeowners—helped to catapult right-wing Republican Ronald Reagan into the White House a few years later. What conditioned the political ascendancy of the right over the past two decades was *the bankruptcy of liberalism* when confronted by the decay of American capitalism.

### Kennedy, Galbraith and Anti-Labor Liberalism

In the early postwar period, the AFL and CIO provided the organized mass base for the Northern liberal wing of the Democratic Party and was key to Harry Truman's upset victory over Republican Thomas Dewey in 1948. This did not, of course, prevent Truman, like Roosevelt before him, from calling out the National Guard and army to break strikes "in the national interest." Nonetheless, in the late 1940s and early '50s, liberal politicians usually posed as "friends of labor" and voiced opposition to Taft-Hartley.

However, in the late 1950s an important current emerged in the Northern liberal wing of the Democratic Party which maintained that trade unions had become too powerful and were using that power in ways harmful to the majority of the American people. That current was represented at the political level by John F. Kennedy and at the ideological level by John Kenneth Galbraith, who would later become a key economic adviser to the Kennedy White House.

As a Senator from Massachusetts, Kennedy along with his brother Robert first gained national prominence as leaders of a new government offensive against organized labor. The immediate target was the Teamsters union and its colorful president, Jimmy Hoffa. This union was singled out because it was simultaneously economically powerful and politically vulnerable. Outside of and hostile to the AFL-CIO federation, Hoffa's Teamsters, with their well-

known connections to "the Mob," were popularly viewed as the "bad boys" of the labor movement. At the same time, benefiting from the shift in transport economics from rail to over-the-road trucking, the Teamsters had become the largest and fastest-growing union in the country. Furthermore, Hoffa was pushing for a single master contract for all over-the-road drivers in the U.S. In his 1960 anti-Teamsters tract, *The Enemy Within*, Robert F. Kennedy railed:

"The Teamster Union is the most powerful institution in this country—aside from the United States Government itself....

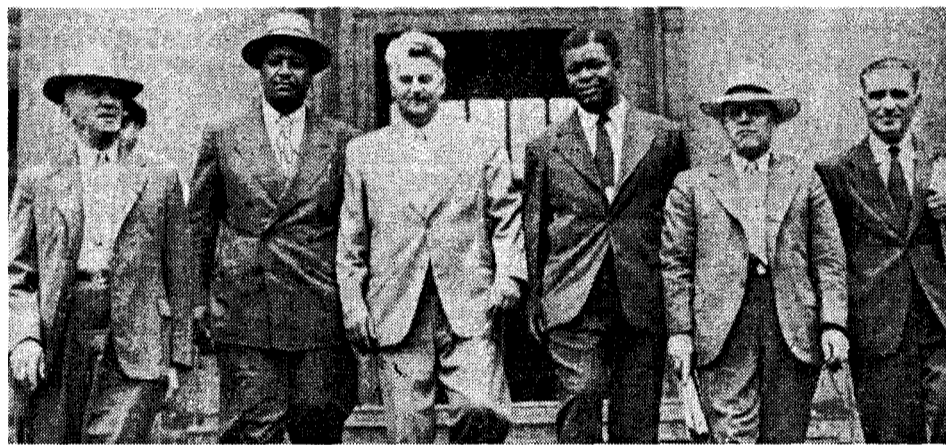
"Quite literally your life—the life of every person in the United States—is in the hands of Hoffa and his Teamsters.

"But, though the great majority of Teamster officers and Teamster members are honest, the Teamster union under Hoffa is not run as a bona fide union. As Mr. Hoffa operates it, this is a conspiracy of evil."

The attack on the Teamsters was spearheaded by 1957 Senate committee hearings chaired by Arkansas Democrat John McClellan. John Kennedy served as McClellan's right-hand man and his brother as the committee's chief counsel. The AFL-CIO tops tried to dissociate themselves from the Teamsters, with liberal UAW chief Walter Reuther even testifying as a friendly witness. Nonetheless, the Senate hearings had their intended effect of discrediting organized labor in general. Opinion polls showed public approval of trade unions dropping from 75 percent before the hearings to 68 percent afterward, remaining at about that level through the 1960s. The public vilification of the Teamsters was key to the passage of the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act, which gave the federal government vastly enhanced powers over internal union affairs while strengthening the Taft-Hartley ban on secondary strikes and "hot-cargoing" (refusing to handle scab goods).

While attacking the labor movement by criminalizing the Teamsters, the Kennedys continued to seek electoral backing from the mainstream AFL-CIO unions. For his part, Galbraith, as an academic, was free to launch a theoretical broadside against organized labor at a more general level. Whereas the right-wing Republican enemies of union power called for

*continued on page 12*



CP  
William Z. Foster (far left), Henry Winston (third from right) and other Communist Party leaders indicted under Smith Act in 1948.

Communist witchhunt was expanded to strike at all layers of American society, notably including the universities and the Hollywood film industry.

The rapid destruction of the CP's industrial base cannot be explained simply in terms of government repression or the embrace of Cold War hostility to the Soviet Union by the mass of American workers (which played on widespread repugnance toward Stalin's bloody despotism), particularly with the outbreak of the 1950-53 U.S.-led imperialist war in Korea. The American Stalinists' staunch support for government strikebreaking during World War II had discredited them with a significant layer of militant unionists. The red purge extended to all leftists, including the Trotskyists, many of whom had played leading roles in the wartime wildcat strikes and earlier militant labor struggles, like the campaigns which built the Teamsters into a powerful industrial union representing all over-the-road truckers.

Though this was obviously not the intent of the workers who were drawn in behind it, the red purge strengthened the hand of the capitalists against the unions. Short-sightedly, these workers only saw their wages, benefits and overall living conditions improving, while the unions appeared stronger than ever before. Behind this view was the fact that the U.S. had emerged from the war with by far the largest and most technologically advanced industrial capacity in the world. A recent history of America's premier financial

tion within the plant, the wage system thus established for the core economy, and for the core only, became relatively immune to cyclical layoffs and the tides of the labor reserve army." The division between older unionized workers in the large manufacturing corporations and the "reserve army" of the unemployed took on an increasingly racial complexion with the massive emigration of Southern blacks to Northern cities during and after World War II.

Beginning in the late 1940s, the social and racial geography of the United States underwent a significant shift. A key factor was the substantial increase in home ownership among better-off working-class families, which was deliberately encouraged by government policy. Agencies like the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration insured or guaranteed home mortgages against default and foreclosure, while interest payments on residential mortgages, unlike rent, were made a tax-deductible expense. The proportion of white families who owned their own homes increased by half between 1940 and 1970. As whites moved out to the suburbs, the inner cities became increasingly black and in some cases Hispanic.

This development would have major effects on the future course of American politics. Racist opposition to residential integration was reinforced by fear-mongering over declining "property values." The civil rights movement was defeated when it moved North in the mid-

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# Algeria...

(continued from page 1)

The multiethnic proletariat of France must be mobilized in defense of the rights of minority workers, whose strategic position in auto and other industries can serve as a bridgehead for socialist revolution between France and North Africa. Warning of the possibility of a deal between the Algiers regime and the Islamic fundamentalists, the Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF), section of the ICL, wrote early on in the face-off between the FIS and the military:

"The army, or a section of it, could very well apply all or part of the FIS's reactionary program. The forces of repression could very well not limit themselves to imprisoning leaders and activists of the FIS and, in particular, turn on the working class itself...."

"The Algerian working class must enter into struggle under its own banner and—drawing behind it women, landless peasants, agricultural workers, the mass of unemployed youth—must overthrow the army/FLN regime and sweep away the reactionary FIS."

—Le Bolchéviek No. 112,  
July-August 1991

## Algerian Workers and Permanent Revolution

Comparing the brutality of the current conflict in Algeria with that seen in the 1954-62 War of Independence, ideologues for French imperialism seek to equate the squalid civil war between military despots and Islamic reactionaries with the heroic struggle of the Algerian people against French colonialism. This reeks of the arrogance of an imperialist power still stinging from a humiliating defeat at the hands of its former colonial slaves. From the first FLN military operation in November 1954, it took more than seven years, at a cost of over one million dead, for the Algerian masses to drive the colonial rulers out of their country. Yet when independence was finally achieved in 1962, it placed in power the bourgeois-nationalist FLN, which was committed to maintaining capitalism and aspired to be a new ruling class lording it over their "own" people.

Once in power, the FLN acted as servants of imperialist interests, preaching "Third World socialism" while imposing iron-fisted military rule over Algeria's workers and peasants. By the end of the 1980s, the FLN had lost the authority it had accrued from leading the struggle against French imperialism. In the fall of 1988, a strike by industrial workers outside Algiers triggered youth revolts in the capital and other cities. Army troops gunned down hundreds of protesters. The fundamentalists seized on the desperation of the plebeian masses to put themselves forward as a "radical" alternative to the brutal and corrupt "Doula" (Power). When the FIS swept the first round of legislative elections in December 1991, the army

moved in to establish open military rule, sweeping aside the FLN, which is today a shadow of its former self. In response to imperialist pressure to "legitimize" the regime, the military has reconstituted a "civilian" government over the past few years through a series of sham elections and plebiscites.

The one social force with the power to lead the impoverished peasants, unemployed youth, women and all oppressed in a revolutionary assault on the capitalist order is the proletariat. In the wake of independence, the country built up a rather sizable modern industrial sector, using oil revenues to import entire factories. This has created an industrial proletariat in light and heavy manufacturing and transportation, which—along with oil and gas workers—has social power well beyond its numerical size. The organized working class has been a prime target of fundamentalist assassins. While the bourgeois press has highlighted the murders of scores of journalists and other prominent figures, nearly 400 trade unionists have been assassinated, as have dozens of leftist militants.

Since independence, Algerian workers have been shackled by the corporatist leadership of the UGTA trade-union federation, which is directly tied to the regime and was the main force in organizing Zeroual's National Democratic Rally party early this year. The UGTA was formed by pro-FLN trade-union



Zohra

**Bodies of among the 300 killed in Raïs, August 29, one of many massacres attributed to Armed Islamic Group. Survivors accused government of complicity.**

the PAGES (Party of the Socialist Vanguard), was semi-clandestine. The PAGES succeeded the Algerian Communist Party which, having liquidated into the FLN in 1956, was outlawed as soon as the FLN came to power. The PAGES dissolved in January 1993, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaving as remnants

can origin occupy a strategic position in French heavy industry underscores that this fight must be *international*.

The French Communist Party (PCF) has been active of late in organizing demonstrations of "solidarity with the Algerian people" and enrolling undocumented immigrant workers in the Communist-led CGT trade-union federation. However, the PCF's rallies are actually in "solidarity" with French imperialism's support for the bloody Zeroual regime, just as it lined up behind its "own" bourgeoisie in the 1950s in refusing to fight for Algerian independence (see "Papon, Vichy and Algeria," page 10). And its concern for immigrant workers is belied by its participation—alongside the ultra-chauvinist Jean-Pierre Chevènement—in the Jospin government. As throughout West Europe, France—both under the former right-wing Juppé government and now under the "Socialist" Jospin—has tightened racist barriers to immigration and deported immigrants and asylum-seekers, making North African workers the scapegoats for growing unemployment.

The PCF reformists do not oppose the scapegoating and repression of immigrants, but simply want it carried out more "humanely." While mouthing socialist rhetoric, the PCF waves the tricolor of French imperialism, issuing protectionist calls to "produce French" and demanding the borders be closed to immigration. During the December 1995 strike wave, the PCF and CGT tops helped ensure that the strikes did not spread to the private sector, with its heavily North African workforce, but remained limited to public sector workers who, by law, must be French citizens. In the name of "secularism," the PCF—joined by the fake Trotskyists of Lutte Ouvrière—has supported the government's racist exclusion of Muslim girls from high schools for wearing the *hijab*, the Islamic headscarf. Far from "fighting fundamentalism," such measures buttress the fascists' diatribes against "foreign influence" and drive North Africans

**President Liamine Zeroual (near right), FIS leader Abassi Madani. Release of imprisoned Islamic fundamentalist in July was part of attempt to negotiate deal.**



Economist



La Repubblica

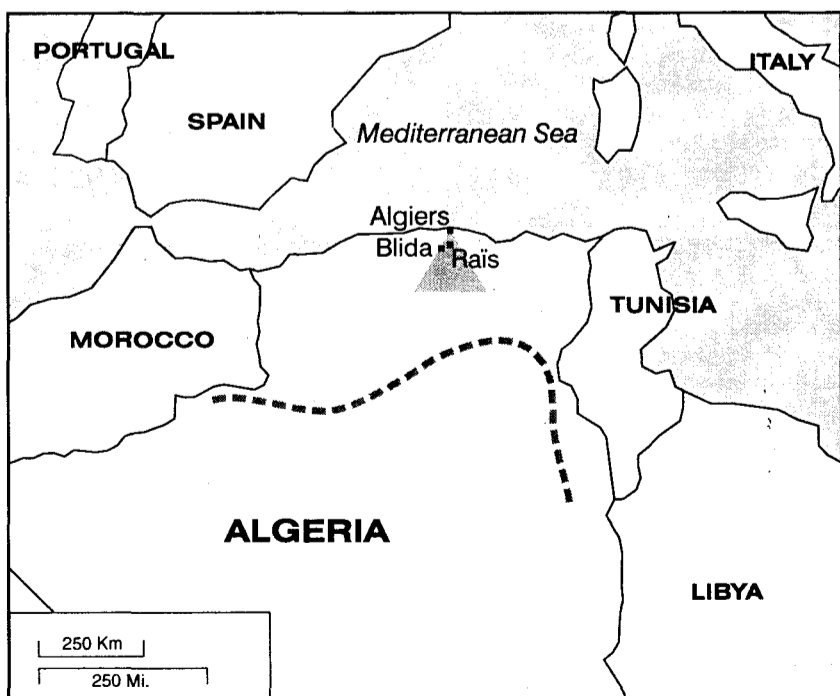
leaders in Algeria in a February 1956 split from the Stalinist-dominated CGT federation, whose leadership rejected the fight for national independence. Together with the FLN, the UGTA called a number of powerful strikes, including a massive general strike in July 1956. Crushed during the savage repression of the 1957 Battle of Algiers, the union federation was not reconstituted until the end of the war. When the FLN came to power in 1962, it purged the UGTA leadership, banned strikes by public sector workers and imposed an iron grip over the organized working class.

The Algerian Stalinists directly contributed to this, serving in the FLN machine after independence as propagandists, administrators and UGTA bureaucrats, even though their own organization,

Ettahaddi and the PADS, both of which support the *éradicateurs*. These groups justify their despicable bloc with the army torturers by appealing to the Stalinist/Menshevik myth of "revolution by stages," labeling the hardline anti-FIS elements in the regime as the "progressive" wing of the Algerian bourgeoisie.

Despite their corporatist leadership, Algerian workers have repeatedly demonstrated their combativity, even under the conditions of the current civil war. In February 1996, public sector workers completely shut down the country for two days in opposition to what they termed *Plan Juppé Bis* (Juppé Plan No. 2). This reference to the French conservative government's proposed austerity measures, which had provoked a massive upsurge by public sector workers there only two months earlier, underscored the links between class struggle on both shores of the Mediterranean. Algerian public sector workers have since continued to wage a series of strikes against threatened privatizations and layoffs. This past May, 30,000 workers at the Skikda oil tanker port struck for three days. This was followed by a two-day strike in July at the SNVI truck factory, which touched off a series of other strikes in the massive Rouiba industrial zone just outside the capital.

The attacks by the Zeroual regime and its imperialist backers cannot be decisively defeated by economist trade-union struggle, no matter how militant. Algeria is a capitalist semicolony, formally independent but crushed under the boot of the imperialist powers, which usurp its resources and squeeze the lifeblood out of its working population. To do away with exploitation by the imperialists and the domestic comprador bourgeoisie, the Algerian working class must sweep away the system of capitalist oppression by taking power through socialist revolution. The fact that workers of North Afri-



WV Map

**Recent massacres have been concentrated in "Triangle of Death" south of Algiers. Oil- and gas-rich area below dashed line has become virtual imperialist protectorate.**

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deeper into the fundamentalists' ghetto.

The struggle against Islamic fundamentalism and capitalist oppression in Algeria is intimately linked with the fight against racist terror in Europe. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria is being used as a pretext to intensify racist repression against the huge North African minority in France. As part of the fight to forge a multiethnic vanguard party to expropriate the racist French bourgeoisie, the LTF demands: "Stop the deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!" The LTF has called on rail and airline workers in particular to use their power to stop the expulsions of immigrants from France.

Algeria is a classic demonstration—in the negative—of the correctness of Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which was vindicated by the experience of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Trotsky explained that in economically backward countries the weak national bourgeoisie—tied by a thousand strings to imperialism and fearful of its "own" working class—is incapable of realizing the goals of classic bourgeois revolutions like the French Revolution of 1789. He wrote that "the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses" (*The Permanent Revolution* [1930]). The genuine liberation of colonial and semicolonial countries can only be achieved through the overthrow of capitalism by socialist revolution. If it is not to be strangled by



**FLN leaders Ahmed Ben Bella (left) and Houari Boumediene. After gaining power, bourgeois nationalists moved to suppress workers, peasants, women and ethnic minorities.**

backwardness, poverty and imperialist intervention, this struggle must necessarily be linked to the fight for proletarian revolution in the imperialist heartlands.

### Imperialism, Nationalism and Islamic Fundamentalism

With the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, semicolonial countries like Algeria, which before were often able to maneuver for breathing space between Washington and Moscow, are now mercilessly squeezed in the vise of imperialist exploitation. In the last few years, southern Algeria has been transformed into a virtual protectorate of international oil and gas conglomerates—especially American and British—which have poured billions of dollars into the Algerian Sahara, a region previously dominated by French companies. The entire area has been decreed an "exclusion zone" barred to Algerian citizens without special passes. Military patrols, roadblocks and helicopters are everywhere, while an international airport and compounds surrounded by barbed wire are reserved for foreign oilmen. The creation of this zone harks back to the attempt by French president Charles de Gaulle to split off the oil-rich *pays utile* (useful country) during the Algerian War to avoid conceding full sovereignty to the Algerian people. After being thwarted by the heroic struggle for independence, that colonialist scheme is now becoming a reality.

As the bourgeois nationalism of the rul-

ing elite is revealed as patently bankrupt, the FIS reactionaries feed off despair and frustration fueled by the profound economic crisis ravaging the country, a phenomenon evident throughout much of North Africa and the Near East. As we have noted elsewhere ("ISO and the Veil: 'Third Camp' Social Democrats Pander to Islamic Fundamentalism," *WV* No. 613, 30 December 1994):

"Though looking to the past, the Islamic fundamentalist wave is a response to the oppressive conditions of the late 20th century. Its present rise as a mass movement is the reactionary reflection of both the absence of a communist alternative and the manifest dead end of nationalism."

While the American bourgeoisie hypocritically screams about Islamic "terrorists" to justify foreign intervention and domestic repression, it sponsored numerous fundamentalist movements in its crusade to destroy the Soviet Union. At the height of the 1950s Cold War, then secretary of state John Foster Dulles proclaimed: "The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it" (quoted in Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* [1957]). After encouraging an anti-Communist bloodbath in Indonesia in 1965 in which Islamic fundamentalists played a prominent role, the U.S. subsequently developed that "bond" most closely in its drive to kill Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan following the USSR's military intervention in late 1979. The Algerian GIA, like a host of fundamentalist organizations in other countries, was formed by veterans of the CIA's "holy war" in Afghanistan, where *mujahedin* cutthroats butchered teachers for the "crime" of teaching young girls to read.

The U.S. has also maintained close contacts with the Algerian fundamentalists themselves. In 1994, the FIS gave the CIA written assurances that oil and gas contracts would be respected if it came to power. Last year, a Rand Corporation report commissioned by the U.S. Army—entitled "Algeria: The Next Fundamentalist State"—assured America's rulers that if the FIS came to power it was "likely to welcome US private-sector investments in Algeria and to undertake close commercial relations with the United States" (*CounterPunch*, 1 November). More recently, the well-connected *Middle East Economic Digest* (19 September) ran a cover story headlined "Hope: Amid the Misery, Investors Return to Algeria," reporting on the many investment projects mooted by imperialist firms—pending a "resolution" of the civil war.

Echoing the imperialists in pushing for a deal with the FIS are the abject social democrats of the Lambertist PT, whose cadre in France are today an integral component of the pro-Socialist trade-union bureaucracy. The Algerian PT has angled for a bloc with the Islamic fundamentalists since 1991, when it criminally supported a "general strike" call by the FIS, its first major confrontation with the regime. In January 1995, the PT signed a common platform with the FIS and a number of bourgeois and "moderate" fundamentalist parties, calling for "reconciliation" and "free and pluralistic elections." These pro-Islamic "socialists" were rewarded for their services in last June's electoral farce, as PT leader Louisa Hanoune and three of her followers won parliamentary seats with backhanded support from the FIS, which called for a vote "for candidates who are in favor of peace and who are not accomplices of the putschists" (*Le Monde*, 11 May).

### Mobilize the Proletariat to Defend Women, Berbers!

Chief among the victims of a fundamentalist victory would be Algeria's women. Many schoolgirls who refuse to wear the veil have already been shot down in the streets or dragged out of school and had their throats slashed.



**Huge pro-independence protest in Algiers, December 1960. Protesters waved outlawed FLN flags in defiance of French colonialism.**

Algerian women have repeatedly taken to the streets in opposition to the fundamentalist threat. Fully two-thirds of the 100,000 people who participated in anti-FIS protests in March 1994 were women. Unfortunately, the banners they marched behind were those of bourgeois feminists, ex-Stalinists and other political forces which support the military regime. The fight for women's rights requires an uncompromising struggle not only against the theocratic reactionaries but against the bourgeois-nationalist regime.

Once in power, the FLN immediately demobilized the thousands of women who had courageously fought against French colonialism, sneering: "Our socialism rests on the pillars of Islam and not on the emancipation of women with their make-up, hairdressers and cosmetics, from which arise unchained passions harmful to humanity." For years, the FLN included within its ranks current FIS leader Abassi Madani, even when he was a leader in the late 1960s of the fundamentalist El Quyam (Values) group, whose members threw lye in the faces of women wearing short skirts. In 1984, the FLN regime imposed a "Family Code" enshrining the anti-woman dictates of *sharia* (Islamic law), prohibiting marriage to non-Muslim men, sanctioning polygamy, making divorce almost impossible for women and relegating them to the status of permanent minors who owe "obedience" to their husbands.

In fact, the nationalist regime helped the fundamentalists to establish a base in

Algerian universities in the 1970s by importing scores of Muslim Brotherhood members from Egypt and elsewhere to replace French-speaking teachers with Arabic speakers. This was part of a "forced Arabization" drive directed particularly against the country's Berber minority, concentrated mainly in the Kabylia region east of Algiers and derived from indigenous peoples who predated the Arab occupation of the area. Berbers played an exceptionally prominent role in the Algerian independence movement, constituting a major portion of the FLN's leading cadres until the late 1950s. But the potential for Berber-Arab unity was undermined by the FLN's nationalist program, which necessarily promoted the dominant Arab people. In 1963, the regime crushed a regional revolt in Kabylia, killing hundreds. In 1980, the regime again came down on Kabylia after the region exploded in a virtual insurrection—the "Berber springtime"—following a police assault on university students who were protesting a government ban on teaching Berber language and culture.

More recently, Kabylia witnessed the largest of the anti-FIS demonstrations that swept Algeria several years ago, including a series of one-day strikes and mass protests in 1994 against Islamic terror and for official recognition of Tamazight, the Berber language. However, the main Kabyle-based parties, the bourgeois Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), play the role of "loyal opposition" to the

*continued on page 10*

**Just Out!**

**Spartacist**

(French Edition)

**No. 31**  
**Autumn 1997**  
(64 pages)

**\$1.50**

**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO  
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# Algeria...

(continued from page 9)

regime. The RCD is closely tied to the *éradicateurs* at the head of the army, while the FFS favors "conciliation" with the FIS.

Tailing right behind these bourgeois forces is the United Secretariat's Algerian supporters, the PST. Like the RCD and FFS, the PST limits itself to pressuring the regime to make Berber an official language. Trotskyists call for the full equality of all languages used in Algeria—Arabic, Berber and French—but we also uncompromisingly defend the Berbers' right to regional autonomy. At this point, the various Berber-speaking regions have not consolidated a nation, although this could happen in the crucible of fierce repression should the virulently Arab-chauvinist fundamentalists come to power. That national/ethnic antagonisms have not dissipated but have rather deepened in some ways under FLN rule, despite the nationalists' pretensions of building a modern industrial society, underlines the necessity for overthrowing capitalism as the precondition for national equality and economic development.

The Pabloite PST/Usec have been loyal followers of the Algerian nationalists for decades. This tendency's founder and then-leader, Michel Pablo, actually accepted a post in the first FLN government under Ahmed Ben Bella. Pablo helped draft the 1963 "self-management" decrees that brought to heel the mass occupations of factories and landed estates which swept post-independence Algeria, by integrating the workers committees into the state apparatus. In recent years, the PST has focused on pressuring the blood-drenched military to accord parliamentary "democracy," centering its program on the call for "elections with proportional representation." The utter



Benito/Syigma

**Women were at the forefront of massive anti-fundamentalist protests in Algiers and other cities in March 1994.**

vacuousness of such parliamentary cretinism in war-ravaged Algeria can be seen in the fact that such elections could well lead to a fundamentalist victory.

The PST's line is a repudiation in practice of the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. Not surprisingly, these tailists oppose any perspective for mobilizing the proletariat in struggle for the defense of the rights of Berbers and women, instead liquidating into various pro-government feminist formations. Rejecting the PST's anti-revolutionary politics, in 1992 a group of PST cadre formed the Tendance Plateforme Trotskyste (TPT) to fight for the perspective of permanent revolution against the Pabloites' class collaboration. After further study and programmatic debate, the TPT declared its solidarity with the International Communist League. Placing the question of women's oppression front and center, the

TPT declared in its March 1992 founding document:

"The fight for the liberation of women, which will be accomplished by the revolution, will have as its basis the fight against all forms of sexual discrimination! Against the veil! Equal pay for equal work! Free and accessible abortion for all women, including minors! For 24-hour childcare centers!"

The woman question in Algeria is strategic and explosive. Yet much of the Algerian left—wedded to nationalism—does not even raise the elementary demand for repeal of the reactionary Family Code. The ex-Stalinist Ettahaddi and PADS call only for "reforming" this law, as does the group around *El Massira* (*The March*), a recent split from the PST. Meanwhile, the Lambertist PT, which grotesquely tails the FIS, did not utter a word about abrogation of the Family Code in its platform for the June elec-

tions. The fight for sexual and ethnic/national equality poses the necessity of an attack against the very basis of the capitalist order. Under the leadership of a Bolshevik party which acts as a tribune of the people, the revolutionary proletariat must inscribe on its banner the fight against all forms of sexual discrimination, for the abolition of the Family Code, and for the separation of mosque and state. For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

## For the Independent Mobilization of the Proletariat

Evincing the Pabloites' suicidal faith in the military-backed regime, PST leader Salhi Chawki dismisses any idea of a "machievellian [sic] plan" involving army complicity in the recent massacres and gives the Zeroual government a clean bill of health: "It does seem that the army was not responsible for these latest massacres, as many people suspected" (*International Viewpoint*, October 1997). Meanwhile in France, the PST's co-thinkers, Alain Krivine's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, tail behind the *French* bourgeoisie, joining in the call for a "commission of inquiry" as "the beginning of the end for the killers" (*Rouge*, 13 November).

As a left fig leaf for its support to the military, the PST promotes the various "self-defense groups" which are tolerated—or directly set up—by the regime and serve as a vehicle for pro-government political groups to rally to the side of the generals. Thus Chawki claims that "the growing structures of popular self-defense are the only act of civil dignity which can respond adequately to the horror facing Algeria." Rendering the PST's line more explicit, *El Massira* (January 1997) openly calls on "officers and policemen to place themselves at the service of the people, not to oppress them."

While expressing the felt needs of rural villagers to defend themselves against

## French Stalinists Betrayed Algerian Independence Struggle

# Papon, Vichy and Algeria

In covering the current trial of former French official Maurice Papon for organizing the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz under the pro-Nazi Vichy regime in World War II, the bourgeois press has brought into the open one of the dirtiest episodes in France's dirty colonial war against the Algerian people. Although he faces no charges for it, in October 1961 Papon, as Paris police commissioner, organized the massacre of over 300 Algerian protesters in the streets of Paris. For more than three decades, that massacre was covered in a shroud of official secrecy; only in the past several years has the bourgeois media begun to refer to it. "The French bourgeoisie would very much like to wipe out the memory of this abject crime," wrote the Ligue Trotskyste de France in a 1983 article. "But the working class will not forget its martyrs" (*Le Bolchévique* No. 42, October 1983).

On 17 October 1961, French authorities systematically organized and carried out an anti-Algerian pogrom in the heart of Paris, slaughtering hundreds of men, women and children participating in a peaceful protest. Many were shot on the spot; others were beaten unconscious and drowned in the Seine, coldbloodedly executed in police stations or lynched from trees in the Bois de Vincennes park. Days after the massacre, corpses were still being pulled from the river. The "official" version was that only three people (including two Algerians) were killed, but leaked national police documents put the number of dead at 140. The Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), after extensive investigations to



L'Humanité

**17 October 1961: Paris police terrorize Algerian immigrants as over 300 pro-independence protesters were slaughtered.**

identify the victims, put the total number of those who died or disappeared at 327.

Amid a series of articles touting the Stalinists' supposed fight against the colonialist war in Algeria, an article on the October 1961 massacre recently appeared in *L'Humanité*, newspaper of the French Communist Party (PCF), implying that the PCF actively protested the bloodbath. This is a lie, and the PCF knows it. Indeed, when Algerian protesters fleeing the police attack sought refuge in the *L'Humanité* building, the gate was shut in their faces.

Following the pogrom, no demonstra-

tions were called by the PCF or the Communist-led CGT trade-union federation. The Stalinist leaders did not visit the wounded Algerian victims in the hospitals or the suffering families of those killed; they mobilized no workers to honor the victims' burials. The only protest strikes were scattered half-hour stoppages in a few plants. The day after the massacre, the Socialists rushed to defend Papon, declaring: "No one can blame him" (quoted in *Territoires Contemporains: Cahiers de l'IHC* No. 2, 1995). For their part, PCF representatives sat alongside Papon at a meeting of the

Paris Municipal Council one week after the massacre, lamely calling only for "sanctions against those responsible" (Michel Levine, *Les ratonnades d'octobre* [1985]). Years later, despite the scores of union members who disappeared that night, the CGT was still rehashing the cops' lie that only two Algerians had been killed (Jean Bruhat and Marc Piolot, *Esquisse d'une histoire de la C.G.T. (1895-1965)* [CGT publication, 1966])!

The massacre was preceded by months of atrocities against Algerian workers by the Paris police. Papon had been transferred from Algeria with orders to reproduce in Paris the mass torture and summary executions that were employed in the colony. According to official figures, more than 50 Algerians were killed by cops in France every month, and many more were brutalized in police torture chambers. There was a crying need for a demonstration of united action by French and Algerian workers against the racist terror. But the Stalinist leaders did nothing. Emboldened, Papon ordered a curfew selectively targeting Algerians, in words virtually identical to a decree against Jews during World War II. Still, there was no protest by the leaders of the French working class. Assured of the docility of the reformist misleaders, the regime of President Charles de Gaulle organized a carefully prepared bloodbath when the FLN called a demonstration against the racist curfew and for Algerian independence.

For years, the Stalinists helped the bourgeoisie blot out the memory of the October 1961 massacre by building up a myth around a subsequent PCF-led demonstration in which nine *French* people were killed in a police charge at the Charonne metro (subway) station in February 1962. While not a single French high-school history textbook deals with the 1961 pogrom, the Charonne demonstration is universally known—and proudly

fundamentalist attacks, even where these irregular militias were not initially created in collaboration with the army and police, they were soon placed under total government control. This has been codified in the past two years in a series of laws putting them under the command of the interior ministry. One type of militia, the "communal guards," is directly set up by the army, which trains and pays the members and provides them with light arms. The other type, the "self-defense groups" initiated by villagers, requires the authorization of the local prefect and the approval of the security services. These irregular militias, each comprising about 100,000 men, have more than doubled the size of the military forces available to the regime.

Like the PST/Usec, the centrist Pouvoir Ouvrier in France, which is linked to Workers Power in Britain, tries to give a left cover to its capitulation before the Algerian military. Thus, *Pouvoir Ouvrier* (September-October 1997) pretends that

it is possible to "take the leadership of the self-defense committees against the Islamist violence and the army special forces." But how, dear centrists, can you "take the leadership" when the leaders are named by the minister of the interior? Moreover, reflecting the backwardness of rural society, a number of these militias have simply become instruments for pursuing bloody vendettas among rival villages, clans and local emirs (potentates). Even Chawki delicately admits that the communal guards "seem to have been responsible for some other collective murders earlier this year."

Armed self-defense is a vital question in Algeria. But this must be predicated on and integrally linked to the mobilization of the proletariat independently from—and in opposition to—the bourgeois state. An example of this came in the summer of 1993, when dockers shut down the port of Algiers for more than a week, cutting off distribution of food supplies. We pointed out that the trade union should



Le Bolchévik

Signs carried by LTF contingent at 1993 Paris protest against deportations raised call for "Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrants!"

have organized the distribution of food—mobilizing women's support committees to help in this—showing in practice how the working class can carry out the necessary tasks of organizing society. Noting that the fundamentalists would have viewed such union-based action as a threat to their hold over the plebeian masses, the LTF wrote (*Le Bolchévik* No. 125, November-December 1993):

"It would therefore be necessary to set up workers self-defense militias to give the reactionaries of the FIS a taste of what working-class power is. But such a mobilization would require ousting the traitors who lead the working class and keep the proletariat subordinated to the bourgeoisie."

The complete and unconditional independence of the proletariat, embodied in the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, is key to finding any way out of the terror and turmoil currently strangling Algeria. A victory for the fundamentalists would not only sound the death knell for unveiled women, ethnic minorities, militant workers and leftists in Algeria. It would also be an enor-

mous impetus to the spread of Islamic reaction throughout North Africa, bolstering the Tunisian Al-Nahda movement and the five-year war of terror waged by the Egyptian Djamaa Islamiya (Islamic Group), which has targeted the Coptic Christian minority and foreign tourists (most recently, in the horrific massacre which left 62 dead in Luxor). As in Algeria, the imperialist-backed bourgeois regimes in Tunisia and Egypt have imposed draconian repression on the population while ramming through policies of austerity and immiseration.

On the other hand, a victorious socialist revolution in Algeria would not only usher in the emancipation of the oppressed of that country, but bring closer the day when all the despotic regimes of the region—whether Islamic, Arab nationalist or Zionist—are swept away by the working class. Key to *this* outcome is the formation of Bolshevik workers parties throughout the region as part of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International. This is what the International Communist League fights for. ■



Sygma

1983 strike at Talbot auto plant highlighted role of combative North African workers in strategic French industries.

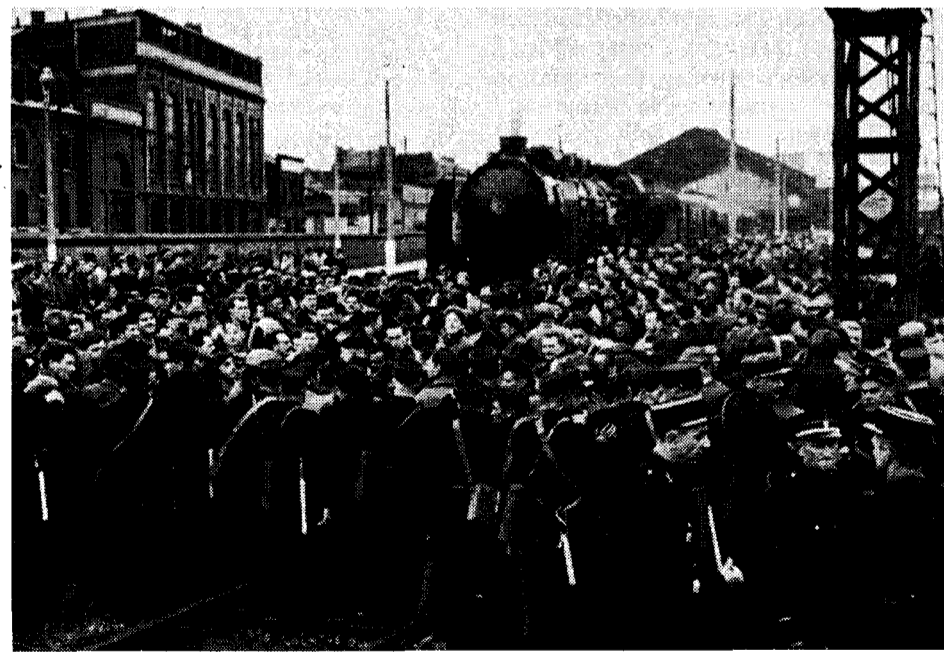
promoted by the Stalinist leaders as the epitome of their supposed "combat" against French colonialism during the Algerian War. But the Charonne demonstration did not even call for Algerian independence! It was called to protest terrorist attacks by the OAS (Secret Army Organization), a fascist group led by former army officers who sought to head off de Gaulle's negotiations with the FLN. When a million people turned out for the burial of the Charonne protesters, PCF speakers did not so much as mention the massacre of Algerians which had taken place only four months earlier.

As far back as the 1930s, when it embarked on its class-collaborationist "people's front" policy, the PCF had *opposed* Algerian independence, calling instead for a more "democratic" French colonial empire in the form of a "free union" between "the colonial peoples and our people" (Jakob Moneta, *Le PCF et la question coloniale* [1971]). In May 1945, PCF ministers in the first postwar government stayed at their posts as the French bourgeoisie drowned in blood an incipient Algerian nationalist revolt in Sétif, killing tens of thousands. During the Algerian War, PCF leaders occasionally uttered the word "independence," but their real policy was to pressure successive bourgeois governments to "negotiate" a settlement which would preserve the French bourgeoisie's "vital interests." This was simply a call for a neocolonial regime in Algeria under the boot of French imperialism.

From the fall of 1955 to late spring 1956, France was swept by a wave of mutinies by soldiers refusing to be sent to Algeria. These revolts were often backed up by strikes, as thousands of French workers—joined by their Algerian class brothers—battled riot police in defense of protesting soldiers. In the midst of this unprecedented upsurge, Socialist leader Guy Mollet was elected

prime minister at the head of a popular-front coalition including the PCF and the Radicals and other bourgeois parties. Mollet proceeded to pour hundreds of thousands of troops into Algeria. Though not formally part of the government, the PCF provided his firmest support, going so far as to vote for granting the regime "special powers" in Algeria.

The worker-soldier revolt in France came amid a series of strikes in Algeria—several of which shut the country down—



J.-P. Marais

Workers and soldiers defy cops to stop troop transport train during Algerian War, 1956.

centered on the highly combative dock workers. Far from seeking to mobilize solidarity in struggle among workers in France, the PCF fomented anti-immigrant chauvinism, pushing its line of closing the borders. In May 1956, at the height of the proletarian upsurge, the PCF denounced a government proposal to admit a thousand additional Algerian workers into France.

In the face of such treachery, the wave of mutinies and strikes against the war dissipated.

France continued to witness militant strikes around economic demands—and Algerian workers there participated virtually to a man. In 1958, with the economy in shambles and the country swept by one of the most powerful strike movements in decades, the bourgeoisie turned to World War II "Resistance" idol General de Gaulle to resolve the crisis. The

fied the military terror in Algeria. Shortly thereafter, he proclaimed the semi-bonapartist Fifth Republic.

Three years later, in April 1961, the social tensions tearing at the fabric of French capitalist society again exploded, as French troops in Algeria revolted against an attempted putsch by officers opposed to de Gaulle's negotiations with the FLN. Rank-and-file soldiers seized military bases, arrested their officers and sabotaged vehicles and communications. Instead of seizing the opportunity to mobilize the workers in struggle against the imperialist war, the PCF sought to unite with de Gaulle against the reactionary officers. When Gaullist prime minister Michel Debré issued a ludicrous call for the population to rush to the airports to prevent an (impossible) assault by the putschists, the Stalinists embraced the "national unity" fraud; they dispatched hundreds of workers to patrol the airports around Paris and cynically "called on the government to immediately arm the working class" (*L'Humanité*, 25 April 1961). Fully 12 million workers took to the streets at the call of the PCF, but the Stalinists kept the demonstrations directed solely against the putschist officers, so that even the Gaullists supported the protests.

The Algerian War provoked wave after wave of explosive working-class struggle by French and Algerian workers, which could have placed the perspective of socialist revolution on the order of the day. Yet the PCF repeatedly derailed this powerful working-class offensive through its treacherous class collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Throughout the war, the PCF leaders sought above all to avoid a humiliating defeat for French imperialism. Today, the PCF continues to serve as a loyal handmaiden to the imperialist bourgeoisie as part of the racist, anti-working-class popular-front government. ■

# Letters

(continued from page 2)

"West" through the early bourgeois revolutions. The current rise in reaction, in the form of a more powerful and better-armed Muslim fundamentalism, is primarily fueled by the bankruptcy of Arab nationalism.

The murderous role of the Zionist rulers in the Occupied Territories has merely strengthened the resolve of the reactionaries, as the one thing Near East Muslim fundamentalists have in common is anti-Semitism. The primary blame, however, has to rest with the Arab bourgeoisies. I realize this was not the issue being dealt with in the article. Nonetheless, I think the way the sentence stands removes much of the responsibility from

the hands of the Arab bourgeoisies.

As we've written before, what is absolutely essential is the building of Leninist-Trotskyist parties in the Near East that are conscious of the historical role of the proletariat in that part of the globe. The political independence of the working class and its mobilization for itself and all the oppressed under the banner of permanent revolution must be the hallmark of these parties. This will be the only way to defeat the reactionary fundamentalist danger, sweep away both the bloody Zionist rulers and the miserable (and bloody) Arab bourgeoisies and build a rational, socialist society. The real question is how to do that and overcome the many religious divisions entrenched in these countries.

Comradely,  
Alan Wilde

## On Interpenetrated Peoples

New York City  
21 November 1997

Dear Editor,

An article headlined "Israel Out of All Occupied Territories!" (WV No. 674, 19 September) states: "Like Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia, among other places, Israel/Palestine is a case of interpenetrated peoples, of two or more peoples claiming the same territory. In such situations, under capitalism—in which the state power is necessarily dominated by a single nation—the democratic right of national self-determination cannot be achieved for one people without violating the national rights of the other."

While this statement is true as a general historical observation, it ignores the particularities of the regions cited and the impact of events in recent years. Firstly, in some of these cases, relatively homogenous populations have coexisted alongside areas of interpenetration. In Israel/Palestine, with the exception of militarized Zionist "settlements," the Occupied Territories are inhabited by Palestinian Arabs. In Sri Lanka, where many Tamils were historically concentrated in the northern part of the island, we upheld the right of the minority Tamils to form their own state.

More importantly, these situations are inherently unstable; bloody, historic catastrophes can and do forcibly separate interpenetrated peoples, as has happened

in several of the countries cited above. In the former Yugoslavia, nationalism was the motor force for the restoration of capitalism in the early 1990s. This counter-revolution was precipitated by and in turn fueled bloody communalist slaughters which have ripped apart the Serb, Croat and Bosnian Muslim populations, once intermingled in various areas including the old Croatian military frontier and Bosnia-Herzegovina, into distinct regions under the rule of mutually hostile and viciously anti-working-class nationalist forces.

The interpenetration of the Greek and Turkish populations of Cyprus was also "resolved" in a reactionary, anti-democratic manner in the wake of the 1974 Turkish army occupation. We wrote at the time that the compacting of distinct Greek and Turkish areas in Cyprus "would involve destructive forced mass population transfers and would contain within them the seeds of further bloody communal and national wars" (WV No. 50, 2 August 1974). This warning has been vindicated by subsequent events, as some 200,000 Greeks were driven from their homes in the Turkish-occupied northern area and the two communities effectively separated. This has set the stage for continuing bloody confrontations between Greek and Turkish nationalists, most recently in the summer of 1996.

Sri Lanka offers a particularly com-

elling example of the impact of nationalist bloodletting. After decades of "Sinhala only" chauvinist agitation pushed particularly by the "left"-nationalist Sri Lanka Freedom Party, in the early 1980s the rightist government of President J. R. Jayewardene unleashed an army of occupation in the overwhelmingly Tamil North centered on the Jaffna peninsula. In 1983, Jayewardene's United National Party instigated a wave of pogroms against the Tamil minority in the South, dispossessing much of the sizable Tamil merchant layer. We wrote at the time (*Spartacist* No. 35, Autumn 1983):

"The massive atrocity taking place in Sri Lanka marks a watershed in that island's history. The bloodletting and the mass population transfers have set the economy back at least a decade and are forcing the separation of the peoples. J.R. has ripped the country apart, massacring many thousands and forcing the survivors into a virtual 'bantustan' in the barren North."

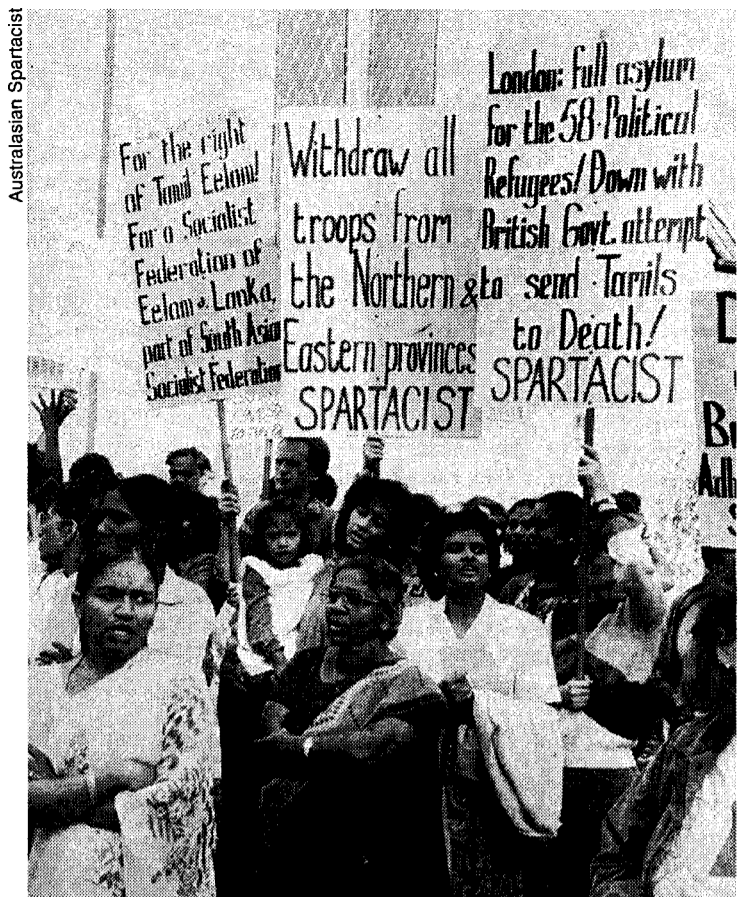
Noting that the bloodbath had "catastrophically altered for the foreseeable future the prospects for common class struggle between the Sinhalese working class and the oppressed Tamil minority," we raised the call for *the right of Tamil Eelam*—i.e., a separate Tamil state in the

North—and for a federated socialist republic of Eelam and Lanka as part of a socialist federation of South Asia.

Now, even as war continues to rage in the North between Tamil nationalists and the occupying Sinhalese army, in the Eastern Province Tamil Muslims and some Sinhalese continue to live alongside the predominant Tamil Hindus. And the uplands plantation areas continue to be populated by hideously exploited Tamil tea pickers, descendants of low-caste Indians imported by the British imperialists before independence, whose labor accounts for a significant portion of the country's export earnings. Neither the ostensibly Marxist organizations on the island nor the Tamil nationalists have ever bestirred themselves to fight on behalf of these Tamil workers.

As we wrote about Lanka in 1983: "As Marxists, we are not in the business of revenge of one people (the prior oppressed) over another (the prior oppressor). Rather we believe the eradication of national oppression and true social progress will require a socialist revolution" (WV No. 336, 12 August 1983).

Communist greetings,  
Helene Brosius



1987 protest in Melbourne, Australia in defense of Tamil people against Sri Lankan army terror.

## Wall Street...

(continued from page 7)

a return to the anti-labor "free market" environment of the 1920s, Galbraith advocated what in Europe and Latin America is termed a corporate state: a strong government exercising a high degree of direct control over the economy.

In his influential books of the 1950s—*American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* and *The Affluent Society*—Galbraith set out the theme that big business and "big labor" were exploiting their monopoly position at the expense of the rest of American society. Under the expansionary conditions of the postwar period, he argued, strong indus-

trial unions like the UAW could demand and extract ever-greater wages and benefits. U.S. Steel, General Motors et al. then passed along these higher costs, adding a bit extra to widen their profit margins, in the form of higher prices to consumers:

"The wage, price and profit spiral originates in the part of the economy where firms with a strong (or oligopolistic) market position bargain with strong unions. These price movements work themselves through the economy with a highly diverse effect on different groups. Where firms are strong in their markets and unions are effective, no one is much hurt, if at all, by inflation....

"At the other extreme are those who experience the rising costs but whose own prices remain largely unaffected because they are fixed by law or custom or, at a minimum, by someone else. This is the position, during inflation, of the

teacher, preacher, public servant, of (in general) the salaried professional and white collar community and of those who, in effect, are reaping the reward of past services to society in the form of pensions or other such payments."

—*The Affluent Society* (1958)

In other words, if a high-school teacher couldn't afford the new car he wanted, he should blame not only GM management but Walter Reuther's UAW as well. Indeed, in Galbraith's view there was little difference between the two. In *American Capitalism*, he wrote of "the full coalition between management and labor" which is "partly disguised by the conventional expressions of animosity."

Galbraith opposed the traditional right-wing program for combating inflation by depressing the economy through

tight money policy, higher taxes and cuts in government spending, arguing: "Even though the unemployment necessary for price stability is not, as a national total, very great, it will never be uniformly distributed. Black and unskilled workers, often the same, lose their jobs first." Galbraith's alternative was "to combine fiscal policy with control over prices and wages." This prescription was followed in the early 1960s by Kennedy and his successor Lyndon B. Johnson, who sought to impose wage "guidelines" on the major labor unions, a policy finally broken by a strike of airline machinists in 1966.

Even more importantly, Galbraith was the first prominent liberal intellectual to maintain that the interests of unionized workers in the strategic core of the economy were counterposed to those of the black poor. This position would be developed in a more leftist form during the 1960s by young radicals who embraced the then-fashionable doctrines of Maoism and Guevarism. In the New Left view, white workers were seen as "junior partners" of American imperialism, benefiting from the exploitation and degradation of the impoverished toilers of Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as of the black ghetto poor at home. In this way the radical left helped produce a political vacuum which allowed racist demagogues like George Wallace to appeal to white workers who felt neither affluent nor economically secure.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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