

# Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 16

## South African Workers Battle ANC Neo-Apartheid Rule



Lan Kurnalo

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# Mary Van De Water-Quirk

On 9 May 2000, one day before her 46th birthday, our comrade Mary Van De Water-Quirk, organizer of the Chicago local of the Spartacist League for 13 years, died after a four-year battle with bile duct cancer. The length of her tenure as party organizer in a city where the cruel contradictions of racist American capitalist rule are most acutely concentrated, and of her struggle against this form of the disease which normally results in a rapid demise, speak to her tenacity and will.

A memorial meeting for Mary was held at the International House of the University of Chicago on June 3. Among those who came to celebrate Mary's life were comrades from every branch of the Spartacist League/U.S. and from other sections of the International Communist League, her sister and comrade Karen and other family members, friends and neighbors. A group of black transit workers who knew Mary and her husband, Kevin Quirk, an Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 241 member, came to pay tribute to her tireless efforts at combatting the racist oppression that is the defining feature of American capitalism.

Mary was recruited to the SL in the Bay Area in 1979. A more than able learner, Mary became the Spartacus Youth League's Bay Area organizer only three months after joining. She arrived in Chicago in 1981 and became SL organizer there in 1983, remaining in that post until forced to leave by the debilitating treatment process.

Mary was one of the main organizers of the November 1988 labor/black mobilization in Philadelphia that spiked a threatened KKK provocation and of the Springfield, Illinois anti-Klan demonstration on Martin Luther King Day in 1994. She served essentially as the SL's Midwest organizer and spurred the Chicago local to expand its political terrain through forays that ranged from Texas to Pittsburgh.



Politically, Mary's focus was on the black question. To this she brought no small amount of compassion and humanity. The apartment she shared with Kevin was a center for political and social interaction with scores of black transit workers and other trade unionists, a singular experience in America's most segregated city. Among those attending her memorial was Cassandra Seay, an ATU member successfully defended by Local 241 and the Partisan Defense Committee against felony charges in the aftermath of a 1987 attack by Chicago cops on her and her family. Cassandra spoke movingly of how Mary convinced her of the need to fight her racist frame-up. Despite heavy pressure to have nothing to do with communists who purportedly wanted to "use" her, after talking to Mary for only five minutes, Cassandra knew we were for real.

Mary's stewardship in Chicago took place during the difficult Reagan years and the bourgeoisie's later "death of com-

munist" triumphalism. Yet the local recruited youth with regularity, shaped them into cadres and transferred them to other locals and ICL sections where they would play important and often leading roles. In his comments at the memorial, Sam Kaehler captured how Mary took every opportunity to train new recruits:

"Mary had a keen sense of what it meant to be a communist in 'Segregation City.' As the cars left the parking lot at the Ford stamping plant factory gate sale, she would point out how blacks and whites worked side by side in the plant, but when they went home, blacks turned one way and whites went the other. These stories had a purpose. Because after several sales with Mary, you were ready to lead them up yourself. That's how you were trained. It went for little things as well as big things."

Mary tended to cede the role of political spokesman to others, but her instincts were almost invariably correct. Mary was capable of fighting fiercely to keep the

local on track, especially when the fight against racial oppression was at issue. However intense the fights and however wrongheaded the opposition, comrades were comrades in the Chicago local. In trying times, she was the social and political glue that held the local together.

Even in the last months of her illness, Mary pushed forward the party's perspectives, most importantly training young comrades and assisting them in committing fully to the cause of world proletarian revolution. Mary will be greatly missed, but more she will be remembered. She was one hell of a communist, a fighter and friend. As Kevin Quirk told the June 3 gathering:

"The wellspring of Mary's courage and will was her total unwavering commitment to the fight to rid this planet of oppression, to end for all time the exploitation of the many by the few. In other words, it was her devotion to the fight for a socialist future. That is why she lived. That is why she fought the way she did right to the end."

## Disease, Bigotry and Imperialist Hypocrisy

# South Africa Torn by AIDS Crisis



Protesters outside International AIDS Conference in Durban in July 2000 demand access to medication. Exortionate Western drug companies, bigotry fanned by local capitalist regimes have exacerbated AIDS pandemic ravaging sub-Saharan Africa.

The catastrophic impact of the AIDS pandemic ravaging South Africa was highlighted in early December when former African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela joined with F. W. De Klerk, the last president of the former apartheid regime, in launching a national "HIV/AIDS Day" at a Johannesburg cathedral service on December 5. With grotesque cynicism, De Klerk, who presided over a reign of terror against South Africa's black majority and whose National Party supported the Nazis in World War II, compared the AIDS scourge to the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews. For his part, Mandela appealed for compassion for the four million South Africans infected with HIV, implicitly rebuking his successor and current ANC president, Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki's anti-scientific diatribes have encouraged bigoted attacks on people with AIDS and

provoked a furor at an international conference on AIDS that met in Durban last July.

Mbeki's ignorant statements challenging scientific evidence that HIV causes AIDS are aimed in large part at deflecting criticism over the refusal of his "tripartite alliance" government—which includes the Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)—to allocate medical resources to combat the epidemic. Seizing on this, the National Party's racist successor, the Democratic Alliance, campaigned for December 5 nationwide municipal elections on a promise of distributing anti-HIV drugs to pregnant women who have AIDS and scored unexpected gains, including among black voters. Meanwhile, the Western imperialists who hypocritically denounce Mbeki refuse to lift a finger to provide medical aid to

the impoverished masses of sub-Saharan Africa. Last year, the Clinton administration threatened sanctions against South Africa for trying to buy AIDS medication at international prices lower than those set by the extortionate pharmaceutical monopolies. And Tony Blair's Labour government in Britain, home to the Glaxo Wellcome drug giant, continues to oppose any such effort by South Africa.

We publish below in edited form a talk given in Johannesburg on 18 October 2000 by comrade Karen Cole of Spartacist South Africa.

\* \* \*

The AIDS pandemic that has reached every country on earth touches on a range of social issues. It exposes the most horrible, murderous aspects of capitalism in its death agony. And it underlines the

need for international socialist revolution.

Diseases and infection will never completely go away. New diseases will develop: it's just an aspect of nature that microbes and parasites change, mutate and evolve to find an ecological niche in human beings and other animals. It's possible that the AIDS virus will elude modern medical technology at its current state. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution couldn't do anything immediately about the worldwide influenza pandemic of 1918. Three million people also died of typhus in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1923. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik Revolution for the first time in history opened the road to get rid of oppression, exploitation and inequality that stand in the way of applying rational approaches to disease research and control and opened the way for massive public health programmes under the direction of a workers state.

The gains of the Russian Revolution could only hint at what a worldwide planned economy could do. The *ABCs of Communism*, which some of you have read, a book used by the Bolsheviks to train workers in literacy and the principles of communism, significantly devotes its final chapter to public health care. It makes the point that the new dictatorship of the proletariat immediately implemented hygienic techniques for public communal kitchens and training for health care workers to control cholera and typhus. They nationalised all private hospitals, opening them to the masses for the first time.

The Bolshevik Party's programme was committed to wiping out age-old oppression and elevating Russia out of poverty and ignorance. The Bolsheviks understood that ultimate success required the extension of the revolution to the wealthy and advanced, industrialised capitalist countries. You can't fight cholera if you don't have the material resources to build river dams and water purification plants. The International Communist League fights for new October Revolutions in the centres of imperialism in America, Europe and Japan as well as in the "Third World." In South Africa, that means we fight for a black-centred workers government that would be centrally based on the black majority while guaranteeing full rights for the "coloured" [mixed-race], Indian and Asian populations and those whites who accept the rule of black workers.

Based on the experience of the Russian Revolution and the lessons of the aborted Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, Leon Trotsky and the International Left Opposition taught that the only way forward

for the oppressed masses of the economically backward countries was the proletariat seizing power at the head of all the oppressed, linked through its revolutionary leadership to the proletariat in the advanced countries. This is the programme of permanent revolution. National liberation and all the basic democratic rights achieved in the advanced industrial countries in previous centuries are only realisable through the dictatorship of the proletariat and international socialist revolution.

### The AIDS Epidemic and Capitalist Oppression

We are historical materialists and scientific socialists. Class struggle is the motor force of history. Throughout history, humanity's ability to master its environment is determined by the level of the productive forces at each stage. However, scientific progress cannot rise above or be separated from class interests. Here's an illustration of what I mean, and it is directly relevant to the AIDS pandemic. Penicillin is one of the greatest medical discoveries in the twentieth century. Some of us in this room would be dead today if Alexander Fleming had not identified a mould that could kill staphylococcus bacteria in 1929. All modern antibiotics flow from this discovery. But the development of penicillin was virtually ignored until the U.S. imperialists massively funded and distributed it during World War II, 15 years later. Why then? American imperialism had an interest in keeping its soldiers from dying from battlefield infections.

And what other new technology was the U.S. funding massively around the

same period? The atomic bomb, which killed some 200,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, and was intended as a warning to the Soviet Union that the U.S. ruling class would stop at nothing to destroy the first workers state in history. So you see the relationship between the development of science and the class interests of the capitalist class. The bourgeoisie can mobilize when it wants to.

One speaker at the July Durban AIDS conference complained that one-quarter of the U.S. defence budget for one year would provide anti-retroviral treatments for all Africans who needed them. That certainly may be true, but of course it is never going to happen. The underlying assumption of this statement is that if the imperialist bloodsuckers could be pressured to shift their priorities and be more humane, then all will be solved. But the drive to war and plunder—to acquire new markets, raw materials and cheap labour with the aim of amassing profits—is inherent to the capitalist system in this epoch. The AIDS pandemic also exposes the lie of "nation building" rhetoric; it obviously cannot be solved within the borders of one country.

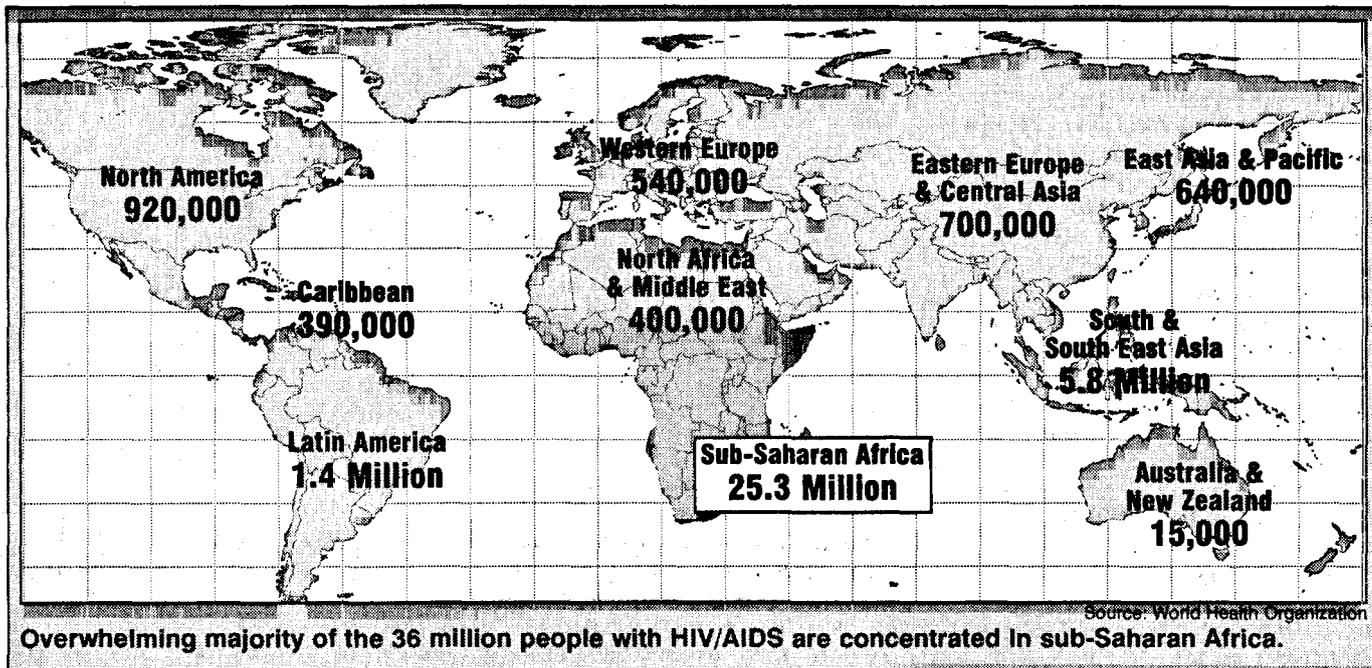
Only world socialist revolution can tear the means of production out of the hands of the greedy capitalist class, ushering in an egalitarian socialist society. Then all the positive gains of modern science can be put at the service of mankind, and all the fake science that is used to justify and defend capitalist rule can be rejected. How we approach this grim epidemic is shaped by our vision of a communist future.

Let me give a few facts up front about HIV and AIDS. You cannot get AIDS



Johannesburg municipal workers rally during November 2000 strike against threatened privatizations. COSATU union tops chain powerful and combative black proletariat to bourgeois-nationalist ANC.

Reuters



from mosquitoes or through casual contact with infected persons. The human immunodeficiency virus, HIV, concentrates in body fluids that are most commonly passed on through any form of sexual intercourse, through blood transfusions, needle sticks and the sharing of hypodermic needles, or from mother to child at birth or through breast milk. Because blood transmission is most efficient, sexually transmitted diseases that cause open sores on the penis or vaginal or anal passages increase the possibility of transmission, as do sexual practices that might tear the anal or vaginal walls. One of the reasons that AIDS has spread so fast in southern Africa is that untreated sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis, gonorrhea and pelvic infections are widespread.

People may have the virus for many years without any symptoms. But eventually the virus will suppress the person's natural defences against infections, called the immune system, and the person will develop AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—that is, they will develop life-threatening illnesses that almost never appear in healthy people with normal immune systems. In Africa, where people are already weakened by many untreated diseases and malnutrition, the virus destroys what's left of the already weakened immune system more rapidly.

The virus is of a particularly complex variety called a "retrovirus," which relates to its structure and how it reproduces itself. Anti-retrovirals like AZT and nevirapine suppress and slow down the advance of the virus. An inoculation ideally gives you immunity; that is, it actually

prevents you from catching the disease in the first place. But the HIV virus can mutate—change its structure—rapidly. So treatment applied to one strain won't work on another, somewhat like the influenza virus where a new vaccine must be developed every year to prevent only the most common varieties. Edward Jenner proved the efficacy of vaccination against another worldwide killer, smallpox, in 1796, and the last person on earth who caught the disease recovered, in Somalia, in 1976—almost two centuries later. And smallpox was a very simple virus.

HIV/AIDS is still spreading exponentially worldwide. In Africa, it was initially spread by those who travel a lot for a living such as airline workers, truck drivers, seamen and soldiers and spread rapidly among professionals such as teachers and doctors. Now, infection has become rampant especially in poorer areas and population groups. Less developed countries account for 95 percent of known cases and 70 percent are in Africa. Twenty-four million HIV-infected people live in southern Africa. Predictions of rates of increase must be continually revised upwards. The report of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS that came out in June predicted that half of current 15-year-olds in South Africa and Zimbabwe may die of AIDS. In Botswana up to two-thirds of youth will die of AIDS. The rising number of orphans throughout southern Africa means there are a growing number of households headed by children. It's difficult to get accurate statistical surveys, which are basic to public health care and would

inform development of a cure, because people avoid getting tested for fear of persecution. The vast majority of youth do not even know they are HIV-positive. Also some say, "Why get tested? There is no treatment available."

More than with any other disease in modern history, every step in the search to control and cure HIV/AIDS has been hampered by the profit-driven capitalist system and all the backward, repressive, racist and anti-woman ideological crap that comes with it. This epidemic has arisen and is spreading in the epoch of capitalism's decline. The optimism of the scientific revolution that accompanied the rise of the capitalist class has long been on the decline, exemplified by the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, superstitions, prejudices and obscurantism. Even in the most advanced industrial countries, people with AIDS continue to be viciously stereotyped, ostracised and stigmatised. These prejudices are compounded many times over in Africa and other countries of the so-called "Third World" like India. And because it is a sexually transmitted disease, the special oppression that women suffer under capitalism creates a major obstacle to a cure. All the guilt, shame and repressive taboos about sex that are designed to subjugate women via bourgeois morality also play a major role in sabotaging a scientific response to AIDS.

### **Imperialism and Neo-Apartheid Capitalism**

South Africa was built on the superexploitation of black labour, extracting huge profits for the imperialists. And the

imperialists and Randlords' craven junior partners of the capitalist ANC-led Tripartite Alliance can only continue to perpetuate death and misery for the African masses by overseeing neo-apartheid capitalism. In South Africa, the contrasts of uneven and combined development are most sharp. The white ruling class and petty bourgeoisie live as well as anyone in America or Europe while the black masses live in conditions that have not been seen in America or Europe for several centuries.

What incentive is there for the capitalist class to find a speedy cure or to treat those already infected? Internationally, the bourgeoisie views the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa as a convenient answer to unemployment and low productivity. An article in *Business Day* (November 1999) outlines the following: Every year the U.S. Investor Responsibility Research Center asks multinationals how they perceive the South African business climate. They reported that AIDS was no problem. The epidemic is mainly confined to those who are economically marginal: women and children, the unemployed and unskilled workers who can be easily replaced given the massive unemployment. Insurance companies are unconcerned because these people are not insured. Mines are closing, so miners are disposable, and due to the many job-related illnesses they suffer, they die quickly once their immune system is compromised. Investors are slightly concerned that the disease is beginning to spread to skilled workers and teachers. But they are most worried that the South African government may choose to spend money on health care for people who, as far as they are concerned, will be dead within a couple of years, rather than



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**ANC government fired 6,000 nurses after 1995 wildcat strike. Strikers carried signs reading "Away with Mandela," denounced ANC leader as "driver of gravy train" for aspiring black capitalists.**

spend that money to repay bank loans.

The 17 July edition of the widely circulated American magazine *Time* featured an editorial comparing the AIDS epidemic with the bubonic plague of 14th-century Europe. A full third of the European population died in what was then called the "Black Death." The writer says that "every cloud has a silver lining"—good always comes of bad—wiping out much of the population in the 14th century led to an increase in labour productivity and paved the way for progress. Therefore, according to this, killing a third of the African population may be just what Africa needs to modernise!

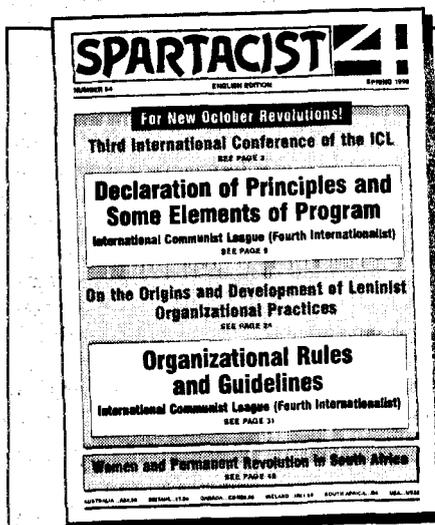
Recently Clinton has decided to throw a few cents at AIDS programmes in Africa, partly to secure the black vote in the U.S. in an election year. Clinton is also motivated by fear that American sol-

diers may be exposed to AIDS when they are sent to war-torn African countries to protect American economic interests. During his recent visit to Nigeria, where his real worry is about the potential of militant oil workers interrupting the flow of oil, he promised some token aid. Tell the people of Iraq—where the U.S./UN starvation blockade causes up to 200 children a day to die of malnutrition and lack of medicines—about Clinton and the U.S. bourgeoisie's concern for health care!

**ANC on AIDS: Confusionism and Criminal Neglect**

According to the UN report released in June, although Botswana has the highest percentage of HIV-positive people, South Africa has both the greatest absolute number and the highest growth rate in southern Africa. The fastest-growing sector is young women. The government's response has been to deny that HIV causes AIDS, to deny that AIDS exists at all and to blame pharmaceutical companies and the CIA for spreading such "lies." They have found endless ways to impede and postpone implementing the most minimal, well-known and tested medical treatments.

When Mbeki called together a panel of discredited researchers and local healers earlier this year to open a discussion on whether HIV causes AIDS, government spokesman Parks Mankahlana ominously warned that any critics of the government on this issue should be silenced. In response to the Durban AIDS conference statement reaffirming that HIV causes AIDS, Mankahlana said the statement "belongs in the dustbin." Mbeki hailed another recent conference of these AIDS-denying pseudo-scientists in Uganda,



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which criminally called for stopping all HIV testing and condom distribution!

The confusionism and abject neglect has already resulted in untold deaths and misery. Social workers at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto have reported that patients, particularly husbands, have stopped coming to the clinics because the president says HIV doesn't exist. And it also created the atmosphere that allowed a mob in KwaZulu-Natal in December 1998 to stone and knife to death Gugu Dlamini, a courageous young woman who spoke out on the occasion of World AIDS Day about her HIV-positive status. In rural KwaZulu-Natal, where the rate of HIV infection is the highest in South Africa, it is commonly believed that women are the source of the disease and all those infected should be killed. Gugu Dlamini's body now lies in an unmarked grave.

Why have the bourgeois nationalists latched onto theories which fly in the face of almost 20 years of experience with this disease? Because Mbeki and the black front men for capitalist rule are incapable and unwilling to provide the most basic material needs. The imperialists celebrated Mandela and the ANC coming to power because they counted on Mandela's moral authority to suppress the just aspirations of the horribly oppressed black masses. Therefore the ANC must lie and rationalise their attacks on the working class in service to their capitalist masters.

The neo-apartheid capitalist regime administered by the ANC, COSATU and the SACP—what we call a “nationalist popular front”—speeds up privatisations and retrenchments and is expanding the repressive state apparatus. From their golf clubs and African fashion shows, the government bureaucrats and new entrepreneurs—subcontractors for the capitalist class—exhort the masses that the days

of “toyi-toying” [the defiant dance of anti-apartheid marchers] are over; this is your government.

While the imperialists write off Africans as hopeless barbarians, their lapdogs of the national bourgeoisie expound about the “African Renaissance” and laud “African solutions” romanticising tribal societies and conciliating “traditional leaders” in parliament and local government. Meanwhile, the racist hypocrites of the Democratic Alliance and other foul leftovers of apartheid piously shake their fingers at Mbeki for his statements about HIV/AIDS while praising him for toeing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank line of slashing jobs and cutting back social services.

The ANC health minister, Tshabalala-Msimang, has pronounced that it is unwise to spend money on AZT for HIV-positive pregnant women (which has proved to protect the fetus against infection) because these women will only create more orphans as a burden on the state. The message here to AIDS sufferers is “Drop dead!”

The South African constitution and the laws passed since 1994 are continually lauded as the most democratic in the world. For example, abortion was made legal. Currently the official position of the government is to leave the legal right to abortion to the “individual choice” of doctors and nurses. We say health care workers who deny women abortions should find jobs in another industry. Health care workers who reflect the anti-scientific prejudices of the ANC government often abuse and harass AIDS patients, pushing bourgeois moralism and blaming them for their illness. In order to maintain one of the most unequal societies on earth, the bourgeoisie must pit one sector of the oppressed against the other to cover its own bankruptcy. Since they cannot provide the

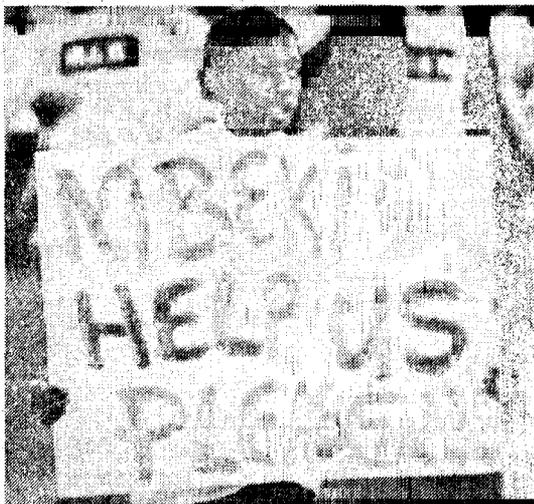
facilities for abortions or for care for AIDS patients, they have no interest in fighting backward ideas.

Women are promised full and equal rights in the constitution, but the ANC has never even taken a public stand against female genital mutilation still practised openly in rural areas and secretly in the townships. In some cases, the clitoris and labia are cut off. In others, young girls' vaginal openings are sewn up and later bloodily torn open when they wed. On top of all the physical and mental damage that accompanies such mutilation, these women are much more susceptible to HIV infection.

The ANC was recently on its knees eulogising the filthy rich Randlord Harry Oppenheimer, one of the latter-day architects of the brutal migrant labour system. A short time later, South Africa became the last country in the world to switch to the modern injected tuberculosis vaccine. Oppenheimer probably knew a lot about TB since it flourished in his congested hostels for migrant miners. Now tuberculosis is on the rise again because it can thrive in the weakened immune systems of people with AIDS. The mine and factory owners who condemned black workers to squalid, congested housing used to complain that blacks were biologically susceptible to TB; therefore, TB was “treated” by sending sick, used-up black workers to the rural bantustans to die. The TB death rate in South Africa is as bad today as a century ago; 10,000 mainly young men and women die every year from TB, which continues to be stigmatised as a disease of “fast living, hard drinking and smoking.”

### Apartheid Crimes and Conspiracy Theories

The first recorded cases of AIDS in South Africa were white homosexuals in the 1980s. Considering there were

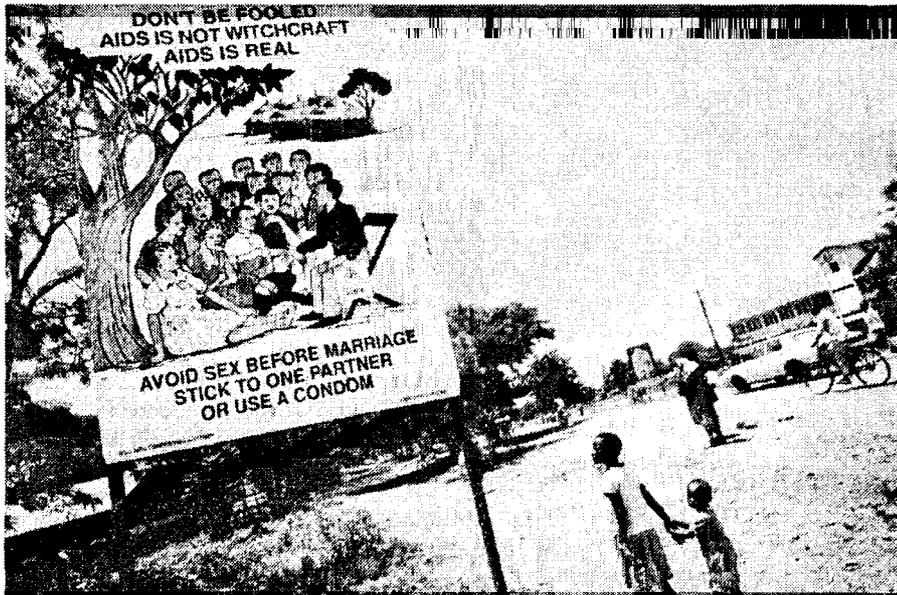


Bret Eloff

**Protester outside Durban AIDS conference. ANC president Thabo Mbeki with U.S. secretary of state Albright. Neo-apartheid regime promotes social backwardness, helps enforce imperialist domination.**



Reuters



Guzy/Washington Post

**Sign in Kenya. Superstitions discourage people with AIDS from seeking treatment while leading to horrific attacks on HIV-positive women as witches.**

no medical records kept for blacks, coloureds and Indians, it is impossible to trace the history of the disease in this country. The apartheid regime's campaigns against AIDS in the '80s included putting stickers on taxis from Jo'burg to Soweto that said, "You can't get AIDS from swimming pools"—not exactly a relevant issue for the apartheid townships. The campaign used a drawing of a supposedly "neutral coloured" yellow hand. But for black women whose main occupation was as domestic servants, the yellow hand recalled the rubber washing gloves belonging to the hated "madam." During the early '90s, the Nationalist Party put up posters in Soweto with crude depictions of black men, warning that returning ANC exiles were bringing AIDS into South Africa.

AIDS conspiracy theories are widely held. There is an understandable mistrust of so-called "Western medicine" and white doctors who historically abused, neglected, poisoned and experimented on black people, and not just here. In the U.S., in the infamous Tuskegee experiments 400 Southern black men with syphilis were left untreated for over 30 years and allowed to die to see its effect on their mortality rate—and on their children. Under apartheid, young women in Botswana were sterilised and given forced injections of the contraceptive Depo-Provera, at that time banned in the U.S. and other countries. South African women were forced into massive birth control programs, sterilised without their knowledge and administered IUDs (contraceptive intrauterine devices) as conditions for employment. Meanwhile,

Afrikaner women were told to "Make Babies for Botha."

Then there is the case of Dr. Wouter Basson. This apartheid regime version of the infamous Dr. Mengele in Hitler's concentration camps carried out biological and chemical warfare "experiments" on kidnapped township residents in Zimbabwe and poisoned SWAPO prisoners in Namibia and then went along for the helicopter ride to drop them into the ocean. After a cover-up by the security forces in the so-called "Truth and Reconciliation Commission," the reason Basson is on trial now is to further "reconciliation" with the apartheid butchers. Basson is still a practising cardiologist one day a week at a public hospital in Pretoria, so the ANC is paying for his legal expenses. The workers in power would try him and many other apartheid murderers for their crimes.

With all the stigmas attached to AIDS, mothers are afraid to admit they are bottle-feeding their babies for fear they will be ostracised. The international manufacturers of milk and baby formulas have been remarkably silent regarding affordable bottle milk for babies at risk. Back in 1976, we supported international protest when Nestlé's dressed up its salespeople in nurses' uniforms to fool impoverished women and push expensive manufactured milk. While breast-feeding is more desirable than bottle-feeding because of the immunities it passes on from mother to child, the real issue with the former is malnutrition and with the latter access to clean water. However, now that it has been proven that HIV is conveyed by breast milk, a basic

preventive measure would be to provide free formula to all infected women.

Volunteer Cuban doctors are sometimes the only doctors who will service the rural areas, and are embraced by the population. That doctors from the Cuban deformed workers state do this service underscores why we defend the enormous gains embodied in the Cuban Revolution—the collectivised property forms and planned economy—as we do in China, Vietnam and North Korea against internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack. After the 1949 Revolution in China, large public health campaigns were launched, women were freed from slavery and concubinage. To this day, the standard of living in China is higher than in capitalist India, a country which achieved political independence from Britain at about the same time as the Chinese Revolution, but which is devastated by imperialist neglect.

### **Union Tops, Fake Lefts Front for ANC**

In South Africa, health care in rural areas is often a container car or a van that may arrive once a week. As we speak, there is a cholera outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal not far from Durban, which has been out of control for two months. Over 20 people have died so far; more than 2,000 people have been hospitalised. Every day there are newly reported cases, and many more go unreported because people have not gone to clinics for treatment. Cholera is an example of a completely understood disease that is totally preventable and treatable—and has been for over a century.

Unemployment is at 50 percent or higher, and latest reports are that the gap between wealthy and poor is increasing. It's election time, so Mbeki has been double-talking about providing some token amount of free electricity, while always calling to get rid of the so-called freeloaders. This is happening while fuel wood is diminishing. Rural labourers are still paid in kind—for black and coloured workers in the Western Cape's money-making vineyards, this means a high rate of infant alcohol syndrome. The development of water resources is planned for livestock, not for women who have to haul water back to their dwellings.

The SACP-dominated COSATU leadership sabotaged the national protest called the day before the AIDS conference in Durban by mobilising the most token presence. Why? They could not embarrass Mbeki, their alliance partner. The pro-capitalist COSATU leadership's treacherous role in the nationalist popular front is to keep the lid on the explosive

and powerful South African proletariat, to tie the oppressed masses to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. In the Metalworkers [auto, steel, etc.] union, NUMSA, discussion of AIDS is tabled to the "Gender Committee," which is the code word for "toss it to the women." The recent national COSATU congress supposedly did their big act of defiance of Mbeki by declaring it is "morally wrong" to deny drugs to pregnant women and rape victims. They buy the moralistic line that only some are innocent. How about everybody else infected? Teenagers, IV drug users, truckers, prostitutes, miners? Do they deserve it?

The SACP played its role at the conference of slavishly shoring up the class-collaborationist alliance against any opposition. After the conference, the SACP made a declaration on AIDS which cravenly capitulated to Mbeki, stating they have "not sufficiently studied the complex issues about anti-retroviral HIV/AIDS drugs so as to comment." Meanwhile, those already infected continue to suffer miserable deaths. The fake left—from the International Socialist Movement and Keep Left [a group buried inside the SACP linked to the U.S. International Socialist Organization] to WIVL [Workers International Vanguard League] and WOSA [Workers Organisation for Socialist Action]—also echo the moralism, and deflect all criticism away from the nationalists by appealing to the multinational drug companies and the World Bank. At the 26 September protests here in Jo'burg in conjunction with the protests in Prague at the IMF/World Bank meeting, the fake left channelled the anger of the protesters into begging the imperialists to "cancel the debt."

Militant South African workers, like the workers at the Volkswagen plant in Uitenhage, are looking for an alternative to the class-collaborationist national popular front. However, the South African proletariat cannot go forward on a

narrow trade-union programme which accepts capitalism. The proletariat must take up the fight for permanent revolution by building a Leninist vanguard party, based on the most advanced layers, that will be a tribune of all the people, that will defend the Gugu Dlamini and all the oppressed.

### Free, Quality Health Care for All!

Under the ANC regime, hospitals have been closed in the name of reducing duplicate services segregated under apartheid. Kempton Park Hospital outside Johannesburg was shut down. In Johannesburg, Hillbrow Hospital stands empty for years while the AIDS epidemic grows among the destitute immigrant population of the area and patients lie on the floor in Jo'burg Hospital and outside Chris Hani Bara admitting area waiting for beds. Retrenchments and privatisations are causing ward closings and cutbacks. The 26-year-old singer and star of the widely acclaimed movie *Sarafina*, Wendy Mseleku, recently died after being turned away three times from public hospitals for lack of beds. In large parts of rural areas, where health care is solely in the hands of nurses, many of these nurses are the same young women who are being devastated by the disease.

Nurses and health care workers were among the first targets of the ANC's anti-working-class programme. In 1996, the Mandela government was to decree free health care for all children under the age of six at local clinics and hospitals. As we wrote at the time, that was a cynical lie. No additional funds were allocated to hire more nurses and other health care workers. There was no equipment or medicines. When nurses went on strike, the SACP/COSATU bureaucrats called the nurses' action "counterrevolutionary." Isolated by COSATU, the strike eventually ended, and 6,000 nurses were dismissed by the provincial government of

the Eastern Cape, headed at that time by Raymond Mhlaba of the SACP.

Black nurses and student nurses have been in the forefront of protests for decent health care for decades. Health care was totally segregated under apartheid—white hospitals were built in urban areas, and no hospitals were built in the rural areas where the majority of the black population lives. No matter how much experience a black nurse had, she was always under the direction of white nurses, often young Afrikaners who were incompetently trained in backwater Calvinist Dutch Reformed *platteland* schools. In the 1950s, black nurses were at the centre of protests against carrying passbooks, since they were almost the only black working women in urban areas. The police were turned on them in Soweto and Durban.

Back when the apartheid government decided to forcibly move the first black nurses from the all-black Baragwanath Hospital to the all-white Jo'burg Hospital because of a supposed "shortage of nurses," the black nurses protested because the white hospital was at 50 percent capacity and Bara was over 100 percent. In 1985, hospital workers at Baragwanath went out on strike. Student nurses were assaulted by security guards, 700 workers were arrested and 1,700 dismissed, sparking solidarity actions across South Africa and international protest. Today Chris Hani Bara services a population of 3.5 million blacks. The hospital is falling apart. In Khayelitsha Day Hospital in the Western Cape, doctors see up to 96 patients a day each. In most hospitals white doctors and black patients do not speak the same language, making diagnoses slow and difficult.

We sell our newspaper at Jo'burg Hospital, mainly to black nurses and hospital workers. The unionised staff is constantly threatened with being replaced by non-union contract labour, and some have been already. We talked to a doctor who



SABC Video

Videotape of sadistic cop attack on three black immigrants in 1998, televised two years later, generated storm of outrage over racist terror in the "new South Africa."

staffs the Casualty Unit. He said that on an average day, two-thirds of the people coming into the unit have symptoms of full-blown AIDS. Many come in with ritual cuts on their bodies administered by inyangas and sangomas [traditional healers]. Doctors must treat people who are suffering from self-induced vomiting caused by herbs and from repeated enemas prescribed by traditional healers. When I asked the doctor what he thought of the latest vaccine trials, he answered despondently, "There's no electricity. You can't distribute a vaccine without refrigeration."

Anti-retroviral drugs have extended the lives of those who can afford them, mainly in the advanced capitalist countries. The pharmaceutical companies make more profits on chronic illnesses like diabetes or AIDS which require a continual variety of medications and procedures and have no cure, so they have a marketing policy of pumping out copy-cat anti-retroviral drugs rather than engaging in long-term vaccine research with uncertain results. Years have been wasted because basic research for vaccines just does not turn a fast buck. Provincial hospitals have been defying the government to take limited handouts of drugs from different charitable sources.

What can we say about Uganda's so-called reversal of AIDS? Uganda's much-acclaimed campaign was centred around the "ABCs"—Abstinence, Be faithful to your spouse, use Condoms. A United Nations report claims that the prevalence of HIV in Uganda has fallen from a high of 14 percent in the early '90s to 8 percent today. But to call Uganda a "success story" captures how bankrupt current programmes are, how hopeless are policies based on "don't have sex" and how venal are the bourgeois nationalists. In Uganda, there are no medicines to treat AIDS-related illnesses, and there are 20,300 people for every doctor. Last year, President Yoweri Museveni called for the arrest of homosexuals. Uganda's terribly low life expectancy, only 40-41 years, is all attributed to preventable conditions: childbirth circumstances, malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, poor nutrition and unsanitary water. The average annual income is 1,850 Rand [US\$250]. As the bloody imperialist carve-up of the Congo [where Uganda has intervened] heats up, bullets will surely be a rising cause of death.

### Imperialism, Nationalism and Social Backwardness

One example lauded as an "African solution" to AIDS is where thousands of unmarried women and children attend

**Emergency room  
in Soweto's  
Baragwanath  
Hospital, 1991.  
Today this  
deteriorating  
hospital serves  
3.5 million  
black people.**



monthly virginity testing "ceremonies" in KwaZulu-Natal. This was a virtually extinct centuries-old custom that has been revived in the last four years. Girls are stripped naked and endure a humiliating half-hour examination by older girls to ascertain if their hymen is intact. There has been much favorable coverage of this in the media. Nomagugu Ngobese, who has just completed a book, *Fertility and Customs*, spoke recently at a government-sponsored Gender Equality and National Youth Commission meeting advocating these procedures. She stated, "Moral values are possibly the only solution we have to curb the rising HIV/AIDS statistics."

At an educational conference in Pretoria, the deputy education minister said the "African Renaissance" should be founded on "a recovery of moral values and ethical conduct." Mary Crewe, director of the AIDS study centre at the University of Pretoria, responded that linking AIDS with religion and morality has fed into denial and apathy around the disease and to marginalisation and social rejection of sufferers. The teaching of "right and wrong" related to AIDS was detracting from, as she put it, "the overriding moral imperative to save lives." The only "morals" that the capitalist class has is to rake in profits, backed up in blood by the state—the cops, the courts, the prisons, the army—and ideologically by the conservatising force of religion.

Traditional healers are hailed by the

government as the front line against AIDS. They are the only "health care" many people ever see. People are poisoned, murdered and raped by these "healers," who encourage the revival of beliefs in witchcraft, beliefs which have caused mob killings of mainly old rural women. In fact, to be a woman and old is suspect in conditions where life is normally cut short by violence and "inexplicable" deaths from preventable diseases.

The Gauteng Health Department funds AIDS education for the Traditional Healers Organisation. Since bloodletting through razor cuts to communicate with ancestors is a common cure for witchcraft, the ANC "educates" these healers to use different razors for each client. Demonstrations through downtown Johannesburg feature banners reading, "One Man, One Razor." Beside their role in furthering ignorance, these traditional healers are part of the repressive political structure that runs from the community "sangoma" straight up to CONTRELESA, the House of Traditional Leaders, which is officially part of the bourgeois state.

These bastions of reaction, former apartheid bantustan collaborators, are murderous remnants of pre-capitalist society. Throughout southern Africa, they fight tooth and nail to deny women abortion, inheritance and property rights. They are courted by the ANC just as they were courted by the original colonialists and the apartheid regime. They

run much of KwaZulu-Natal, the epicenter of the epidemic in South Africa, and many parts of the most impoverished Eastern Cape. Bourgeois-nationalist ideology has always relegated women to being baby-makers. The capitalists and their lackeys are the enemies of women's liberation.

We fight for women's liberation through socialist revolution. Since the beginning of class society thousands of years ago, the institution of the family has been the fundamental source of the subjugation of women as dependent domestic slaves. In a socialist planned economy, the family as a social unit will be transcended by socialisation of child-care and household duties. Only then can relationships be entered into freely and without economic compulsion.

The oppression of women in Africa cannot begin to change and the drudgery and hardships women suffer cannot begin to be alleviated without a socialist revolution extending to the advanced capitalist countries. Women in southern Africa are still largely deemed minors with few enforceable rights of ownership or inheritance. Widows are still inherited by their husband's brothers. Polygamy based on the economic subordination of women still occurs. Women are under tremendous economic pressure to demonstrate their fertility. And children are, in fact, the only potential means of support in old age.

*Lobola* [bride price] is pervasive, and *lobola* basically means women are property like cattle. Children are considered illegitimate and have no rights under customary law if *lobola* payments have not been completed. And most significantly for the spread of AIDS, the man pays for the woman to provide him with sex. Women are afraid to ask their husbands to wear condoms, and are beaten and turned out for refusing sex. Rape is rampant in South Africa. Rape and "dry sex" practices (where women apply detergent or herbs to dry out their vagina, which supposedly increases a man's pleasure) multiply the possibility of infection. Moreover, it is widely believed that sleeping with a virgin will cure AIDS.

The Christian missionaries who accompanied the imperialist plunderers imposed on women a conservative, restrictive family ideology against which their lives were judged, enforcing their subjugation. Many women traders and entrepreneurs in urban and port areas were driven back into domestic slavery. The apartheid migrant labour system that historically tore apart families continues and has been called the "engine of the epidemic" because it encour-

ages multiple sex partners. The migrant labour system, which permeates all of sub-Saharan Africa, is perpetuated under neo-apartheid capitalism because it is the backbone of the superexploitation of black labour.

Foreign workers desperately seeking jobs in South Africa are targeted by the government. The apartheid regime used to send South African miners back to the rural areas to die from TB; now the neo-apartheid state carries on the same policy with workers from bordering countries—HIV-positive Mozambican miners are deported to die without even being informed of their status. The health minister recently argued that they cannot distribute nevirapine lest people from neighbouring countries flock to South Africa for treatment. We demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants, including access to schools and medical care.

Prostitutes should not be afraid to get health care and education and should not be at the mercy of gang violence. We are for the de-criminalisation of prostitution. Professional prostitution is actually a minor business compared to all the ways women living in poverty must sell sex for survival. Teenagers and young women need money and gifts to get through secondary and tertiary institutions. Women acquire "sugar daddies" to survive, and for money for their chil-

dren. Youths hang out where trucks lay over along the highways of southern Africa to earn a bit of money. Domestic work is still the largest category of legal employment for women—sex for money is the only other option to housework. So-called educational campaigns about the sins of promiscuity are not only false and reactionary but also absurd in a situation where you are having sex so you can buy some maize for you and your child to eat. At the Durban AIDS conference, advocates of vaginally applied anti-viral foams—which may afford easy and private protection—protested that they are not being adequately researched and funded. Underlying the lack of interest in the foams is the morality issue again—sex for any reason but reproduction is deemed sinful.

### Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals!

Homosexuals continue to be scorned and threatened everywhere. In the '80s anti-apartheid activists who struggled also for democratic rights for gays often had to fight their way into the political organisations. Tseko Simon Nkoli, a young gay COSAS [Congress of South African Students] and ANC activist, was arrested in 1984 for speaking out in defence of the massive stayaway strikes that fall. He was kept in detention for 16 months and then brought to trial as part

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of the world-famous Delmas treason trial which started in 1985, along with Mosiuoa Patrick "Terror" Lekota and Popo Molefe [who are now respectively minister of defence and premier of North West Province]. He had to argue against the anti-gay bigotry of the other ANC defendants who wanted to throw him out of the case. On 30 November 1998, Simon Nkoli died of AIDS.

In at least 30 African countries it is illegal for a man to have sex with another man. In South Africa, the constitution, on paper, opposes discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, when Mbeki launched his so-called research panel, he motivated questioning the connection of HIV and AIDS by saying, "Are you aware, whereas in the West, HIV and AIDS is said to be largely homosexually transmitted, in Africa, including our country, it is transmitted heterosexually?" So instead of scientific investigation and understanding, there is vilification and prejudice. HIV/AIDS is not a "homosexual disease" or a "heterosexual disease." HIV is a *virus*. Mugabe of Zimbabwe has called homosexuals "pigs," "perverts" and "worse than beasts." Until 1989 in

Zimbabwe, putting AIDS as cause of death on a death certificate was banned. The heads of state of Zambia, Namibia, Kenya and Swaziland have all made public their contempt for homosexuals, citing both "African traditions" and "biblical teachings." This month, the minister of home affairs of Namibia called on the police to eliminate homosexual men and women from Namibia.

Evidence as far back as ancient San [Bushmen, nomadic hunters of southern Africa] cave paintings shows that homosexual relations have been around forever in Africa, just like everywhere else in the world. The suppression of gays is directly related to the suppression of sexuality and the subordination of women and youth in the social unit of the family, the main institution for the oppression of women and children in class society. Democratic rights are indivisible. Communists fight for full democratic rights for homosexuals. We fight against anti-gay bigotry and we are for the legalisation of all "crimes without victims." The guiding principle for sexual relations should be that of effective consent—that is, mutual agreement and understanding

as opposed to coercion—and the state has no business interfering.

We are for free, quality health care and treatment for all and for massive medical research programmes. It certainly means that the working class must expropriate the pharmaceutical companies. It means education—including in scientific matters—which begins with teaching basic health care, medical precautions and sex education. Education here also means literacy. We are for expropriating the capitalist class as a whole without compensation—that means the land, the banks, the mines and industry. Free medical care requires building up the infrastructure, training nurses and doctors, construction of hospitals and clinics, as well as uncongested housing, clean running water, electricity and paved roads. All of southern Africa needs a genuine socialist construction programme.

The organised and combative South African proletariat must take the lead under the leadership of a revolutionary internationalist Trotskyist vanguard party. This is why you must become a communist. Only the communist party we are building here and internationally has the programme to be the tribune of all people—women, gays, immigrants and the rural poor. We look forward to the day when all socialist humanity, using the knowledge and science of the past, will have the freedom to go forward and explore all the difficult questions of life. In summary, I would like to read a passage from a 1925 speech by Trotsky on "Dialectical Materialism and Science":

"There are two aspects of by no means equal merit to the scientific contributions of the past which are now ours and upon which we pride ourselves. Science as a whole has been directed toward acquiring knowledge of reality, research into the laws of evolution, and discovery of the properties and qualities of matter, in order to gain greater mastery over it. But knowledge did not develop within the four walls of a laboratory or a lecture hall. No, it remained a function of human society and reflected the structure of human society. For its needs, society requires knowledge of nature. But at the same time, society demands an affirmation of its right to be what it is, a justification of its particular institutions—first and foremost, the institutions of class domination—just as in the past it demanded the justification of serfdom, class privileges, monarchical prerogatives, national exceptionalism, etc. Socialist society accepts with utmost gratitude the heritage of the positive sciences, discarding, as is the right of inventorial choice, everything that is useless in acquiring knowledge of nature but only useful in justifying class inequality and all other kinds of historical untruth."

—*Problems of Everyday Life*  
(1973) ■

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**Down With Neo-Apartheid Capitalism!  
For a Black-Centered Workers Government!**

# South African Workers Battle ANC Union-Busting, Austerity

Up to 100,000 or more workers took to the streets of Johannesburg on May 10 as part of a one-day general strike called by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to protest massive job cuts. Reporting on the impact of the walk-out, the *London Independent* (11 May) headlined its article, "Mass Strike Brings South Africa to a Halt." This action is part of a rising level of working-class opposition to the economic austerity and union-busting policies of the African National Congress (ANC) government, including huge strikes by public sector workers last summer and fall and a militant wildcat in January at Volkswagen's Uitenhage plant near Port Elizabeth.

The May 10 general strike was a measure of the pressure being exerted by the ranks on the COSATU leadership, which binds the unions to the capitalist government through the so-called "tripartite alliance," a nationalist popular front composed of the bourgeois-nationalist ANC and its junior partner, the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP), along with COSATU. There was widespread sentiment among the workers to break with the "tripartite alliance." Reporting on the Johannesburg strike rally, a comrade of Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, observed:

"We found the demonstration to be very polarized over the question of for or against the ANC and the alliance. In general workers hated the ANC and wanted to break the alliance or they defended the ANC and were hostile to us. In the part of the demonstration that we sold to, *Workers Vanguard* was a noticeable political feature—at least every tenth person had a paper. When one comrade was taking a photo of a contingent with the banner, 'Socialism—For Workers Empowerment!', a worker shouted to her, 'Hi, *Workers Vanguard*!' He and the workers around him were all holding the paper."

Our comrades seek to win working-class militants to the fight to forge the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party needed to



Reuters

**South African labor struggle: public sector workers' protest, summer 1999.**

lead the South African proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, to power through a socialist revolution which smashes the bourgeois state, expropriates the white capitalist class and erects a black-centered workers government. We publish below an edited presentation given in Chicago last month by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour, who visited South Africa earlier this year to work with our section there.

\* \* \*

In the ghetto neighborhood in the San Francisco Bay Area where I have a part-time job, one of my co-workers has in his office a famous photograph from the 1994 elections in South Africa in which Nelson Mandela became the country's first black president. The photo shows an old man who's crippled and can't walk. He's being carried to the voting booth by a young man, probably one of his relatives. That photo captures the intensity of

the belief that, after decades of heroic struggle and great sacrifice, finally the black South African people were going to get social justice—not only democratic rights, but the equitable distribution of the wealth of the country to all its inhabitants.

In fact, the ANC government initially promised all kinds of good things. They had something called the Reconstruction and Development Programme. It promised a million housing units in five years, ten years of compulsory public education for all children, free socialized medicine. Thirty percent of the agricultural land would be distributed to black farmers. But these were all empty promises. And in fact, today the Reconstruction and Development Programme is an embarrassing memory for the government. The offices which administered it have long since been closed. Six years later, the conditions of the black masses in South Africa are no better, and in some ways

worse—for example, the level of unemployment—than they were under the old apartheid, white-supremacist regime.

The ANC government is just as ruthless in defending the so-called right to private property as its predecessors. Last fall, some black squatters in a township near Johannesburg tried to erect a shantytown, and the local ANC authorities brought in the police to expel them and demolish the shantytown. And when the squatters initially refused the police orders, the police and security guards just opened up on them with gunfire, seriously wounding scores. A few months later, the workers at the big Volkswagen plant in Port Elizabeth went on strike to protest the firing of some militant shop stewards. The company responded by firing 1,300 workers, one-quarter of the entire labor force. The cops were brought in en masse to intimidate the workers. They not only surrounded and patrolled the factory, they occupied the adjacent black townships.

During the Volkswagen strike, ANC president Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor, gave what they call the "Throne Speech"—the name is a carry-over from the old days of British colonialism. The main theme of this speech was the need to attract foreign investors, to build a black capitalist class and consequently to break the power of the black trade-union movement. He declared: "Our standing in the eyes of the investor community cannot be held hostage by elements pursuing selfish and anti-social purposes," namely, militant workers. (The "investor community"—what a nice way to describe the heirs of J. P. Morgan and the men who bankrolled Adolf Hitler, who incidentally helped found Volkswagen!)

But if things have not changed for the black masses, they have certainly changed for their putative leaders. Last year, there was an emergency trade-union conference and the government sent as its spokesman the defense minister, Patrick Lekota, the guy in charge of the military—a significant choice for spokesman. He presented a hardline defense of the government's economic austerity policies. One of the delegates at the conference had worked closely with Lekota in the 1980s and went up to him and said, "Patrick, we used to be comrades. What has happened to you?" Lekota replied, "I am no longer your comrade. I am a minister now."

Ten years ago, the most prominent left-wing workers leader in South Africa was Moses Mayekiso, head of the metal workers union and Central Committee member of the Communist Party. When he was in prison in the late 1980s, there was an



Radio Times Hulton

**Gold miners in the Transvaal, 1888. Mining of diamonds and gold by super-exploited black labor was key to development of South African capitalism.**

international campaign to free him in which we, the International Communist League, participated. In fact, I remember picketing with my comrades in San Francisco with signs reading "Free Moses Mayekiso!" What is Mayekiso doing today? He's the head of some private financial outfit. He's a small-time, or maybe a medium-time, finance capitalist. People like Mayekiso and Lekota are said in South Africa to be "on the gravy train."

We characterize post-1994 South Africa as neo-apartheid. The legal and political structure of the apartheid system has changed quite radically. The social and economic dominance of the white minority has not changed. The superexploitation of black and nonwhite labor by the white capitalists, domestic and foreign, has not changed. Whites still live in the "First World," blacks in the "Third World." Average per capita consumption of electricity in the white neighborhoods of South Africa is about the same as in Stockholm, Sweden and Munich, Germany, two of the wealthiest cities in the Western world. One-quarter of all urban blacks live in what they call "informal housing"—backyard shacks, garages, shantytowns made of cardboard and plastic. Ninety percent of all rural blacks have no electricity at all.

The leading cause of death among white children in South Africa is swimming pool accidents. Water also plays a significant role in the death of black children, but in a rather different way. They die from diseases like dysentery, which are contracted from drinking polluted water.

When Mandela took over as president,

South Africa had the most unequal economic structure of any country in the world. The wealthiest 10 percent got over half of all the national income. The poorest 40 percent got less than 4 percent. That's still the case. What's changed is that now the top 10 percent includes several thousand blacks, many of them former leaders of the so-called national liberation movement, which in fact liberated *them*—to drive BMWs, wear Armani suits and move into posh, formerly all-white neighborhoods.

### **European Colonialism and Apartheid Capitalism**

To understand what we call neo-apartheid under the ANC, you have to understand apartheid under the white-supremacist regime. South Africa as it exists today is the product of the European colonial conquest and subjugation of the indigenous black, Bantu-speaking population. This history of colonial subjugation is the case as well in the rest of Africa and, in a different way, in the Near East and Asia. However, the European-derived population in South Africa is far larger and more deeply rooted than elsewhere in the colonial—or rather, now former colonial—world.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Dutch Calvinists and French Huguenots moved to South Africa in significant numbers and established an agricultural economy. They called themselves Afrikaners, sometimes called Africa's "white tribe." In the late 19th century, when gold and also diamonds were discovered, British imperialism took over South Africa, fought a war against the Afrikaners—the Boer War—

and there was a large influx of immigrants from Britain. Because of the relatively large size and the permanent character of the white European population, the imperialists have been able to exploit the indigenous population in a far more complete and systematic, one might say totalitarian, way than elsewhere in Africa and in other colonial countries.

At the beginning of the 20th century, most blacks in South Africa were self-sufficient agriculturalists. They owned their own land, they lived in traditional tribal societies. The British government then took their land—*all of it*—in the 1913 Land Act, declaring that South Africa was literally a white man's country. Blacks could only own land in the so-called native reserves (bantustans), amounting to 7 percent of the country; the most arid, desolate part. The main reason that they did this was to provide a large pool of cheap labor to work in the mines, which for many was a death sentence.

After World War II, South Africa was industrialized by the superexploitation of black labor under the white police state. In order to provide the large white European population with a European living standard, every last bit of surplus was squeezed out of the black population. By the 1980s, one-third of the entire white labor force and one-half of the Afrikaners were on the government payroll. And most of these people did *nothing*, they just pushed paper around. Half of the white government employees could have stayed home every day of the year, sitting around their swimming pools drinking beer and it would have had absolutely no effect on the actual economy. They were totally parasitic.

In one important respect, the effect of colonial rule in South Africa was very

different from the rest of Africa, the Near East and Asia. In general, Western imperialism (and in the Far East, also Japanese imperialism) tended to widen and deepen the class divisions among the indigenous colonized peoples. That is, the colonial administration collaborated with the indigenous, propertied classes and the traditional ruling elite. In some cases, they even created classes where none had existed. For example, among the Ibos in Nigeria, there were no hereditary chieftains. They simply had village councils in which everybody had an equal say. When the British moved into Nigeria, they appointed chieftains to the Ibos. They said, "We tell you what to do. You tell your people what to do. And you will be well rewarded."

There were wealthy Indian landowners and Indian millionaire factory owners in British India—likewise for Egypt, French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies. But not for South Africa. In South Africa, the class structure of the black—or more generally nonwhite—population was compressed. Blacks couldn't even own residential land in South Africa, much less agricultural or commercial land. In the 1980s, the only black capitalists in Johannesburg were the guys who owned and ran minivans and minibuses. Incidentally, these were very competitive capitalists—but not in ways that benefited their customers. Every once in a while they would shoot each other up as a way of preventing the oversupply of their services.

In South Africa, you had a complete correspondence between class divisions and national or racial divisions. The capitalists—big, medium and little—were white, the state bureaucracy was white. The working class was nonwhite—

mainly black African, some Indian and some "coloured" (or mixed-race). The urban and rural poor were black. This situation, of course, had a profound effect on the political consciousness and the organization of the black masses.

### Communism and Black Nationalism in South Africa

The South African Communist Party has for the past half century been an important constituent part of the African National Congress, which, as its name indicates, claims to stand for the *national* interests of the entire black African population of all social classes. In South Africa, Communism was seen as complementary and not antagonistic to black African nationalism. In a conventional, popular sense, what Communism meant was, you take the wealth from the white ruling class and you distribute it among the impoverished black masses. Communism did not mean expropriating the factories, the mines, the farms owned by black capitalists. Because *there were no black capitalists*.

The identification of Communism and national liberation in South Africa was reinforced during the Cold War era by the international alignments. South Africa was an important strategic ally of the United States, of Western imperialism. It was part of the "free world"—an embarrassing part to be sure, but part of it. The ANC was backed diplomatically and financially by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union provided the arms and training for the ANC's basically token guerrilla warfare. During the township revolts in the mid-1980s, the young black rebels called themselves "comrades" and waved the red flag with the hammer and sickle as a symbol of defiance.

Der Spiegel



Rigid segregation of apartheid era was written into law, enforced by brutal terror. Right: 1976 Soweto student uprising was inspired by Cuban defeat of South African forces in Angola.



Peter Magubane

The same factors and conditions made the South African Communist Party as well as the ANC an incubator for a future black capitalist class. Let's take a young black intellectual in the 1970s, say, someone with a law degree. He's ambitious in a bourgeois-careerist sense. He wants money, he wants the good things in life, he wants to be a political mover and shaker in his own country. But how can he realize these aspirations? He can't become a corporate executive of Anglo American, the big mining and industrial conglomerate. They don't have black corporate executives. Obviously, he can't join the ruling white-supremacist party. So our ambitious young black intellectual recognizes that if he is going to become part of the ruling elite, then they've got to, one way or another, displace this white-supremacist regime or at least arrange a "power sharing" agreement. So he joins the ANC, maybe he joins the Communist Party, or at least works closely with it.

If you read the recent speeches of Thabo Mbeki, you might think they were written by the public relations department of the International Monetary Fund. For all I know, maybe they were. Mbeki is a former member of the Communist Party and this is generally true of that whole ANC ruling elite. If you survey maybe the wealthiest 5 percent of black Africans in South Africa, probably over half of them are former members of the SACP. Some of them might even be current members of the SACP, at least nominally.

To oversimplify, one can say that if you wanted to be a capitalist and were a black in South Africa, you had to call yourself a Communist. Because that was the only way in which you could hope to mobilize the black masses, and particu-

larly the black proletariat, in the struggle against the white-supremacist regime.

### For Permanent Revolution!

Of course, the Communist Party does not today, nor did it in the past, say, "Our goal is to promote a black capitalist class and a black state bureaucracy." Rather, they justified and continue to justify their policies with reference to the old Stalinist dogma of "two-stage revolution." This says that in all colonial or semicolonial countries, first we have to have the bourgeois-democratic revolution—in South Africa it's called the "national democratic revolution"—led by a supposedly progressive or "anti-imperialist" wing of the bourgeoisie. In South Africa this role is assigned to the ANC of Mandela and Mbeki. Then, at some point in the future, they say, we'll have the proletarian socialist revolution.

In opposition to the Stalinist doctrine of two-stage revolution, Leon Trotsky put forward the program and perspective of permanent revolution, which he summarized in this way:

"With regard to countries of a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution to their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation."

—*The Permanent Revolution*  
(1929)

Trotsky stressed, "In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the

development of the international socialist revolution."

But how does the proletariat become the leader of the subjugated nation? For that it has to be organized and led by a revolutionary vanguard party, such as the Bolshevik Party that Lenin built in tsarist Russia, which politically combats and defeats the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist parties which also claim to be the leader of the subjugated nation. Historically, the struggle for permanent revolution has been directed against the Stalinists' policy of collaboration with and support to bourgeois nationalists. And this is the main form of opportunism in Third World countries.

But sometimes you get a very different kind, or at least an apparently very different kind, of political tendency within the workers movement, which we would characterize as "militant economism" or syndicalism. This tendency maintains that the workers should exclusively concentrate on building their own organizations at the point of production—trade unions or factory committees—and should turn their backs on the national liberation struggle; they should turn their backs on the struggles of the peasantry and the other oppressed sections of society.

Interestingly, such a tendency emerged in South Africa in the late 1970s and '80s. They were called the "workerists" and for a time they led a number of quite significant trade unions. Basically, the workerists looked around the rest of Africa, the Near East, Asia, and they saw governments, like in Algeria, which had come to power as the leader of a national liberation movement. But these governments then savagely suppressed the working class. So the workerists in South Africa said, "We're not going to let that happen here." Basically, they projected that sooner or later, by one means or another, the ANC was going to come to power. And they saw their job as building strong trade unions which would defend the workers after the ANC came to power and which would pressure the ANC government into carrying out policies beneficial to the workers.

In the early '80s, one of the leaders of this tendency, Joe Foster, laid out its political doctrine. He begins by describing the ANC as "a great populist liberation movement" and goes on:

"But these movements cannot and have not in themselves been able to deal with the particular and fundamental problem of workers....

"It is, therefore, essential that workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even whilst they are part of the wider popular struggle. This organisation is necessary to protect and further worker interests and



Rural masses continue to live in abject poverty after end of white-supremacist rule in 1994.

to ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who will [in the] end have no option but to turn against their worker supporters.”

—*South African Labour Bulletin*,  
July 1982

In opposition to this current, we wrote at the time:

“The only way to ensure that national liberation movements do not turn against their worker supporters is for the workers movement to place *itself* at the head of the oppressed black people, to combat every manifestation of white racist rule—the disenfranchisement of the black majority, the bantustans, the pass laws, the enforced separation of urban black workers from their wives and children, the massive use of convict labor.”

—WV No. 366, 9 November 1984

A few years later, a number of the most prominent “workerist” leaders, like Mayekiso and Alec Erwin, as well as many rank-and-file activists, joined the ANC and the Communist Party. I was in South Africa about six weeks ago, and I and a comrade met with some veteran trade unionists who had been part of this tendency. They had joined the ANC and SACP but are today very disillusioned. We asked them, “Why did you join the ANC and SACP since you had earlier criticized them from the left?” One of them said, “We were duped by Joe Slovo,” who was the CP leader at the time. “Slovo told us that right after Mandela came to power, the Communist Party would mobilize the working class in the struggle for the second stage, proletarian revolution.”

But why were they duped? These were not naive, politically raw youth. These were battle-hardened, left-wing workers leaders. They were absolutely familiar with the politics and history of the ANC and SACP. But the real reason is that in their own way, the “workerists,” too, had subscribed to the two-stage revolution. They assumed and accepted that the white-supremacist regime was going to be replaced by the ANC and they saw their goal as simply to defend the workers’ interests against the inevitable ANC regime. That was the point of intersection between the “workerists” and the SACP. They never understood that the working class could defend its interests only, as Trotsky put it, by placing itself at the head of the subjugated nation through the instrumentality of a revolutionary workers party.

### South Africa in the Cold War

Up until now, I’ve mainly focused on the internal structure and developments in South Africa. But one really can’t understand the transition from apartheid rule to ANC rule and neo-apartheid except in the context of world politics.



de Blois/AP



Siava/Sigma

**Racist state terror and anti-immigrant chauvinism under neo-apartheid rule: police fire at black township squatters near Johannesburg; Mozambicans await deportation in South African jail.**

Southern Africa, like much of the rest of the world, was an arena of the Cold War—and in the mid-1970s in Angola, a *hot war*—between Western imperialism, led by the U.S., and the Soviet Union and its allies. South Africa was an important regional ally of the U.S. The Pentagon collaborated closely with the South African military; the CIA collaborated closely with its South African counterpart. For example, in the early 1960s the ANC decided to launch armed struggle against the white-supremacist regime, and its leaders, like Mandela, therefore went underground. It was the CIA which, through one of its informants in the ANC, tracked Mandela down and informed the South African government, which then captured him and put him in prison for the next 30 years.

In the 1950s and '60s, South Africa was one of the very few countries in Africa or Asia with very large American, as well as British, capital investment. The big monopoly, Anglo American, was well named. Half of its stockholders were American and British. And in 1970, the American business magazine *Fortune* wrote:

“The Republic of South Africa has always been regarded by foreign investors as a gold mine, one of those rare and

refreshing places where profits are great and problems are small. Capital is not threatened by political instability or nationalization. Labor is cheap, the market is booming, and the currency hard and convertible.”

—quoted in Martin J. Murray, ed.,  
*South African Capitalism and  
Black Political Opposition* (1982)

But over the course of the next decade or so, developments took place which very much changed this rosy picture of South Africa in the eyes of the American capitalist class. To begin with, national liberation struggles in neighboring Angola and Mozambique, which were Portuguese colonies when this *Fortune* article came out, not only succeeded in winning independence from Portugal but precipitated a revolutionary upheaval in Portugal itself. In 1975, when the Portuguese colonialists pulled out, a left-nationalist government allied to Moscow was established in Angola, where the ANC was now allowed to set up guerrilla bases.

At that point, the Americans encouraged the South Africans to send in their army and smash this left-nationalist regime—replace Portuguese colonialism with South African colonialism in Angola. In response, Soviet leader Leonid

Brezhnev got the Cuban army to go in and the Cuban army smashed the South African army, inflicting a humiliating defeat on it. Finally, the ANC guerrillas actually got to be on the winning side, fighting alongside the Cubans. By themselves, they couldn't do very much. Let's give credit where credit is due—to the Soviets and Cubans.

The war in Angola actually turned out to be a turning point in the history of modern South Africa. The defeat of the white-supremacist South African army by the Cubans, with the ANC in an auxiliary role, inspired and encouraged a new wave of resistance in South Africa itself. Only a few months later came the 1976 Soweto student uprising. More importantly, beginning in the mid-1970s, you got the development of a black trade-union

A few years later came the black township revolts in which the segregated townships like Soweto were effectively taken over by militants, generally supportive of the ANC and SACP—the young “comrades” waving the red flag with the hammer and sickle. The white-supremacist regime, true to its nature, responded to this by escalating police-state terror. In 1985, the government of P. W. Botha declared a state of emergency. The police and army killed over a thousand blacks and imprisoned 20,000.

The American ruling class didn't approve of this policy. Not on moral grounds, to be sure. They figured that even if it worked in the short run, it was not going to work in the longer run. For every black union activist and township militant who was killed or imprisoned,

next four years these negotiations didn't go anywhere—the most the ANC was willing to concede was still less than what the white-supremacists and their American senior partners demanded.

This deadlock in the negotiations was broken not by developments in southern Africa but by developments in East Europe and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy collapsed under the regime of Mikhail Gorbachev. Capitalist counterrevolution swept across East Europe with Gorbachev's toleration and encouragement. And everybody knew, if the Soviets were giving East Europe back to the Western imperialists, they were certainly not interested in a new client state in southern Africa. In fact, Moscow dropped all of its support to the ANC and moved to establish good diplomatic relations with the white-supremacist regime.

In 1990, the South African government legalized the ANC and the Communist Party. A government spokesman explained why to its supporters, many of whom strongly opposed this move:

“Our situation has changed fundamentally by what has happened in the international field, in Eastern Europe, Russia, and in several African states recently. The total effect of all these things puts the threat posed by the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress in an entirely new context.”

—quoted in David Ottaway,  
*Chained Together: Mandela,  
De Klerk, and the Struggle to  
Remake South Africa* (1993)

That is, the South African ruling class and the American imperialists understood that bereft of Soviet support, the ANC and also the SACP leaders were willing to become *their* political agents, to do *their* bidding. And that's exactly what has happened.

Today, Mbeki states that his number one, overriding economic priority is to attract foreign investment. The minister who is in charge of privatizing state-owned corporations like telecommunications is a member of the Communist Party. The London *Financial Times* writes, “the minister of trade and industry has enthusiastically liberalised trade and promoted foreign private investment.” That minister is Alec Erwin, former prominent workerist and leading member of the Communist Party.

### For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

But the investor-friendly policies of Mbeki, Erwin & Co. have caused widespread disillusionment among the working class and more importantly a rising level of opposition. There was a public workers strike last year which was the largest and most politically significant since the ANC came to power in 1994.



**Cuban women troops prepare to leave Angola, 1989. Cuban forces smashed South African apartheid invasion in mid-1970s.**

movement which over the next decade became one of the largest, most combative and most left-wing in the world.

Under these conditions, the more far-sighted elements of the American ruling class recognized that four million whites in South Africa could not long continue to completely subjugate and exploit 20 million nonwhites simply by the mechanisms of police-state repression. Moreover, the longer the apartheid system lasted, the more radical the black masses would become; the more hostile they would become not only to the South African ruling class but also to its American great-power ally. In 1981, the Rockefeller Foundation put out a study called *South Africa—Time Running Out*. Here is their assessment: “All the ingredients of a major crisis are present there. The dangers of political instability, large-scale racial conflict, and the growth of Communist influence are real.” Their conclusion: “To promote genuine political power sharing in South Africa.”

five more would replace them. And they would be even more fanatically hostile to the white-supremacist regime, even more fanatically hostile to the U.S. and more sympathetic to the Soviet Union and Communism. The American ruling class sent a strong message to its South African junior partner. Wall Street financiers dumped all of the South African stocks and bonds that they could. U.S. banks refused to roll over their loans to the South African government and South African corporations. The value of the South African currency, the rand, plummeted through the floor. One of the leaders of the white liberal opposition, Helen Sussman, quipped that nobody had to call for foreign divestment anymore, it's already happened.

Well, the Afrikaner nationalists are pretty hardheaded. But money talks. They got the message. So in 1986 they opened secret negotiations with the ANC leadership, with Mandela in prison and the others who were in exile. But for the

The question that our comrades in South Africa are most often asked today by rank-and-file workers, by low-level union officials, even by some middle-level officials, is, "What do you think we should do?" We don't have to argue, as we did in the past, that this is a capitalist government, anti-working-class in its policies and serving the interests of Anglo American, Citibank and Volkswagen. That's now taken for granted. The question is what to do about it. There is a widespread sentiment among the workers that the unions should break with the "tripartite alliance," should cease supporting the ANC/SACP government and fight its reactionary economic policies. And of course that's what the unions *should* do.

But the decisive question, and this is where most of the discussions and arguments lie, is what then and what more? Because the South African working class cannot defend itself even in the most narrow economic sense simply at the level of trade-union struggle, however militant and effective in its own terms. How could union struggle affect mass structural unemployment? According to the government's own figures, 40 percent of the black labor force is unemployed. Also, the South African workers movement has not broadly or seriously organized, even at the trade-union level, the millions of agricultural laborers who, along with the miners, are among the most oppressed sections of the proletariat. More generally, the workers movement has not concerned itself with the desperately impoverished rural population, both on the white farms and in the former bantustans, who live under conditions which are not *neo*-apartheid but apartheid just like in the old days.

To talk about rural South Africa is to talk about the oppression of women. Central to the structure of South Africa is that women and their children remain in the countryside while their husbands and fathers are separated from them, working in the cities and the mines. It is in rural South Africa that patriarchal traditions, inherently and deeply oppressive of women, remain quite strong. Polygamy is practiced—it's not common but it's not uncommon—including by men who consider themselves left-wing workers leaders. Far more widespread is what is called *lobola*—the bride price. If a black African man wants to get married, he has to pay a substantial sum of money—I guess it used to be cattle—to the family of the woman.

But the fundamental point is that the many-sided conditions of exploitation, oppression and backwardness cannot be eliminated, cannot even be significantly



Gubb/JB Pictures

**Mass township revolt of the mid-1980s shook apartheid regime. Communist red flag flies at funeral of anti-apartheid fighter killed by cops in 1986.**

lessened simply through trade-union struggle. It manifestly requires a proletarian revolution such as Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks led in Russia in 1917: the expropriation of the white-owned mines, factories and farms and the establishment of a planned, socialized economy.

As I emphasized, the Communist Party plays an important role in the ANC-led government. It also runs the main trade-union federation—run is the wrong word because the ranks are very restless; it's the leadership. How do these self-styled Communists justify their aggressively pro-capitalist and anti-working-class policies? Their bottom line argument is that these policies are forced on them by the unfavorable international conditions of the post-Soviet world. If wages are too high, if the unions are too militant in South Africa, investors will go elsewhere. They'll close down their factories and unemployment will be even worse than it is today. As for proletarian revolution, they say, even if it's possible in South Africa, it will simply and quickly be smashed by Western imperialism, led by the U.S. If there's no military attack, they'll starve us into submission. That's the basic argument. It's a serious argument and it has to be answered seriously.

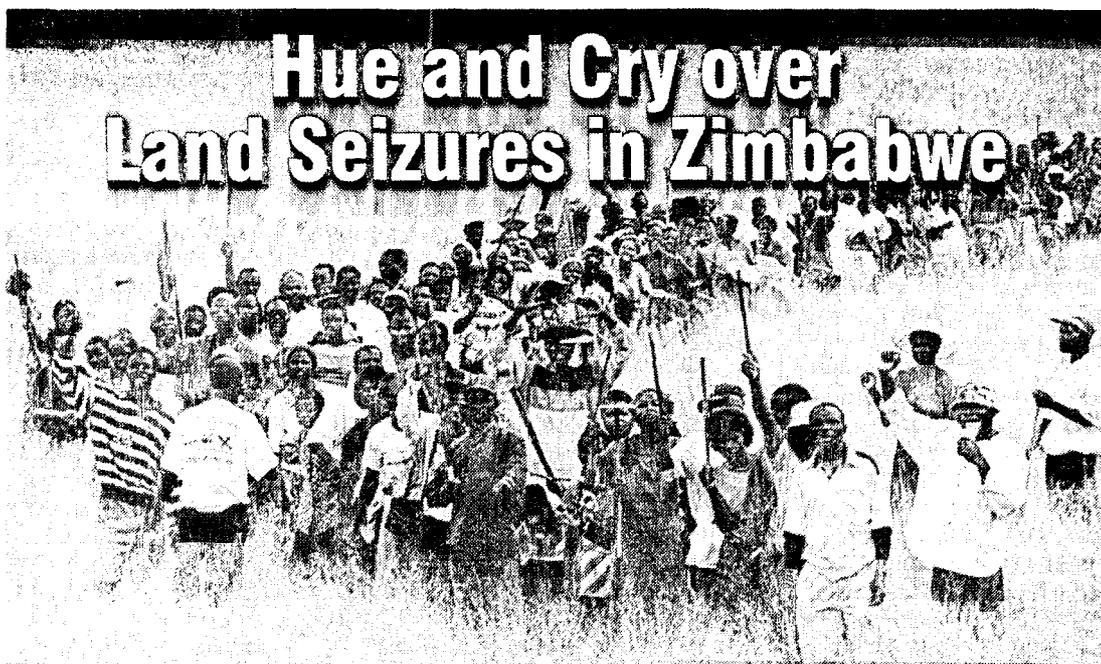
When I was in South Africa I gave a talk—mainly to unionized black workers—on the changing conditions in South Africa and their relation to world politics. I concluded the talk by shifting the geographical focus to the United States. That is, I talked about the working-class struggle in the United States, the struggles of black and Latino minorities. I pointed out, for example, that in the last years of

the Vietnam War, the American army had become semi-mutinous, with soldiers killing their officers. South African black workers—even left-wing workers—don't know that. Their image of the United States is this all-powerful military juggernaut which rules the world without question and nothing can be done about it. Which is of course exactly what their leaders tell them.

Those of you who are not members or supporters of the Spartacist League, or may even be our opponents, I presume that you came to this forum out of a sense of identity and solidarity with the conditions of the oppressed South African black masses. Those of you who are not youth probably participated in the anti-apartheid protests of the 1980s. Nothing you can do, and I repeat, *nothing* you can do, would aid and encourage the struggle for national liberation, social justice and proletarian revolution in South Africa more than building a communist party based on the working class in the U.S. Every blow struck against American imperialism from within has powerful reverberations in South Africa and in all countries oppressed and dominated by international capital, of which the U.S. is the self-declared policeman.

It is certainly very possible, indeed likely, that the first battles of the world proletarian revolution will be fought in South Africa, Mexico or other Third World countries where the bourgeois order is far more unstable than it is in the U.S. today. But the ultimate battle is going to be fought *here* in the bastion of world capitalism. And the purpose of our party is to prepare for that battle. That's what we're all about. Join us! ■

# South Africa ANC Regime: Enforcer for Imperialist Plunder



Alexander Joe

Land occupation in Zimbabwe. A few thousand wealthy whites own 70 percent of country's best land, while six million rural blacks scrape by on marginal plots.

JOHANNESBURG—U.S. president Clinton's visit to sub-Saharan Africa in late August highlighted imperialist concerns over growing instability in the region. Clinton sought to bolster the newly elected regime in oil-rich Nigeria—a linchpin and regional gendarme in West Africa—having just dispatched hundreds of U.S. troops to train the Nigerian military. In central Africa, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) are torn by civil wars. At the southern end of the continent, in Zimbabwe, massive social unrest among both the urban working class and the rural population—fueled by nearly a decade of austerity measures imposed by the capitalist ZANU-PF government and dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—has threatened to spill over into neighbouring South Africa, the economic giant of sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to this sharp crisis, ZANU-PF president Robert Mugabe has cynically exploited the burning land hunger of the more than six million Zimbabweans

who live on marginal rural lands, while about 4,500 white farmers own 70 percent of the best land. Seeking to maintain its grip on power in the face of a challenge by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the bourgeois-nationalist Mugabe regime orchestrated the seizure of some 1,200 white-owned farms by self-styled veterans of Zimbabwe's war of independence against British imperialism and the former white-supremacist regime. Though relying on electoral support from the urban masses, particularly the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the MDC is a stalking horse for the white farmers and their imperialist backers, who have screamed like stuck pigs over the land seizures. In "infringing" on private property, however hypocritically, Mugabe is playing a game unsanctioned by the white capitalists and British and U.S. imperialism.

While the crisis in Zimbabwe has cooled down since parliamentary elections in June—in which the MDC made a strong showing though ZANU-PF

retained control of Parliament—the South African bourgeoisie has good reason to fear the "contagion effect" of the Zimbabwe land seizures. The land question is explosive throughout the region. With the dismantling of the legal structure of apartheid in 1994, the white-supremacist regime was replaced by the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) of Nelson Mandela and his successor, President Thabo Mbeki. But the economic basis of the old apartheid system—the superexploitation of black labour—remains intact. While a thin layer of black capitalists have made it onto the ANC's "gravy train," the overwhelming majority of the black masses live in desperate poverty in the countryside or in segregated townships, where unemployment ranges above 50 percent. Presiding over the immiseration of the South African masses alongside the ANC are its partners in the "tripartite alliance," the COSATU trade-union bureaucracy and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

The first law passed by the ANC-led capitalist government supposedly allowed black families to reclaim land that had been stolen from them under apartheid. Yet the government has redistributed a mere 3 percent of the land, leaving 80 percent in the hands of the white minority, which makes up only 13 percent of the total population. Meanwhile, white farmers and hired mercenaries from the Executive Outcomes "security" firm rove the countryside maiming and murdering with impunity, as blacks are increasingly evicted from white-owned lands they have worked for generations.

The land occupations in Zimbabwe have resonated strongly in South Africa. An ANC spokesman vowed that South Africa "will not go the way of Zimbabwe." As the land seizures continued, the value of the South African rand plunged to a historic low, until Mbeki promised to "take all necessary steps to ensure that the breaking of the law comes to an end" if land occupations erupted here. In a visit to the Zimbabwean capital of Harare last spring, Mbeki quietly twisted Mugabe's arm to announce that he would try to bring the land occupations to a halt.

In this the ANC leader was acting not only on behalf of the neo-apartheid bourgeoisie but of the major imperialist powers as well, particularly the Blair Labour government in Britain, Zimbabwe's former colonial master. Most vitriolic in their racist and chauvinist denunciations of Zimbabwe were former Labour "lefts" like Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his aide Peter Hain, who was a prominent anti-apartheid activist in the 1980s. London sent SAS special forces to southern Africa and prepared a "rapid reaction force" to move in to "protect" British passport holders, who make up more than a third of Zimbabwe's 70,000 whites. On

Britain's prompting, the European Union imposed economic sanctions against Zimbabwe.

There is more at stake for the imperialists and their junior partners in Jo'burg and Pretoria than a relative handful of white-owned tobacco plantations. Mugabe has 12,000 troops in Congo, who control some key diamond-producing areas in Kasai, a mineral-rich province where South Africa's De Beers has been displaced. The many-sided war there, involving Laurent Kabila's government troops, a half dozen rebel armies and as many expeditionary forces from surrounding countries, has temporarily prevented the imperialists from getting their hands on the country's fabulously rich diamond and other mineral reserves. The United Nations is currently considering the deployment of a "peacekeeping" force to Congo, in which South Africa has already announced it intends to play a prominent role. The UN and Britain already have occupation forces in Sierra Leone, another diamond-rich country. *Imperialist hands off Congo! All U.S./UN/British troops out of Africa!*

South Africa holds the key to the future of all of sub-Saharan Africa. Under the rule of the capitalist ANC, this means continued brutal exploitation and oppression of South Africa's black, coloured and Indian working masses by the white racist bourgeoisie and enforcing imperialist plunder throughout the region. Under a black-centred workers government, South Africa's industrial and mineral wealth would be used to develop the vast resources of the region for the benefit of the former colonial slaves. Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, fights to forge the Bolshevik party needed to lead the proletariat, drawing behind it the rural landless and all the oppressed, in a socialist revolution that

breaks the power of the bourgeoisie and expropriates capitalist industry and the large landowners. For a socialist federation of southern Africa!

### MDC: Stalking Horse for White Landholders, Imperialists

Conditions for Zimbabwe's working people have continued to worsen since the Mugabe regime imposed IMF-dictated austerity measures in 1991. Massive plebeian protests in late 1997 culminated in a general strike called by the ZCTU that December, followed by another in March 1998. Mugabe's dispatch of 12,000 troops—from a country with a total population of 12 million—to Congo further inflamed hostility to his regime, as he sells his country's youth as cannon fodder to keep Kabila in power in return for diamond and mineral concessions for him and his ZANU-PF cronies.

Earlier this year, Mugabe tried to push through a constitutional reform which would have essentially made him president for life, while proposing a land distribution scheme to mobilize his peasant base against urban opposition. When Mugabe's referendum failed because of opposition led by the MDC, ZANU-PF encouraged an escalation in the land seizures. Fearing that they will lose their jobs if the large commercial farms are broken up, the 350,000 black agricultural labourers and their families—who account for one-eighth of the total population—have been driven into the arms of the MDC, and their own exploiters.

Founded last year under the leadership of ZCTU head Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC has openly sought ties with the imperialist powers and opposes the land seizures. Last spring, when Britain threatened to pull out a military training mission, the MDC urged London to keep the troops in place as a "guarantee" of "democratic government" (UPI, 17 April).



Economist



AP

January 1998: Protests against food price increases and other IMF-dictated austerity measures imposed by Zimbabwe president Mugabe (right) were dispersed by police gunfire. Months of protests included two general strikes.

MDC leader Tsvangirai was joined by a number of prominent Tory politicians, a former U.S. assistant secretary of state and racist South African politician Tony Leon in a letter to the *London Times* (13 April) denouncing the Mugabe regime. In Zimbabwe, the MDC's supporters include a prison torturer who served under the former white-supremacist regime of Ian Smith's Rhodesia (Zimbabwe's colonial name), and Smith himself, who once ranted, "I don't believe in black majority rule ever in Rhodesia—not in a thousand years." Smith and his like deserve revolutionary justice from a workers tribunal for the butchering of African men, women and children during his rule.

Rubbing shoulders with this notorious racist pig in the MDC are the avowed "revolutionaries" of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), Zimbabwean supporters of the tendency founded by the late Tony Cliff, led by the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and including the Keep Left grouping buried inside the SACP. (While the American ISO has been at loggerheads with the SWP of late, it was no less enthusiastic about the MDC's recent electoral gains.) ISO spokesman Munyaradzi Gwisai was even elected to Parliament for the openly pro-imperialist MDC in the Highfield area of Harare. While whining that the MDC "played into Mugabe's hands in the rural areas by lining up with white farmers," the SWP cheered that "the MDC's victories will give confidence to sections of workers" (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 1 July).

While themselves ensconced in the party of the big farmers and industrialists, the Cliffites in their MDC election campaign called for "seizure of big farms without compensation," "tax the rich to fund the poor" and "power to

workers and the poor," pretending that the MDC can be won to this programme (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 1 July). The right-centrist Workers Power group in Britain also calls for pressuring the MDC, lecturing: "The workers, through their unions and other grass-root organisations, need to overturn the MDC's land programme" (*Workers Power*, July/August 2000). To justify such appeals, the MDC is depicted as a social-democratic party, which the Cliffites in particular claim the white landowners have only recently begun to support.

Thus a Zim ISO leaflet issued before the elections talks of "the need for workers and the poor to be at centre of the MDC and to make sure that the party puts workers interests at the fore and not the capitalist ideas that are now being propagated by the current middle class/capitalist leadership of the party" ("Mistake to Cancel the May Day Rallies—Now Prepare for General Strike!" undated). An election statement on the back of this leaflet urges a "vote for MDC which was started by workers and the poor."

### ISO: Economism in Service of Pro-Imperialist Reaction

Even the most abjectly pro-imperialist reformist workers party, like the British Labour Party, is organically based on the labour movement. Not so the MDC, which was bankrolled from the start by the white capitalists—who determined its policy on fundamental issues—operating in an alliance with the pro-capitalist ZCTU bureaucracy. The MDC grew out of the 1997-98 upheaval. A *Mail & Guardian* article (17 December 1997) headlined "Zim's 'Unholy Alliance': Black Workers, White Farmers" pointed to "an unlikely consensus between Zimbabwe's

newly assertive trade unions, who brought the country to a grinding halt last week for the first time in half-a-century, and white farmers whose domination of the land appears doomed by looming nationalisation." A more recent *Mail & Guardian* (11 April) reported:

"White support is proving crucial to the opposition. The party will not say how much money it has raised, or from where. But the head of its campaign in Mashonaland West's 10 constituencies, Duke du Coudray, concedes that a significant proportion of campaign funds comes from white-owned businesses."

An integral part of this unholy alliance is the ISO, which boasts of being "a socialist pressure group affiliated to the MDC" (*Socialist Worker* [Zimbabwe], January 2000). By their own admission, the Cliffites are playing a very real role in providing a left cover to lure militant workers into the MDC, thus tightening the political chains that bind Zimbabwean workers to their capitalist exploiters and imperialist overlords. How do self-styled socialists end up as brokers for neocolonial domination?

The starting point for the Cliffites, Workers Power, et al. is not revolutionary Marxism but trade-union economism, a programme limited to advancing the economic interests of the working class within the framework of capitalism. In an imperialist "democracy" like Britain, this economist programme translates into support for the parliamentary vehicle of the trade-union bureaucracy, the Labour Party. But in semicolonial countries like Zimbabwe, there is no room for a parliamentary-reformist social democracy. The national bourgeoisie is too weak and subordinated to imperialism, and the class contradictions in society are thus posed too sharply, to allow for labour reformism. Thus trade-union economism ends up directly allying with the bourgeois nationalists or, in the case of the MDC and the ZCTU labour bureaucracy, the white capitalists and imperialists themselves.

Frederick Chiluba of Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) is reportedly viewed as a model by MDC leaders. A former head of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, Chiluba came to power in 1991 as leader of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy, a lash-up of trade-union leaders and bourgeois politicians. The hated Chiluba regime has been notorious for corruption, IMF-imposed austerity and brutal repression. The economic and political conditions which have led to such movements are in part the result of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, bourgeois-nationalist regimes in Africa



UN imperialist "peacekeeping" force in diamond-rich Sierra Leone.

were able to jockey for financial aid between Washington and Moscow. Today, the imperialists see no need to subsidise these regimes, which have been forced to sell off nationalised industries and subject the masses to even deeper privation.

The appearance of bourgeois opposition parties in some way connected to the trade unions in post-colonial countries is a reflection of massive discontent among workers with capitalist governments formed by former national liberation movements which, once in power, necessarily carry out the dictates of imperialism. Such discontent is expressed today in South Africa in the growth of a semi-syndicalist mood among militant workers fed up with the betrayals of the reformist SACP as a co-administrator of the capitalist state. A few years ago, a number of leading trade unionists, notably including Moses Mayekiso, called for the formation of a workers party in opposition to the ANC/SACP.

But a party narrowly based on defence of the economic interests of unionised workers cannot advance a programme to address the all-sided social oppression facing the urban and rural masses. Not surprisingly, Mayekiso and many of his fellow "workerists" were ultimately won over to the SACP. Even a substantial and permanent improvement in the living conditions of the workers in such countries can only be achieved by overthrowing the capitalist order and replacing it with a planned, collectivised economy. What is needed is a revolutionary workers party which does not simply defend the particular interests of the working class, especially its better-paid unionised sector, but fights as a tribune of the people to eradicate all forms of national and social oppression.

### For Permanent Revolution!

Many of the Western fake leftists who today support the pro-imperialist MDC against Mugabe hailed him as an "anti-imperialist" a generation earlier. In the 1970s, Mugabe's ZANU and the rival ZAPU of Joshua Nkomo waged a guerrilla war against the Smith regime, simultaneously engaging in murderous feuds with each other. While extending military support to the struggle against white-supremacist rule, we warned that these petty-bourgeois formations sought to *work out an accommodation with capitalism, not to destroy it*. At the 1979 Lancaster House conference in Britain, Mugabe and Nkomo set a "willing seller, willing buyer" scheme for land redistribution, offering ample compensation to those whites who agreed to sell, while poor blacks got the most barren tracts.



John Woodroof  
**Powerful South African proletariat holds key to emancipation of sub-Saharan Africa from capitalist exploitation, imperialist domination.**

Such land clauses were put in the Lancaster House Constitution by Britain with the full blessing of Mugabe, just as bourgeois property rights are enshrined in the new South African constitution.

When Mugabe came to power in 1980, we wrote: "In every respect the 'Marxist' Mugabe has demonstrated in no uncertain terms that he is a loyal lackey for imperialism—from his 'good neighbor' policy toward South Africa to the recent strikebreaking" ("Strikes Hit Zimbabwe-Rhodesia," WV No. 256, 16 May 1980). Two decades of Mugabe's rule has offered proof in the negative of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: The replacement of the old white colonial elite by a black bourgeois governing party has done nothing to resolve the fundamental democratic and social questions after years of British colonial rule and white-supremacist domination in the former Rhodesia. The few white-owned farms which were taken over since 1980 were handed to ZANU-PF stalwarts.

Under imperialism, "nation-building" necessarily means one tribal or ethnic group dominating the others. A few years after taking power, Mugabe, from the dominant Shona group, unleashed a bloody attack against the Ndebele people in Matabeleland, who made up Nkomo's base. Meanwhile, last year Zimbabwe's Supreme Court ruled that women could not inherit land and argued that such discrimination is "in the nature of African society." Unemployment stands at over 50 percent, while the country has among the highest rates of people with AIDS in the world. Mugabe openly espouses vile anti-gay bigotry. For his part, Mbeki denies even that AIDS is caused by the HIV virus. Yet while the Western media hypocritically criticise such backward views, the imperialists refuse to provide the drugs and money to assist the many millions of HIV-infected people in Africa.

In countries such as Zimbabwe and

South Africa, the burning democratic tasks such as agrarian revolution, equality for women and tribal/ethnic minorities and breaking the yoke of imperialist subjugation can only be realised through the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution: the seizure of state power by the proletariat standing at the head of the peasantry and all the oppressed. In the imperialist epoch, the bourgeoisie in countries of belated capitalist development, tied by a thousand threads to the imperialist rulers and fearful above all of its own proletariat, is unable to resolve these tasks historically associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries in West Europe and North America.

The current land seizures have reportedly extended beyond the war veterans mobilised by ZANU-PF to include homeless township dwellers and even rail-way workers. The aspiration of the dispossessed peasantry of Zimbabwe to reclaim the land that was stolen from them can be a powerful motor force for proletarian revolution. But as Trotsky explained in his 1929 work *The Permanent Revolution*:

"The realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard, organized in the Communist Party. This in turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution....

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

—*The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (1969)



Reuters

**Election rally of Movement for Democratic Change (left), headed by trade-union leader Morgan Tsvangirai (right). Zimbabwean Cliffites help chain black workers to imperialist-backed party of white landowners.**



no credit

This is the perspective, confirmed by the experience of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party in the 1917 Russian Revolution, which is fought for today by Spartacist South Africa. Especially in a small country like Zimbabwe, a socialist revolution would inevitably and almost immediately pose the task of its international extension—in the first instance to neighbouring South Africa, which supplies most of Zimbabwe's petrol and electrical power, and beyond that to the imperialist centres.

In some measure thanks to the ISO, the lineup of class forces in Zimbabwe is the exact opposite of what Marxists seek to achieve: The working class, instead of leading the peasantry against the capitalists and landowners, is in their tow against the landless peasant masses. And the peasantry, in turn, has been mobilised by the Mugabe regime against the agricultural and urban proletariat with the cynical promise of achieving what the masses fought to win in the independence struggle: land.

In its election leaflet, the Zimbabwean ISO calls for extending the land seizures and dismisses concerns about the breakup of the commercial farms, mainly tobacco plantations which account for 40 percent of the country's export earnings, enthusing: "Throughout Africa and Asia small-scale farmers are the mainstay of agriculture." This is the outlook of a petty-bourgeois democrat, at best. The difference between large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture and small-scale, subsistence farming—an increase in productivity measured in orders of magnitude—is the difference between affluence and starvation. While seeking to provide leadership to the struggles of the poor peasants for land as part of the revolutionary overthrow of the big capitalists and

landlords, the proletariat advances the goal not of an equality of poverty but of an egalitarian communist society based on enormous leaps in human productivity. In his "Principles of Communism" (1847), Friedrich Engels explained:

"It follows from all this that the antithesis between town and country will likewise disappear. The carrying on of agriculture and industrial production by the same people, instead of by two different classes, is, even for purely material reasons, an essential condition of communist association. The scattering of the agricultural population throughout the country, alongside the crowding of the industrial population in the big towns, is a state adequate only to an undeveloped stage of agriculture and industry, an obstacle to all further development, which is making itself very perceptible even now."

From the standpoint of a collectivised, planned economy, it makes no sense to divide Zimbabwe's large, productive, white-owned farms into small, unproductive plots. The conflict which has currently come to the fore between smallholding peasants and the agricultural proletariat can only be equitably resolved in a *revolutionary* fashion, that is, by the expropriation of the landed estates and imperialist holdings. Soviets of farm labourers and poor peasants would democratically determine which lands would be maintained as state farms and which would be distributed to individual peasants. A workers state would encourage poor peasants to join together in cooperative farms by providing tractors and other technology. In South Africa, which has no peasantry to speak of, a revolutionary workers government would simply expropriate the highly mechanised and capital-intensive commercial farms. Only under an expanding collectivised economy, based on a perspective of proletarian revolution in the advanced in-

dustrial countries and an international planned economy, could the necessary resources and technology be provided to liberate rural workers from backbreaking labour while absorbing in industry or construction those former peasants and agricultural workers no longer required to work the land.

### **For a Black-Centred Workers Government in South Africa!**

Explaining why Mugabe fell out of favour with the imperialists, a South African government think-tank analyst wrote: "Many African and European governments, and the United States, consider the presence of Zimbabwean troops an impediment to the establishment of their own strategic presences in Congo. The unilateral intervention of Zimbabwe in support of Kabila has never been appreciated by those who wish to do away with the Kinshasa government. It is Zimbabwe's presence in Congo which led to the IMF and the World Bank, under the influence of the US, halting all loans to Mugabe" (*Sunday Independent*, 25 June). Mugabe's ZANU-PF government has since teetered on the brink. Petrol queues snake through towns, power cuts loom and foreign currency reserves are virtually depleted.

The Mbeki regime has played a prominent role in trying to pressure Mugabe to withdraw from Congo, which would open the road for South African investors, who are positioned for major extension into central Africa. The ascendance of a layer of ANC politicians as black front men for white capitalist rule, not only in the government but in such major mining conglomerates as Anglo American, has facilitated South Africa's push to join the renewed scramble by the imperialist powers to divide up the Afri-

can continent's vast resources. Under the ANC government, the racist South African bourgeoisie, as a junior partner of U.S. and British imperialism, has sharply increased capitalist investment in southern and central Africa.

Acting under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the ANC regime invaded Lesotho in 1998 with the aim of securing the Highland Water Projects, a strategic source for all of Gauteng, South Africa's industrial core. Now Mbeki is ready to join in enforcing the Lusaka Accord which would balkanise Congo under the aegis of the UN, whose earlier "peace-keeping" mission in that country presided over the CIA's assassination of nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba in 1961. But the South African army is so rife with racists that black soldiers have taken to shooting white officers, as at Tempe military base. Reflecting concern over the reliability of the army in military combat, bourgeois press reports ask: "Will our sons come home in body bags?"

More fundamentally, the South African bourgeoisie's regional ambitions have to reckon with a powerful and combative proletariat at home, which is chafing under the attacks of the ANC regime. The COSATU trade-union federation issued out of convulsive struggles under the apartheid regime, which ultimately led to its downfall. But the COSATU leadership soon came under the influence of the reformist SACP, which has historically been heavily intertwined with the ANC and ties the strategic core of the black proletariat to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. In response to the land seizures in Zimbabwe, an April 25 statement by the COSATU tops declared: "It is crucial, both for that country and the entire Southern African region, that stability and the rule of law is installed in Zimbabwe."

Echoing these labour lackeys of neo-apartheid capitalism is the pseudo-Trotskyist Workers International Vanguard League (WIVL) in Cape Town. While arguing that the MDC is "no friend of workers," the WIVL whines about the ANC government's "quiet diplomacy approach" toward Mugabe and its failure to "condemn his attacks or the land invasions" (*Workers International News*, July 2000). WIVL should just say openly that they want the squatters off the white farms and a return to the "rule of law"!

What really worries the ANC and its tails is maintaining the "rule of law" in South Africa, where millions of impoverished black people, many with family ties to the urban proletariat, languish in desperate poverty in the rural hinterlands. More than 100 white farmers were

killed last year, many of them in the northern KwaZulu-Natal area where attacks on white farmers are openly acknowledged to be a form of "indirect" land redistribution. The *Sunday Independent* (23 April) editorialised:

"Just as Zimbabweans need to turn to the land for food and survival security, so are many black South Africans losing hope that they will ever be accommodated in an economy driven by international dictates. These marginalised people are returning to the rural areas to find patches of land large enough to feed their families. But they are being forced higher and higher up the mountains towards stony ground. When they look down into the fertile valleys, what do they see? White farmers. That's the future reality that South Africans must face now, before it is too late."

It is not only the land question that unites the Zimbabwean and South African masses. The Ndebele people, for example, reside on both sides of the border, artificially drawn to suit the interests of the British colonialists. Moreover, Zimbabweans make up a sizable proportion of the migrant workers who slave in the mines and on the land in South Africa. These workers face constant harassment, roundups and deportations by the state and terror attacks from anti-immigrant vigilantes, and are used as scapegoats

by the nationalist ANC for massive unemployment. At the same time, the migrant workers are a living link between the South African proletariat and workers throughout the region. It is crucial that the labour movement take up their defence against state repression: Down with the "Operation Crackdown" witchhunt! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

We fight for a socialist federation of southern Africa, in which there will be an equal place for all the myriad peoples of the region, including those whites who accept the rule of a government based centrally on the black proletarian majority. This struggle is linked to a perspective for proletarian revolution internationally, to open the road to the social and economic emancipation of the continent. The enormous industrial and mineral resources of South Africa will not be limited to "nation-building" south of the Limpopo River, but will be harnessed to the task of aiding the impoverished masses of the entire continent to escape from famine and desperate poverty. The fight to build a South African Bolshevik party is inseparable from the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

International Communist League  
(Fourth Internationalist)

## The Fight For a Revolutionary Vanguard Party: Polemics on the South African Left



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NUMBER 1

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## Thousands Come Out to Stop Klan Terror

# Labor/Black Mobilization Rides KKK Out of NYC



WV Photo

The power of labor was evident as SSEU Local 371 members led march toward Foley Square under labor/black mobilization banner, 23 October 1999.

New Yorkers came out in their thousands on October 23 determined to make sure the KKK didn't ride in their city. They were mobilized by the call initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee, "All Out to Stop the KKK on October 23!" Hundreds of working people, students and others joined in distributing 175,000 of the PDC's mobilizing leaflet in workplaces, campuses and neighborhoods throughout the city.

Thousands came out in defiance of the efforts of the Giuliani administration, its cops and the courts to deny their right to mobilize to stop the Klan. They came out in opposition to appeals by the phony "friends of labor" in the Democratic Party and self-appointed spokesmen for the black population who preached a "demonstration for tolerance" for the "rights" of the KKK. They knew this wasn't an issue of "free speech" but of stopping Klan terror and murder. They came out to drive the Klan lynchers off their streets. And that's exactly what they did.

Able to show their faces only under the protection of an army of cops, 17 Klansmen covered outside the New York State Supreme Court, surrounded on all sides by at least 8,000 determined anti-Klan protesters. "Unmasked and Overwhelmed, the Klan Is Besieged at Rally," headlined the *New York Times* the next day. As these hooded-and-robed racists scurried back into the courthouse under police escort barely midway through their scheduled rally, the trade unionists and others assembled under the PDC "Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK!" banner broke into nonstop chanting: "We stopped the Klan! We stopped the Klan!"

Headed up by union marshals with their arms linked, they marched up Lafayette Street displaying in victory the militancy, determination and defiance that was at the core of this mobilization centered on the social power of organized labor. "We gave a message to the city: This is not Klan country!" said a member of the Social Service Employees

Union (SSEU) Local 371. Local 371 came together with members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, postal, construction, civil service and many, many other trade unionists to form the backbone of the mobilization to stop the Klan.

These unionists, who knew that coming to a mobilization to stop the Klan was serious business, were above all what gave the mobilization its disciplined and determined character. They acted as marshals to protect the mobilization at 100 Centre Street. In the vanguard was SSEU Local 371, led by its president, Charles Ensley, whose members stationed themselves right in front of the speaker's platform and then led a large contingent from 100 Centre Street to Foley Square a block away, where thousands of others had drifted in the hope of getting closer to the Klan. A thousand edgy cops, with many more in reserve, were restrained by this show of labor power.

The thousands who turned out saw this labor/black mobilization as their own, and many had indeed helped build it. Workers at transit locations, hospitals and UPS depots, on buses and subways, at municipal office buildings took stacks of leaflets to distribute and poster. Many demonstrators brought their own hand-made signs or made them on the spot. People called out suggestions for additional chants to the speaker's platform.

Student governments from Borough of Manhattan Community College, Lehman, Bronx Community, Hostos, as well as students and student organizations from Columbia and New York University, Sarah Lawrence, Cornell and many others, endorsed and helped build the mobilization to stop the Klan. Many students organized contingents from their campuses, which marched into the rally in groups. As the speaker for the Spartacus Youth Club—which helped build campus support—read off the names of the colleges and college groups, students cheered loudly.

For hundreds of students, this was not only their first taste of mass political action, but their first sense of the social power of labor organized in racially integrated unions. Speakers from the student contingents spoke with fire and passion, as exemplified by a young woman from City College who declared: "We are here to tell the KKK that you are cowards and if you would like to come to Washington Heights, if you would like to come to Harlem, and if you'd like to come to Brooklyn, we are waiting! Harlem is waiting, KKK!"

### A Workers Party in Action

What was seen in the streets of New York City on October 23 was exactly what the PDC had said was necessary to stop the Klan: a powerful mobilization of the social power of the multiracial working class, standing at the head of blacks, Hispanics, Asians, immigrants, Jews, Catholics, gays, youth and all those the Klan has lined up in its sights. Our purpose was to give an organized and militant expression to the massive outrage against the Klan.

It was a united-front mobilization, which allowed for the expression of many diverse political viewpoints by all those who shared a commitment to the urgent necessity to *stop the KKK*. But it tapped into far more than that, intersecting the accumulated anger among the city's working people, particularly blacks and Hispanics, who are fed up with being pushed around for years in the one-sided war against workers and the poor.

It galvanized the anger against the marauding, racist cops which exploded



WV Photos

Trade unionists were the backbone of NYC mobilization to stop the KKK. Right: Postal workers carried signs honoring their brother Joseph Iletto, gunned down by fascist killer in Los Angeles in July 1999.



earlier this year over the killing of black African Amadou Diallo by the NYPD. It gave expression to the hundreds of thousands in this city—from unionized workers to immigrant cab drivers and hot dog vendors, CUNY students, artists, AIDS victims—who have had it with Giuliani's mini-police state. It demonstrated an alternative to the Democratic Party politicians, their black front men and labor flunkies, who worked as feverishly to try to demobilize any independent outpouring of the working people and all the enemies of Klan terror as they had done to contain the protests over the Diallo killing within the confines of electoral pressure politics.

Many of the thousands who mobilized behind the anti-Klan rally were looking for the answer not only to stopping Klan terror but to fighting back against the entire system of racist capitalist exploitation and oppression. Demonstrators listened raptly to all the speeches from the platform. Many shouted, "That's right, that's right" when PDC labor coordinator Gene Herson denounced both the Democratic and Republican parties as enemies of labor and the oppressed. Calls for the working people to build their own class party were met with applause.

What was seen on the streets of New York City on October 23 was a microcosm of a workers party in action, i.e., the working class mobilized in its own interests, acting independently of the government and parties of the capitalist class. The PDC—a class-struggle legal and social defense organization whose purpose is in accordance with the views of

the Marxist Spartacist League—initiated the call which brought to bear the social power of labor and its strong, militant component of black workers in defense of all the oppressed. That same power, those same forces which stopped the Klan from riding can organize the unorganized and unemployed, can mobilize in defense of the masses in the ghettos and barrios, can crack the "open shop" South—itsself a product of KKK anti-union terror.

The successful labor/black mobilization brought to life the connection between labor's fight and the fight for black freedom. Black oppression is the cornerstone of racist American capitalism. There is no road to eliminating the special oppression of black people other than the working-class conquest of power, and there will be no proletarian revolution to end class exploitation unless the working class actively takes up the fight for black rights.

The working class has the numbers, the organization and the power to win all those things that the ruling class appropriates for itself—health care, education, decent housing, abortion rights. What is lacking is the kind of leadership necessary to fight—a leadership of the unions that doesn't bow down to the bosses' laws, parties and state agencies, a workers party that doesn't respect the property "rights" of the bourgeoisie. We need a workers party that fights for a workers government to rip the means of production from the capitalist class and institute a planned socialist economy that operates not for the profit of a few greedy exploiters but for the working people who produce the

wealth of society. That is the kind of workers party that we communists of the Spartacist League are fighting to build.

### The Political Battle to Stop the Klan

Just as the mobilization to stop the Klan in New York City on October 23 gave a real taste of the social forces and leadership required for socialist revolution in this country, it also starkly exposed the enemies and obstacles to organizing struggles of the working class in its own interests and in the interests of all those at the bottom of this society. These included the capitalist cops, courts and Giuliani city administration; the American Civil Liberties Union, which continued its revolting decades-long defense of "constitutional rights" for the fascist terrorists; the Democratic Party, whose calls for a "demonstration for tolerance" were aimed at trying to demobilize the working people and others who wanted to stop the Klan; Al Sharpton and the black establishment *Amsterdam News*, who grotesquely filed a court brief on behalf of the Klan; the International Socialist Organization (ISO), who leapt into the camp of Giuliani, the Democrats, Sharpton, the ACLU and the Klan against the PDC-initiated labor/black mobilization.

From the day that the Klan's rally was publicly announced in a 13 October article in the *New York Post*, there was a contention of two counterposed class forces—those representing the interests of the capitalist ruling class and those representing the interests of the working class and its allies. The moment the PDC heard of the KKK's plans, it applied for a permit to hold a demonstration at the same time and same place as the Klan's announced rally site, 100 Centre Street. The call for a labor/black mobilization was issued immediately, and met with overwhelming support when it hit the streets. This mobilization had an impact on city politics not seen in years. The issue captured the front pages of the tabloids, dominated talk

shows and call-ins on black radio stations, reportedly split union executive boards and drove the Democratic Party establishment to distraction.

The Giuliani administration and NYPD responded by setting to work in an attempt to block this mobilization. Colluding with them was an unholy alliance ranging from the New York Civil Liberties Union's Norman Siegel, lawyer for the KKK, to Democratic State Assemblyman Scott Stringer and black Democrat Al Sharpton. The KKK's rally site was secretly moved a block away to 60 Centre Street, information that was not made public for days. As it became clear that thousands of New Yorkers were rallying behind the PDC's call, as tens of thousands of leaflets were distributed over the weekend of October 16-17, this cabal moved into high gear.

Stringer, joined by Sharpton and other Democratic Party pols, called a press conference on October 19 to announce that he had applied for a permit for a "demonstration for tolerance" at 60 Centre Street, where the Klan would stage its rally. That evening it came out, as a PDC press release reported, that Stringer & Co. were "colluding with the Klan and the Giuliani administration to cut a deal to share a sound permit with the KKK at 60 Centre Street." The following day, Sharpton filed his *amicus* brief on behalf of the Klan. We fought on behalf of the tens of thousands of New York's working people who wanted to stop the KKK, waging an incessant battle in the courts for their rights to free speech and assembly.

On October 21, a federal district court gave the Klansmen everything they had asked for and the working people were told they were to be muzzled. The court approved the deal cooked up by Siegel, Stringer and the Klan to share a sound permit and gave the KKK the right to stage their race-hate provocation in hoods with masks. The judges denied a sound permit for the labor/black mobilization at 60 Centre Street. As PDC counsel Rachel

Wolkenstein declared, "This deal is an attempt to guarantee that only the Klan will be heard and not their intended victims." She added, "The denial of a sound permit to the anti-Klan rally is a provocation against the mobilization organizers' ability to hold a militant, orderly mass demonstration. A rally without centrally located sound and leadership is like a car without a steering wheel."

Even the right-wing *New York Post* (23 October) denounced the court's decision that the anti-Klan mobilization could not use loudspeakers at the same time as the KKK on the grounds that that would "snuff out the free speech" of the Klan. Indeed, the court ruling was a graphic illustration of the race and class bias of the capitalist "justice" system—a free ride for Klan terror and no rights for their intended victims! This was punctuated by the fact that the courthouse was literally used as a shelter for the KKK when it staged its race-hate rally.

When the Klan's permit to rally with masks was retracted in a federal appeals court on October 22, a disinformation campaign was set in motion aimed at convincing people there was no reason to come out the next day since the KKK would not be there. A PDC press release that evening declared: "Whatever reports are circulating that the KKK currently has no permit to stage its race-hate provocation, the working people of this city have no reason to trust the word of these racist terrorists or the Giuliani administration. The only way to guarantee that the Klan does not rear its head in New York tomorrow is if the streets are filled with its opponents."

And, on October 23, there were many thousands of determined opponents of the Klan filling the area around Centre Street. Here was the answer to Sharpton's defense of the Klan's right to "free speech." Many of those who came out had personal experience with the burning cross, the lynch rope, the shotguns through which the Klan "speaks." Despite being separated by hel-

Reuters



AP



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Liberal and fake-socialist enemies of labor/black mobilization provided platform for KKK racist terrorists: NYCLU's Norman Siegel at Klan rally, Democrats Al Sharpton and Scott Stringer, ISO speaker next to police banner at Democratic Party diversion.

meted riot cops and police barricades at different locations, they had come out not to show "tolerance" for the KKK as preached by Stringer and the Democrats but in response to the PDC call to *stop the KKK*.

### The ISO—Traitors Exposed

Except for some of the Democratic Party faithful, like Local 1199 president Dennis Rivera, and a token endorsement by the leadership of the Central Labor Council, Stringer, Sharpton et al.'s call for "tolerance" fell on deaf ears. The *only* organization to leap into Stringer's camp with energy and purpose was the International Socialist Organization, which did its level best to give a cover to the Democratic Party—and the Klan—*against* the organized working class.

The ISO endorsed a meeting called by a variety of lawyers and liberals to organize behind Stringer's "demonstration for tolerance." When representatives of the PDC intervened to call for uniting all those who wanted to stop the Klan on October 23, there were no takers. While Sharpton was outrageously defending the Klan's "rights" in court, at the meeting the ISO enthused over what a good speaker Sharpton was and how many people he would draw to the Democratic Party diversion! As it turned out, Sharpton never even showed up on October 23, doubtless not anxious to face the jeers of the thousands who had come out to stop the KKK. But the ISO was there with bells on.

While shamelessly enlisting with the Democrats, the ISO tried to cover its despicable role by issuing a little-distributed leaflet under the heading "Stop the Klan!" Since their main purpose was *opposed* to stopping the KKK, this was pure cynicism. On site on October 23, the ISO continued to try to deceive people who had mobilized in response to the PDC's call by steering them into the site of the Democrats' location, which was a police trap. When people discovered this deception, many who tried to leave found their way blocked by the cops.

Having been provided a temporary, if unwitting, audience by the ISO's treachery, Democrats like Senator Charles Schumer and others tried to turn the event into an election rally. They were repeatedly booed by the angry protesters who had not come out for election speeches or messages of "tolerance" but to stop Klan terror. While the anti-Klan demonstrators understood the role of the cops in protecting these nightriding terrorists, the ISO speaker stood in front of the banner of the Latino Officers Association. This is not unusual for the ISO, which has a long history of viewing the cops as "workers" and upholding their "right" to organize. Will

these social democrats whose British paper once headlined "Are All Coppers Really Bastards?" now ask, "Are all Klansmen really bastards?"

With the ISO acting as the donkeys for the Democratic Party in trying to demobilize the mass labor-centered protest to stop the Klan, whatever pretenses it had to the cause of "workers power" have been stripped bare. The ISO stands exposed as the servants of capital against the interests of the working class, black people and all the oppressed.

While the rest of the left did not play so forward a role as the ISO in serving the interests of the Democratic Party, most remained silent in the face of the deadly Klan threat until Stringer and Sharpton started to call for a liberal diversion. The Communist Party endorsed the Stringer rally. Workers World Party (WWP) tried to have it both ways. Feigning some mock independence from the Democrats, they called for people to assemble at Stringer's site, but somewhat later than the official starting time. Then, on October 23, WWP also had people at the PDC rally site, where they handed out placards that called to "stop the Klan" and for a "new trial" for black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. When SYC comrades pointed out that this sowed illusions in the very same courts that had sentenced Jamal to death and had upheld the "right" to Klan terror, many of the people who had unwittingly taken WWP's placards traded them in for PDC placards demanding *freedom* for Jamal.

In a very unusual move, the Stalin-lovers of Progressive Labor Party (PL), who smear "Trotskyites" as fascists, called on people to assemble at the site of the PDC mobilization, signing an endorsement form on the spot. Now a PL Internet statement crows how "thousands" were "led by PLP" and asserts, "It took the PLP to lead a breakaway march of hundreds who really wanted to confront the Klan." In fact, what PL did was "lead" itself straight into a line of riot cops a short distance away. PL's whole strategy of individual confrontations with the cops and the fascists is based on a rejection of the working class as a force for social struggle. Giuliani's cops did arrest several anti-Klan protesters on October 23. We demand: Drop all the charges now!

The self-proclaimed redder-than-red communists of PL—who can't tell the difference between a trade union and right-wing religious bigots like the Promise Keepers—are guided by absolutely *no* class criteria. Thus, they expressed no solidarity with the powerful Teamsters union during its strike against the UPS

bosses. Instead, they dismissed this struggle as a battle between two wings of the ruling class! With its utter contempt for the organized working class, PL's cries of "Kick the bosses in the ass" and "Death to the Klan" are little more than the bleatings of grandstanding liberals.

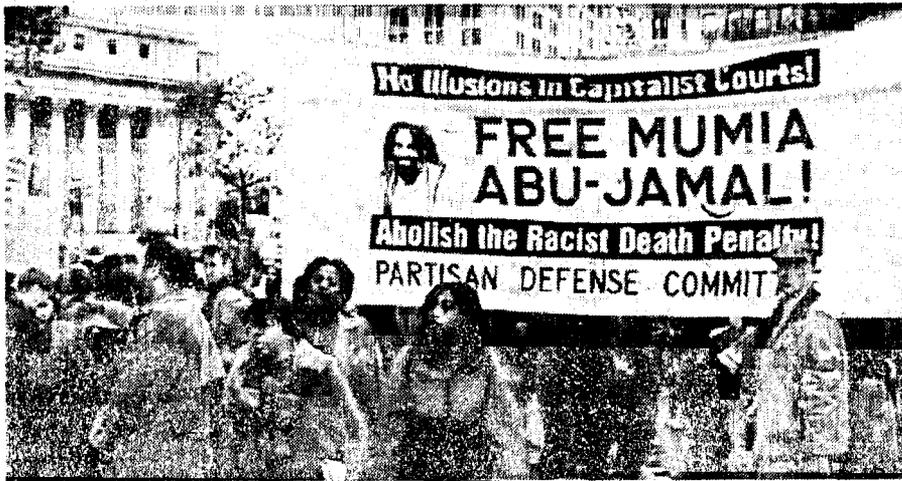
### Linking the Power of Labor to the Anger of the Ghettos

The clear intent of the liberal Democrats and their allies was to block any independent expression of the power of labor and *its* allies to stop the Klan on October 23. But they seriously miscalculated the outrage throughout this city against the Klan rally and failed miserably in their efforts. Throughout the building for this labor/black mobilization, the Democrats and their labor lackeys evidently realized they couldn't even try the usual violence-baiting and red-baiting of the PDC which has been attempted against previous PDC-initiated anti-fascist mobilizations. That's not because they had any less fear of or hostility to labor being mobilized behind a class-struggle program, but because they recognized they couldn't openly come out against the labor/black mobilization to stop the Klan in a city where the overwhelming mass of the population is directly in the cross hairs of the racist terrorists.

Many unions told us that they couldn't endorse the PDC mobilization because their leadership was split over the question. Nonetheless, a number that didn't endorse asked for stacks of the PDC's mobilizing leaflet to put in their union halls. Dennis Rivera, who runs a well-oiled machine in Local 1199, made no overt attempt to mobilize his membership behind Stringer's "free speech" diversion. Likewise, the hidebound craft-union bureaucrats at the head of the Central Labor Council who endorsed Stringer's "demonstration for tolerance" did not put out the word that trade unionists should stay away from the labor/black mobilization.

What was reflected here was the fear of the labor bureaucrats and black Democrats that by opposing the PDC's anti-Klan mobilization they could potentially detonate the anger building at the base of the unions, the outrage in the ghettos and barrios. But that didn't stop them from trying to head it off.

In defending their legal efforts on behalf of the Klan, the editors of the *Amsterdam News* grotesquely echoed the racists who compared the Klan with Khallid Muhammad. Condemning this equation of the victims of Klan terror with its perpetrators, PDC labor coordinator Gene Herson responded: "The



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**PDC banner on October 23. Mobilizing labor/black power to win Mumia's freedom is counterposed to reliance on Democrats, capitalist courts.**

purpose of this is to conceal the real enemy and deny the true nature of the KKK. Khallid Muhammad is an anti-Semitic demagogue, but that's all he is. The Klan is a *terrorist action group* whose purpose is genocide." Speaking at a PDC press conference on October 19, Jim Webb of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists added, "Khallid has never murdered, lynched, burned churches, synagogues and homes."

In its call initiating this mobilization, the PDC noted that the Klan was making a big mistake by thinking it could ride in New York City, and October 23 proved that. The thousands who turned out that day sent a powerful message that the KKK had better not try it again. This mobilization was also a powerful response to the demagoguery of Muhammad and his former mentor, Louis Farrakhan, who seek to channel the anger of the ghetto into bigotry against Jewish, Arab and Asian shopkeepers in order that they can be the sole exploiters of the ghetto masses. This response was palpable in minority neighborhoods throughout the city.

A Korean shopkeeper in Harlem came out of his store to donate money and hand out leaflets to build for the anti-Klan mobilization. In Chinatown, a merchant took a stack of leaflets and taught PDC soapboxers how to say "stop the Klan" in Chinese, immediately drawing sympathetic crowds. At the mobilization itself, many black participants remarked on the multiracial character of the turnout and echoed denunciations of anti-Semitism from the speaker's platform.

In contrast to the preaching of liberal "diversity"—like Jesse Jackson's "rainbow coalition" or David Dinkins' "beautiful mosaic"—which means acceptance of the racist status quo and Democratic Party ethnic politics, this was a powerful

demonstration of *class unity* and unity of the oppressed behind the social power of the multiracial working class. One chant in particular resonated at the PDC mobilization: "Asian, Latin, black and white—Workers of the world, unite!" Everyone could see that proletarian power right before their eyes in this labor-centered anti-Klan mobilization.

### **The Fight for a Workers America**

The Klan was born out of the bloody reaction in the South following the defeat of the slavocracy in the American Civil War. These were the hooded-and-robed agents of the former Confederacy, who carried out a campaign of terror, intimidation, mutilation and murder aimed at strangling the political rights that were won by the freed slaves during Reconstruction. The KKK spearheaded the restoration of white supremacy in the form of the system of Jim Crow segregation that held sway for nearly a century. It heralded a resurgence, reaching several million strong in the 1920s, with the lynching of Jewish businessman Leo Frank in Georgia in 1915.

Today the Klan is the lowlife, terrorist bunch held in reserve by the American capitalist ruling class. This ruling class, a tiny minority which expropriates all the real wealth of this society, believes that everyone else has no rights which this rich, white man's government is bound to respect. This capitalist ruling class needs the homegrown Nazis of the KKK, to be deployed to crush the organizations of the working class when the masses can no longer be lulled by the lie that their interests are represented by capitalist "democracy."

The political battle required to build the labor/black mobilization which stopped the Klan from riding in NYC contains

important lessons for all those who want to struggle against union-busting, racism, poverty, homelessness, war and all the other hideous expressions of a system rooted in exploitation and racial oppression. Central is that the capitalist state is not neutral. It is the instrument for organized violence to ensure the rule of one class—the capitalists—over another class, the proletariat. As Marxists, we know that the bourgeois state at its core consists of special armed bodies of men—the cops, the military, the prison system and the whole "justice system"—whose job is to protect the profits and rule of the capitalists and to repress the workers. All historical experience has shown that the working class cannot reform the state and use it in its own interests but must create its own state, a workers state. The revolutionary fight for proletarian state power is the only road to black freedom and the emancipation of labor and all the oppressed.

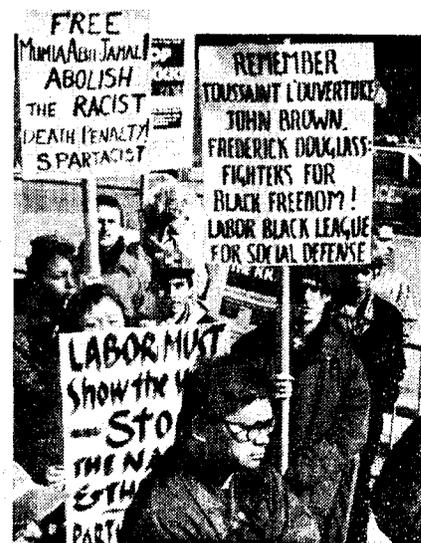
We didn't invent the perspective on which our anti-Klan mobilizations are based. It is the concrete application of the experience of the Bolshevik Party which led the first, and only, successful working-class revolution in history—the October Revolution of 1917. Like the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy in this country which undermines the gains that were won through hard class struggle, the gains of the Russian Revolution were betrayed by the Stalinist bureaucracy which hijacked the exercise of political power by the workers. Paralleling the policies of the AFL-CIO tops, the Stalinists pursued class collaboration, not internationalist class struggle. Ultimately, this led to the destruction of the Soviet Union by the forces of imperialism and domestic counterrevolution in 1991-92.

Since then, the imperialist rulers have been celebrating the "death of communism." But communism isn't dead—it is the program that expresses the class interests of the workers and oppressed, growing out of their aspirations and struggles for a society of genuine equality and social justice. What is needed to realize those aspirations is a workers party, which can bring the consciousness to the working class of its social power and historic interests in fighting the rule of capital and every manifestation of the barbarity of this system. What is needed is a workers revolution, which will break the power of the few and liberate the many—the working people and their allies—who will employ the wealth created by their labor for the benefit of the majority both in America and around the globe. On October 23, thousands of New York's working people and minorities got a small taste of that workers power. ■

# Join the Labor Black Leagues!



The first Labor Black Leagues were formed as a result of the Spartacist League-initiated, 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped the Ku Klux Klan from marching in Washington, D.C. in November 1982. We stand for mobilizing the masses of minority and working people in militant integrated struggle against the brutal system of racist oppression that is capitalist America. Initiated by and fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, a multi-racial revolutionary Marxist organization, the Labor Black Leagues are part of the revolutionary movement of the workers and oppressed against the bosses and for socialism.



WV Photos

## If You Stand For—

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

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

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

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

**5** Down with anti-gay laws! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Government out of the bedroom!

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

**7** Abolish the racist death penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all victims of racist capitalist repression! No faith in the capitalist courts! No to gun control! Defend victims of cop terror and racist police frame-up! For class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense; support the work of the Partisan Defense Committee!

**8** Unconditional opposition to every attempt to abolish welfare! Down with slave-labor, union-busting "workfare" schemes!

Fight any and every attempt of the government to take away or cut back even more social programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public health and aid to education and housing! For a massive program of public works—high-quality integrated housing, schools, libraries, hospitals for the working people and the poor!

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

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

## — Join the Labor Black Leagues!

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

**CHICAGO** (312) 454-4930  
Labor Black Struggle League  
Box 6938, Chicago, IL 60680

**NEW YORK** (212) 267-1025  
Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 2502, Church St. Station  
New York, NY 10008

**OAKLAND** (510) 839-0851  
Labor Black League for Social Defense  
Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604

## Diallo Trial: Racist Killer Cops Acquitted

# There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts!

February 25—They shot down and killed Amadou Diallo, an unarmed black man, in a barrage of 41 bullets. And today these four cops, part of the Street Crimes Unit which rampages through the ghettos and barrios under the slogan, "We Own the Night," walked out of court free men. The arguments by the attorneys for the police, the role played by the prosecution in whitewashing the cops, the judge's four-hour instructions to the jury and now the verdict itself are all blatant statements of what we in the Labor Black League for Social Defense have been saying from the start: *There is no justice in the capitalist courts!*

Written in the blood of Amadou Diallo, the message is loud and clear. For the capitalist rulers of this society, the cops were simply "doing their job" as a racist occupying army in the inner cities. The rights of citizenship that are supposedly granted to all in this society under the U.S. constitution—the right to bear arms, to free speech and assembly—have been redefined to apply only to the cops whose purpose is to "serve and protect" the interests of the tiny rich, white minority who own and control the enormous wealth of this society against the vast majority at the bottom. It's the 21st century version of the Dred Scott decision: the black population in the ghettos have no rights that the cops are bound to respect. And it's one that vicious racist mayor Giuliani is itching to enforce as he mobilizes his cops on full alert.

Al Sharpton is preaching that the federal government will intervene and turn this verdict around. Tell that to Abner Louima who has been made to relive his hideous torture at the hands of the cops on the stand of a federal investigation. The Democratic Party Clinton administration has poured thousands more cops



WV Photo

Up to 8,000 people marched through Midtown Manhattan on 26 February 2000 to protest acquittal of four cops who gunned down Amadou Diallo.

onto the streets while condemning hundreds of thousands of women and children to starvation by "ending welfare as we know it." And if you want to see an "investigation" by Janet Reno's Justice Department look no further than the incinerated corpses of 86 men, women and children of the racially integrated Branch Davidian religious sect in Waco, Texas, who were sent to a fiery death on Reno's order in 1993.

Sharpton's appeals for "justice" to the agencies of capitalist injustice are designed to try to stupefy black people, the working class and all the opponents of cop terror. That's what he did last year too when, together with other black Democratic Party officials and trade-union bureaucrats, Sharpton sought to channel the mass outrage over the Diallo killing into electoral pressure politics.

Sharpton and Dennis Rivera, president of SEIU Local 1199, came up with a ten-point program to "reform" the cops—including a demand that the killer cops get a raise in pay!

No one heard Sharpton or Rivera raise a peep in protest when New York transit workers, who were fighting to get their pay raised, were met with strikebreaking injunctions by Democratic Party state attorney general Eliot Spitzer and Republican mayor Giuliani. At the same time, the union tops are busy gladhanding police "unions" and organizing cops, prison guards and other armed servants of the capitalist state. We say: cops and prison guards out of the unions!

The cops can't be reformed. Their job is to operate as the armed enforcers for the rule of racist American capitalism. The Feds aren't going to help you—they

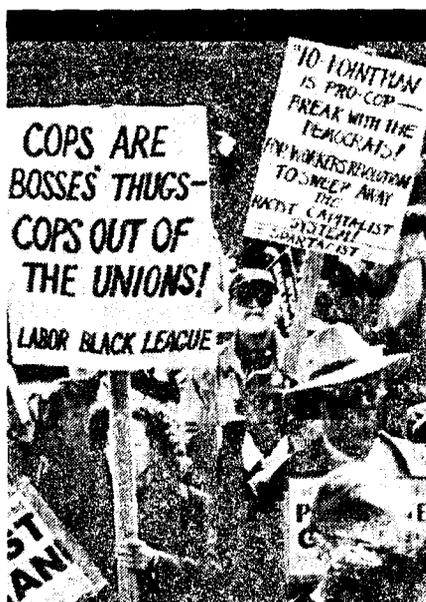
**No Illusions in Feds, Democrats!  
For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

are the central executive committee of this whole *system* of cop terror. Nor are the cops going to be "controlled by the community" for the simple reason that they are servants of a ruling class whose profits are derived from the exploitation of labor and the racist oppression of blacks, immigrants and all minorities.

Against Sharpton and the labor misleaders who seek to tie the working class, black people and all the oppressed to their class enemies, particularly as represented by the Democratic Party, the Labor Black League has a fundamentally different perspective based on mobilizing the power of *our* class, the multiracial labor movement. Massive protest and strike action by New York's powerful and integrated working class—transit, hospital, city and hotel workers—would give an organized political expression and social power to the outrage of the inner cities against cop terror.

There will be no end to police brutality short of the destruction of the system of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression which the cops serve as armed guard dogs. But a protest based on the organized muscle of the labor movement would give the cops and their capitalist masters some pause. More importantly it would serve to imbue the working class with the understanding that its interests are inseparably linked to the defense of the ghettos and barrios and the fight for black freedom.

The Labor Black League for Social



WV Photo

New York SL/LBL called for mobilization of labor power at protests against Diallo killing while Democrats pushed pro-cop whitewash schemes.

Defense stands for mobilizing the masses of black, minority and working people for integrated struggle against the brutal system of race and class oppression that is capitalist America. We fight to build a leadership that is based on a program of *class struggle*—the understanding that the interests of the working people are irreconcilably counterposed to those of

their capitalist class exploiters and their political parties, be they Democrats or Republicans.

That kind of leadership was seen in action last October 23 at the head of the nearly 10,000-strong mobilization that ran the Klan out of New York City. Initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and heavily built by the Labor Black League and the Spartacist League this mobilization, centered on the power of labor, standing at the head of blacks, immigrants, gays and all the intended victims of Klan terror, was an example of a workers party in action. Standing on the other side of the barricades, working overtime to stop this independent mobilization of the working class, was Al Sharpton and the Democratic Party establishment who preached "tolerance" for the KKK lynchers. Now, Sharpton and the black preachers counsel tolerance for cop brutality telling black people to turn the other cheek and pray.

It is through the leadership of a workers party that the power of labor will be welded to the anger of the inner cities to uproot a system based on exploitation and oppression enforced by racist cop brutality. When those who labor rule we will begin to build an egalitarian socialist society where racist terror and oppression will be eliminated once and for all and the tremendous wealth of this society will be used to provide a decent life for the working people, blacks, immigrants, the poor, the young, the aged. ■

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



### What Diallo Really Means

The doorway execution of Amadou Diallo, and the subsequent acquittal of the four killer cops by a distant jury in Albany, New York in late February, 2000 is contributing to a firestorm of controversy and community outrage in New York, and in other parts of the country.

Perhaps the most interesting responses have been the political ones, which seem to suggest that the tragedy could somehow have been averted, if only the city had been led by a Democrat. While it is undeniable that the repressive regime of Torquemada Giuliani has contributed to the aura of police aggression against the people, that is not a distinctive feature of Republicanism, as it is of statism, for the two faces of the State wear Republican and/or Democratic garb.

The interests of the state are power, and conservation of the *status quo*, no matter how unjust that status quo happens to be.

When one considers the behavior of the police under the Democratic Dinkins administration, one finds the same kind of brutality, of racist anti-Black police terror, and indeed, as the infamous Police Riot in front of New York's City Hall demonstrated, where the target of cop ire was the Mayor himself!

There, memory recalls, hundreds, if not thousands of cops likened their "commander-in-chief" (the Mayor) to a wash-room attendant! No mayor can claim an administration where there was a true dearth of police violence against the poor, and the powerless, and against the Black and Latino communities.

The dangers presented by the Diallo killing are twofold; 1) It is a harbinger of greater violence against unarmed Black and nonwhite life by the cops; and 2) It will be used to mobilize Democratic political campaigns for mayor, the Senate, or the Presidency.

The first, of course, is self-explanatory, but as to the second, the danger lies in the illusion, that perhaps black life will somehow be safer in the city with Democrats in political control.

The depth of that illusion is illustrated by the tepid and weak comments that are uttered by many major white candidates for political office on the Democratic side.

The Democratic senatorial candidate, Hillary Clinton, in the aftermath of the Diallo killers' acquittal, issued a statement to the effect that "police officers should work to understand the community, and the community should understand the risks faced by police officers." This, in the afterglow of a whitewash quasi-prosecution and acquittal of four cops who glocked Diallo to death in his doorway, for committing the capital crime of "standing while black" (SWB)! This, in studied political reflection of a case where cops fired 41 shots at an unarmed man!

Do you really think that this is a promise of safety if and when she gets elected? If this is what she says when she wants and presumably needs Black and Puerto Rican votes,

what will be said after the election? This then, is the voice of the "New Democrat." One that sounds suspiciously like the Dixie Democrats, the voice that protects the *status quo*, changing nothing, and promising to change even less.

The legendary R & B singers, the Temptations, used to sing, in "Ball of Confusion," about the politicians who say "vote for me, and I'll set you free!" "New" politicians don't even promise freedom. They promise tolerance. As if the poor are beings of pestilence, who are to be "tolerated." They can't even promise "freedom" in this, the Prisonhouse of Nations, where 2 million souls groan in the American Gulag. Indeed, they cannot begin to promise this, for they have been pivotal in the very construction, and consolidation, of the Prison Industrial Complex.

They are not the solution, for their only claim to fame is to bring in some black management of this Menagerie of Pain. A few high appointees. Some cabinet members. A new diversity over the same system of repression.

It's time for us to look further for our political solutions.

We need to think in terms of new political configurations, that speak to our deeper social, racial, ethnic and class identities. For, clearly, this has not, and does not promise to work. The objective of all politics is power.

No major political party in America can even begin to promise black folks in America the power to stand on their own doorstep, or ride their own car, or walk the streets of the urban center, without the very real threat of being "accidentally" blasted into eternity. A politics that cannot, or will not control the agents of that polity (that is, the police) is unworthy of our support.

2 February 2000

©2000 Mumia Abu-Jamal

**Join the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Contact the Partisan Defense Committee. In New York: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013-0099; phone (212) 406-4252; e-mail: 75057.3201@compuserve.com. In Chicago: PDC, P.O. Box 802867, Chicago, IL 60680-2867; phone (312) 454-4931. In the Bay Area: PDC, P.O. Box 77462, San Francisco, CA 94107-0462; phone (510) 839-0852.**

**Urgently needed contributions for Mumia's legal 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 Ave., No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001. If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370.**

reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 736, 19 May 2000

## SL/SYC Revolutionary Contingent at Bay Area Rally

# Free Mumia! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

More than 3,000 people rallied in defense of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal in San Francisco on May 13, while smaller protests took place in Chicago, Philadelphia and other cities. A week earlier, some 6,000 people packed New York's Madison Square Garden theater for a rally there. Mumia's cause was also featured—through speeches taped from his cell on death row—at commencement ceremonies

As the Bay Area SYC contingent call reprinted below makes clear, the liberals and reformists—such as Socialist Action, Workers World Party, International Socialist Organization, Revolutionary Communist Party/Refuse & Resist!—did not organize these protests around the

The liberals and reformists seek to turn Jamal into a poster boy to illustrate that this racist capitalist system is inherently fair. This was captured in a full-page ad in the *New York Times* (7 May) signed by prominent academics, which concluded: "While there are those who

### Young Spartacus

at Antioch College on April 29 and five days later at a 25th anniversary commemoration at Kent State of the National Guard killing of four student protesters against the Vietnam War.

Many youth have taken up Mumia's cause because they see the fight for his freedom as part of a struggle against social injustice and racist oppression. But the liberal and reformist organizers of the protests consciously formulated the rally slogans to foster illusions in the capitalist injustice system. While a handful of speakers at the SF rally mouthed the words "there is no justice in the courts," none took exception to the huge banner behind them emblazoned with the call "New Trial Now!"—pushing the notion that Jamal *will* get justice in the capitalist courts that framed up this innocent man and sent him to death row.

Many young protesters in San Francisco found what they were looking for in the Revolutionary Contingent built by the Spartacus Youth Club, the Spartacist League and the Labor Black League. Protesters literally tossed away the signs they had been given that appealed to the racist injustice system for a "new trial," leaving them in a pile on the ground, and joined our contingent of nearly 100 behind the Partisan Defense Committee banner reading "There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!"



Young Spartacus

**San Francisco, 13 May 2000: Revolutionary Contingent called for mobilizing labor's social power to free Mumia. Against liberal appeals for "new trial," we say: "There is no justice in the capitalist courts!"**

call to "free Mumia" because they seek a bloc with liberal Democrats who won't call for freeing a convicted "cop killer." These liberal capitalist politicians merely want to clean up the more embarrassing aspects of Jamal's 1982 frame-up trial on bogus charges of killing a Philadelphia policeman. Many of the SF protesters joined us when we chanted, "Democrats and Republicans starve the poor! For a workers party to wage class war!" and "Capitalism means racism and war! Socialist revolution is what we're for!"

believe Mumia is innocent and should be freed now, and others who have no opinion about his innocence, we are all united in viewing Mumia's 1982 trial as a travesty of justice, and affirm that he **MUST** have a new trial!" Likewise, liberal Democratic Party SF Board of Supervisors president Tom Ammiano told the crowd that Mumia is "a man who *may* be innocent," for which he was rightly booed.

At last year's April 24 "Millions for Mumia" rally, a handful of small-time

Bay Area labor fakers like Jack Heyman of ILWU longshore Local 10 and Bob Mandel of the Oakland teachers union, joined by the slimy Bolshevik Tendency, acted to camouflage their appeal to the liberals in defense of the "fairness" of the capitalist courts by tacking "Free Mumia" onto the call for a new trial. This year, even the "left" fig leaf was largely gone; as one protester said to a WV salesman at the rally, "It's an election year, what do you expect?"

The reformists subordinate the issue of Mumia's innocence and freedom to their attempt to make the Democratic Party more palatable by cleaning up its image, in order to better tie the workers to their capitalist exploiters. This was clear at a May 12 "Labor Conference for Mumia" in Oakland organized by the Labor Action Committee, which passed the following motion put forward by Mandel:

"WHEREAS [Philadelphia mayor] Ed Rendell has been appointed the chairman of the Democratic National Committee and will play a leading role in the Democratic convention in LA in August 2000 and

"WHEREAS Ed Rendell was the Philadelphia District Attorney when Mumia was railroaded and has continued to play an active role in seeking his execution....

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this conference condemns Rendell's appointment."

Mandel, one-time supporter of the SL, longtime virulent Spartacist-baiter and up-and-coming junior union bureaucrat, is now openly embracing a perspective of putting a better face on the Democratic Party. Exposing these pro-Democratic Party labor fakers, an SL supporter said from the floor of the May 12 conference, "In order for the working class to exercise its power, it must be mobilized politically independently of its class enemies, the Democratic Party."

## Join the Revolutionary Contingent!

The notorious frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal symbolizes what the barbaric, racist death penalty is all about in capitalist America. The capitalist forces of "law and order," represented by *both* the Democratic and Republican parties, want Jamal dead because they see in this eloquent journalist, MOVE supporter and former Black Panther Party spokesman the threat of black revolution, a symbol of defiant opposition to their system of racist oppression. They want to execute this innocent man as a warning to all those who fight against racism and vicious cop repression in the ghettos, who defend the working class against capital-

ist exploitation, who oppose imperialist mass murder from the Balkans to Iraq. The Partisan Defense Committee calls on working people, minorities, youth and all opponents of capitalist repression in the U.S. and around the world to demand: *Freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty! There is no justice in the capitalist courts! March with the Spartacist Youth Club in a revolutionary contingent based on these demands on May 13!*

Instead of demanding freedom for Mumia, the liberal and reformist organizers of the May 13 demonstration have watered down their demands in order to attract hypocritical Democratic Party politicians. They say only: "Stop the execution!" and "New trial for Mumia!" or "Let the evidence be heard!" *Do not be put off by the watered-down politics of the organizers of this demonstration. Mumia's life depends on the broadest mobilization, particularly by the multiracial working class that has real social power. All out on May 13!*

To wage an effective fight for Jamal's freedom it is vital to understand *what* we are up against: who our enemies are, who our real allies are. Mountains of evidence refuting the frame-up and proving Jamal's innocence have been heard time and again. Obscenely the pro-Democratic Party reformists even tell us to pressure Janet Reno, the mass murderer of 86 men, women and children in Waco, Texas in 1993, to "investigate" Mumia's frame-up. Bourgeois liberals try to paint the frame-up of Jamal as an exception, a "miscarriage of justice," in the same way they try to pass off the killing by racist cops of African immigrant Amadou Diallo in a hail of 41 bullets as an "aberration" in an otherwise just system of "democracy." Behind the call for a "new trial" is a reformist political program premised on the belief that the brutal racist capitalist state—whose sole purpose is to defend the "right" of the capitalist ruling class to reap profits off the labor of working people—can be pressured and reformed to be "just."

This is a dangerous illusion! Look what happened to Hurricane Carter. Framed up on false murder charges in the mid-1960s because he was an advocate of the right of armed self-defense, Carter finally won a new trial in 1976 after an international protest campaign. But when he was convicted *again*, the liberals fled his cause and Carter spent another ten years in prison. Don't let those who preach reliance on the "neutrality" of the racist, imperialist U.S. state keep you away from demonstrating your determination to free Mumia!

We start with the Marxist understanding that the capitalist state, based on the cops, courts and prisons, is a force for organized violence against the exploited and oppressed working class. While we must pursue every means of legal redress, the fight to free Jamal must be mobilized *independently of the racist capitalist state* which has worked for years to frame him up.

We put all our confidence in the social power of the multiracial working class. Workers unions are the only significant force for integration in the workplace and on the factory floor in racist America. Unlike students, the working class in the trade unions has the social power and potential to become a battalion in the struggle against racial oppression and exploitation and to shake the foundations of decaying world imperialism. The fight to free Mumia, to abolish the racist death penalty, if undertaken with a mobilization of the union movement, would be a first, giant step in that direction. But to undertake this struggle, labor must break the hold of the current pro-capitalist AFL-CIO misleadership, which ties the working class hand and foot by preaching reliance on the capitalist Democratic Party. The fight to free Jamal must be mobilized not only against the capitalist state, but against the capitalist parties that run it.

On 23 October 1999 a powerful multiracial labor-centered mobilization of 10,000 initiated by the PDC ran the KKK race-terrorists off the streets of New York City—against the opposition of the Democratic Party that *defended the "rights" of the KKK murderers*. This was a powerful example on a small scale of a revolutionary workers party in action—mobilizing all the oppressed behind the working class in opposition to the capitalists, their parties and their state—as opposed to the union misleaders who tie workers and blacks to the Democrats.

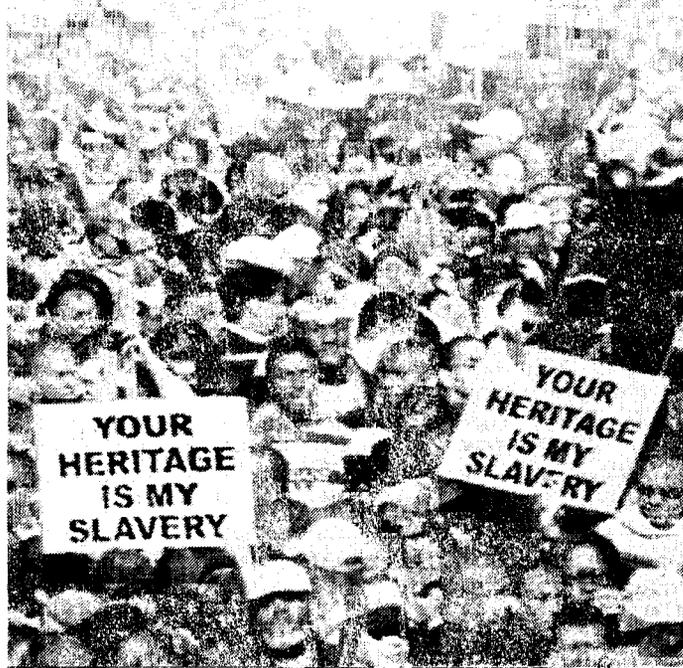
When he was granted a stay of execution in August 1995 Mumia wrote, "Let us utilize this precious time to build a stronger and broader movement, to not 'stay' one execution, but to halt them all! *Down with the racist U.S. death penalty!*" Black oppression is an integral part of racist American capitalism. To sweep away the entire apparatus of capitalist repression, to end their whole system of racial oppression, exploitation and war, requires a multiracial revolutionary workers party to lead the fight for a workers government which will take industry away from its capitalist owners and rebuild America on a socialist planned economy. *Finish the Civil War! Forward to a workers state!* ■

## Racist Democratic Party Hustles Black Vote

# Down With the Confederate Flag of Slavery!

In the largest protest against racism in the South since the civil rights movement, up to 50,000 people marched in Columbia, South Carolina on January 17 to demand the removal of the Confederate flag from above the statehouse. From throughout the state and throughout the South, protesters turned out on Martin Luther King Day in numbers far exceeding organizers' predictions. They came because they know what the Confederate flag stands for: black enslavement and racist murder, KKK cross-burnings and church bombings, the lynching of any who would fight for the rights of blacks and labor. Everywhere it flies, from Southern state capitols to KKK and Nazi skinhead rallies, it is an *incitement to racist terror*.

The Democratic Party, headed by the Southerners Gore and Clinton, has cynically seized on the widespread revulsion toward the Confederate flag to try to boost its prospects in the 2000 elections. The Democratic South Carolina state government hoisted the Confederate flag in 1962 as a symbol of racist defiance of the mass civil rights struggles for black equality and integration, in the same spirit as the forces of slavery who fired on the Union flag at Fort Sumter a century before. Nine days before the Columbia march, a rabble of some 6,000 racists had turned out to uphold this racist banner as a symbol of Southern "heritage." On January 17, marchers carried signs reading, "Your Heritage Is My Slavery." It is the "heritage" of the slaveholders who *lost* the Civil War, of the Dixiecrat Democrats



AP  
Columbia, South Carolina, 17 January 2000: In largest protest in South since civil rights movement, up to 50,000 marched to demand removal of banner of slavery and Klan terror from statehouse.

**Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

who presided over decades of Jim Crow segregation in the South through naked dictatorship abetted by the terror of the KKK—a system to keep black people "in their place" and trade unions out.

The inseparable connection between the struggle for the rights of blacks and labor in "open shop" South Carolina was brought home with a vengeance on January 20 in Charleston, as 600 state and local police viciously attacked a mass picket by the overwhelmingly black International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local 1422. Just three days before, Local 1422 had sent a busload of its members to the Columbia

protest, which was endorsed by the president of the state AFL-CIO.

On the day of the march, Democratic presidential contenders Al Gore and Bill Bradley both called for the removal of the flag from the statehouse to score points against Republicans George W. Bush and John McCain, who openly sided with the racists in South Carolina. Bill Clinton chimed in to announce his opposition to the flying of the Confederate flag.

Aiding Clinton & Co. in this cynical hustle is the liberal NAACP, whose national president, Kweisi Mfume, is himself a former Democratic Congressman and head of the Congressional Black Caucus. The NAACP, one of the organizers of the January 17 protest, has initiated an economic boycott of South Carolina until it removes the racist flag from the statehouse. Likewise, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition has called for a boycott of Georgia, whose state flag

incorporates the Confederate emblem, and is organizing a protest in front of the Super Bowl in Atlanta on January 30. These black Democrats fear the independent mobilization of working people and therefore seek to channel outrage against racism into the trap of Democratic Party electoralism, as they did when many thousands bravely fought during the civil rights movement to tear down Jim Crow.

With such stone racists as Republican South Carolina State Senator Arthur Ravenel denouncing the protesters and railing against the NAACP as the "National Association for Retarded People," it is scarcely surprising that Clinton & Co.

can, with the crucial aid of the black Democrats, posture as defenders of black people on this issue. But let us not forget that it is the Clinton administration which, even more than its Republican predecessors, has from its first days in office carried out a wholesale assault on the lives and livelihoods of the black population. Clinton entered the White House with a vow to "end welfare as we know it," and has carried through on that, consigning millions of white, black and immigrant women and children to starvation and homelessness. In concert with the Republicans, the Clinton White House has vastly expanded the forces of racist repression, from putting tens of thousands more killer cops on the streets, to throwing hundreds of thousands of black people into prison, to continually speeding up the nation's death rows through measures like the 1996 "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act."

White supremacy and the racist oppression of black people—symbolized by the bloodsoaked Confederate flag—have always been the bedrock of American capitalism. The issue of slavery was settled through blood and iron in the Civil War. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the victorious Northern capitalists, who sealed an alliance with the ex-slaveholders by withdrawing Union troops from the South following the Compromise of 1877, marking the defeat of Reconstruction. The emancipated slaves were left defenseless against the landowners and the rising racist terror exemplified by the Ku Klux Klan. At the same time, the smashing of slavery laid the basis for the eventual integration of black workers into the expanding industries in the North, although forcibly segregated at the bottom of capitalist society.

Today, black people make up a large and strategic part of the multiracial working class in the most powerful industrial country in the world. In fact, a larger percentage of black workers are unionized than white workers. Nowhere is the strategic weight of black workers more apparent than in the South, where a unionization drive would mobilize the entire black community against the white ruling class, the police and KKK.

The struggle for black rights can only go forward through the independent mobilization of the social power of the multiracial working class in a struggle for workers power. The labor movement must fight to overcome the racist divisions which are fostered by America's rulers to obscure the fundamental class divisions in society and to head off united working-class struggle. The chief obstacle to such struggle is the illusion in



Robert F. Williams (center) organized armed self-defense against KKK terror in Monroe, North Carolina in late 1950s.

"lesser evil" politics which binds working people and the black masses to the capitalist Democratic Party. The AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy reinforces these illusions through its service as representatives of the interests of the capitalist class enemy within the organized labor movement. As such, the labor tops routinely try to prevent, derail and sell out trade-union struggles.

At the political level, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy has been a structural component of the Democratic Party since Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" coalition of the 1930s. Its program is class collaboration, and its policy is to present the Democrats as more sympathetic than the Republicans to the interests of workers and blacks and to act as merely a pressure group within this capitalist party in order to quell any outbreak of labor or black unrest. But the Democrats serve only one master, the bourgeoisie. It is because of the Democrats' influence over trade unionists and black people that it is the preferred war party for U.S. imperialism.

The massive turnout on January 17 is one of many recent indications, beginning with the 1997 Teamsters strike against UPS, that the widespread anger at the base of this society is beginning to break through the surface. But the first and most important task in the resur-

gence of class struggle is to break from the politics of "lesser evilism." Only by freeing itself from the grip of the capitalist class and its parties can the working class go forward. The struggle for unionization, against police brutality and the mass incarceration of young black men must be linked to the fight for a *workers party*, a party based on the independence of the working class from all reliance on the class enemy and fighting for the perspective of a workers government, where those who labor rule.

## Democrats Shield KKK Lynchers

Seeking to court the black vote, the Democrats try to posture as opponents of the Confederate flag above the South Carolina statehouse. But only last October, the Democratic Party pulled out all the stops in an effort to ensure that the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan would be able to wield the Confederate flag in a rally to inspire and organize racist terror in the heart of New York City! From racist "law and order" Senator Charles Schumer to black Democrat Al Sharpton, the New York State Democratic Party establishment acted as the main force *against* the massive mobilization of integrated working-class power that rode the KKK and their Confederate flags out of town on October 23. The Democrats called for a demonstration of "tolerance" for the hated KKK and offered to share their sound permit to allow the fascists to spew out their incitements to race war, working behind the scenes with Republican mayor Giuliani, the cops and the courts. Sharpton and the black establishment *Amsterdam News* went so far as to file a "friend of the court" brief on behalf of the Klan's "right" to rally for genocide.

The labor/black mobilization against the Klan was initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee—a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—and energetically built by hundreds of trade unionists and youth. It was a powerful demonstration of the social power of the working class, as up to 10,000 working people mobilized to stop the KKK, *against* the efforts of the Democrats to defend the "rights" of the Klan. What was seen in the October 23 labor/black mobilization led by Marxists was an example of a workers party in action, with the working class mobilized in its own interests and independently of the government and parties of the capitalist class. The Democratic Party acted in *its* class interests as a party of racist American capitalism. Above all, these capitalist politicians fear and oppose the mobilization of labor power.

The capitalists hold the homegrown Nazis of the KKK in reserve, to be deployed to crush the organizations of the working class in the face of a proletarian challenge to capitalist class rule.

In 1984, on the eve of the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco, it was Democratic Party mayor and current U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein who raised the Confederate battle flag in Civic Center to placate the Southern Democrats. The Spartacist League and the Labor Black League for Social Defense, which is fraternally allied with the SL, repeatedly mobilized to tear down that racist banner. Wearing the uniform of a Union soldier, a black SL supporter scaled the 50-foot flagpole in April 1984 and shredded the Confederate flag, hurling it to the ground where it was burned!

Feinstein, consciously playing the racist card in her bid for the party's vice presidential nomination, repeatedly replaced this emblem of the KKK after it was torn down. Only when the flagpole itself was found cut down by an acetylene torch was she finally forced to replace the Confederate flag with that of the "California Hundred," the first 100 volunteers from the state to fight with the Union Army. We wrote in the midst of this campaign, "It is a telling verdict on the capitalist system and the anti-progressive role of the bourgeoisie today that it falls squarely to the communists to uphold the verdict of American history against slavery, while Democrats like 'Dixie Dianne' uphold the banner of black oppression" ("Black Militant Puts Dixie Flag on Trial," WV No. 357, 22 June 1984).

### Dixiecrats Old and New

For the better part of a century, the Democrats, who had earlier been the

main party of the Southern slavocracy, ruled the Jim Crow South with an iron fist supplemented by KKK terror. It was under Democratic Party state governments that Southern sheriffs savagely attacked civil rights marchers in the 1950s and '60s. It was a Democratic governor who brought out the flag of slavery in Georgia in 1956 to signal defiance of the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision against segregation in public schools. Alabama followed suit, while Virginia simply closed down all public education for two years rather than see black and white children together. As Malcolm X said at the time, "A vote for a Democrat is a vote for a Dixiecrat."

The civil rights movement profoundly altered the shape of bourgeois politics, blowing apart the Democrats' New Deal alliance between organized labor, Northern liberals and Southern segregationists. The 1964 Republican presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, who voted against the Civil Rights Act, authored the "Southern strategy," persuading Southern Dixiecrats to defect to the Republicans. In every presidential election since then, the Democrats have centered their campaigns on getting back the white vote, desperately seeking to reverse the perception that they were beholden to blacks, labor and other "special interests."

The Democrats developed their own Southern strategy, successfully running Georgia governor Jimmy Carter for president in 1976. During his campaign, this "born again" racist publicly proclaimed his allegiance to "ethnic purity," a code word for racial segregation. Indelibly marking the Carter years was the November 1979 Greensboro Massacre, when a caravan of Klansmen and Nazis, including

a paid government "informant," opened fire on an anti-Klan protest in North Carolina, killing five leftists and union organizers.

After 12 years of the Republican Reagan and Bush administrations, Clinton and his Democratic Leadership Council got the White House back in 1992 through his efforts to win back "Reagan Democrats." To this end, he deliberately attacked black rap artist Sister Souljah as being "anti-white" in order to embarrass Jesse Jackson, the leading black figure in the Democratic Party, and took time during his campaign to fly back to Arkansas to personally oversee the execution of a brain-damaged black man, Rickey Ray Rector, posing with the cops at the prison for a photo op. Recognizing that Clinton was appealing to white racist voters far more than his Democratic predecessors in the 1980s had done, many blacks responded by staying away from the polls. After the Republicans won control of Congress in 1994, Clinton cynically turned for support to the Democratic Party's traditional constituencies of labor and blacks, bringing Jesse Jackson back into the inner circle. Jackson, of course, eagerly embraced his role of bringing back black voters to the Democrats.

It is the role of black Democrats like Jackson, Mfume and Sharpton to keep the black masses firmly in line behind the Democratic Party despite years of unmitigated attacks under Democratic administrations, going back to the Kennedy years when beleaguered civil rights field workers who mistakenly sought help from the FBI had the phone hung up on them by Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The black bourgeois politicians have also served in the vanguard of the racist "war on crime" and "war on drugs." Continuing where his Republican predecessors left off, Clinton has presided over a qualitative rise in the prison population, particularly of black and Hispanic men, who make up a majority of prisoners. One-third of young black men are either imprisoned or in some other way ensnared in the racist injustice system; 35 years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, fully one in eight black men do not have the right to vote because of a felony conviction.

By next month, the number of those entombed in "democratic" America's prisons is due to reach two million, fully *one-quarter of the world's prison population* (Justice Policy Institute, "The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates at the Millennium"). By some estimates, nearly half a million are behind bars for drug offenses, many on charges as minor as simple possession of marijuana. We



AP photos

**Democratic Alabama governor George Wallace vowed, "Segregation forever." Birmingham police attack civil rights protesters, 1963.**



call for the decriminalization of drugs and demand an end to all laws against consensual "crimes without victims." Alongside the astronomical growth of the prison population has come a massive increase in the rate of state murder by executions and expansion of the death penalty, which is a legacy of slavery and Southern lynch law. Abolish the racist death penalty!

While Gore and Bradley mouth pious statements against racism, both capitalist parties agree on pushing the racist death penalty and beefing up the number of racist cops terrorizing the ghettos. Joining black Democratic politicians in pushing the "anti-racist" credentials of Bradley and Gore are "progressive" intellectuals like Harvard's Cornel West, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, and Henry Louis Gates Jr. West has been stumping for Bradley, while Gates has come out for Gore. It was Gore who played the "race card" by first making an issue of Willie Horton, a furloughed black prisoner who then allegedly committed a murder, in the 1988 Democratic presidential race against Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis. Gore baited Dukakis for being "soft on crime," by which he meant soft on black people. Horton then became the focal point of a viciously racist campaign by George Bush Senior on his way to winning the election against the "liberal" Dukakis.

### For Revolutionary Integrationism!

Jackson, Mfume and other black Democrats are representative of the thin layer of middle-class blacks who materially benefited from the civil rights movement. With American society racked by the fight for black equality and the

burgeoning protests against the imperialist war against the workers and peasants of Vietnam, the U.S. rulers moved to restabilize society—and the credibility of the Democratic Party—by co-opting a layer of black liberals and nationalists while unleashing murderous repression against the Black Panther Party and other radicals.

Today, Mfume's NAACP joins with city administrations throughout the country, and with many black politicians, to push for stricter gun control measures and for lawsuits against handgun manufacturers. This is in the service of the racist rulers' attempt to disarm the victims of racist attacks and the working class in general by eliminating the already attenuated right to bear arms. The whole history of this racist society shows: gun control kills blacks!

We remember the very different NAACP of Monroe, North Carolina, which under the leadership of ex-Marine Robert F. Williams successfully organized armed self-defense against KKK nightriders in the late 1950s in defiance of the liberal-pacifist civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and national NAACP head Roy Wilkins (see "Robert F. Williams, 1925-1996: Courageous Fighter Against Racist Terror," WV No. 655, 8 November 1996, reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 14, January 1997). In his *Negroes with Guns* (1962), Williams recounted how he organized his chapter of the NAACP:

"We began a recruiting drive among laborers, farmers, domestic workers, the unemployed and any and all Negro people in the area. We ended up with a chapter that was unique in the whole NAACP because of working class composition and a leadership that was not middle class."

Williams' policy of organized armed self-defense against KKK violence ran counter to the passive resistance philosophy and liberal perspective of King & Co. The liberals preached "nonviolence" to black youth facing the deadly violence of the Southern sheriffs and Klansmen and sought to contain the civil rights struggles within the framework of "respectable" bourgeois politics. They presented the brutal beating and murder of civil rights militants as a "moral example" to pressure the liberal wing of the Democrats against the Dixiecrats, promoting reliance on the federal government under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In this way, a mass movement for racial equality was derailed into bourgeois electoral politics. Many of the black activists of those years went on to become elected Democratic Party officials.

This was the period when the Spartacist League originated as the Revolutionary Tendency (RT)—a left opposition in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) fighting to uphold the Trotskyist program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism against the rightward-moving party leadership. A central component of the RT's opposition to the SWP leadership was the struggle for a *revolutionary integrationist* perspective, linking the tumultuous struggles for black equality to labor's fight against capitalism. Counterposed to liberal integrationism—the false view that blacks could achieve social equality within the confines of the American capitalist order by pressuring the Democratic Party—revolutionary integrationism is premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society, where white supremacy and racism, no longer serving the purpose of dividing the working class, will be things of the past. When the enormous productive resources of this country are used for the benefit of those who labor to produce them, the foundation will be laid for the full integration of blacks and the eradication of all social inequalities.

Having abandoned a revolutionary perspective, the SWP refused to intervene into the Southern civil rights struggles while initially tailing the liberal-pacifist King leadership and later advocating black nationalist separatism. Expelled from the SWP in 1963, the RT, within the limits of its small numbers, sought to intervene in these struggles in the North and in the South. We counterposed our proletarian program for black freedom to the liberals' reliance on the Democrats and intersected a layer of civil rights militants fed up with King's liberalism.

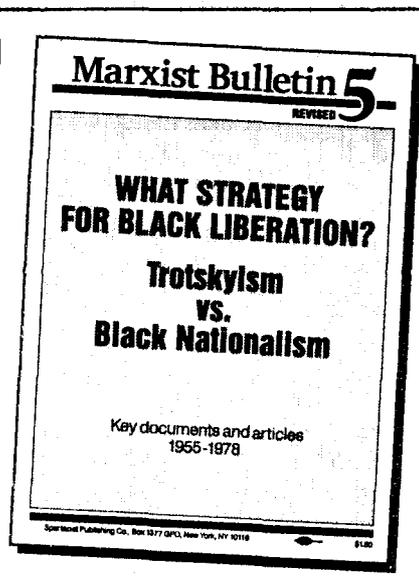
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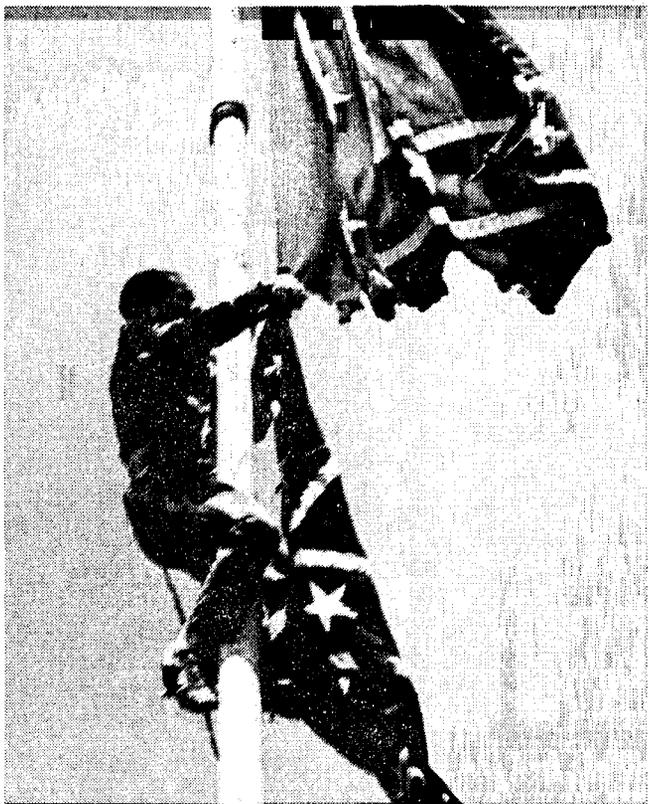
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AP Photo

**SL supporter cuts down hated flag of slavery flying in San Francisco Civic Center, 1984.**

In the South, we advocated organized armed self-defense against the racist nightriders, publicizing and materially supporting such groups as the Deacons for Defense in Louisiana under the slogan, "Every Dime Buys a Bullet!" We called for a "workers united front against federal intervention," opposing both the use of federal troops to put down militant black struggles and the imposition of government anti-labor measures such as wage controls and anti-strike bills. We raised a series of transitional demands such as the call for a "Southern organizing drive backed by organized labor." In the 1966 document "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9), the Spartacist League stated:

"The struggle for black freedom demands the total break of the Negro people from the Democratic Party...."

"Only by the development of a working-class program and by explicitly opening the door to support by white workers can real political independence be maintained, real gains won and the basis laid for eventual working-class political unity. This unity will come about when the exploited section of the white South is driven into opposition and is compelled to forego color prejudice in order to struggle along class lines against its real enemies—the owners of land and industry.

"The creation of a South-wide Freedom Labor Party would serve as a tremendous impetus for similar action by Northern workers. The struggle for such

a party would necessitate a rank-and-file revolt within the organized labor movement to overthrow the present labor bureaucracy."

### **Organize the South!**

This program is as vital today as it was over 30 years ago. The crucial importance of organizing the South is accentuated by the continuing flight of industrial production from the North and Midwest to the South to escape unions. One measure of changing demographics is that the majority of the black population once again lives in the South, with many returning from Northern and Midwest states following jobs as industry shifted. By 1990, North and South Carolina combined had more manufacturing production workers than any state except California, with both U.S. corporations and foreign firms like BMW flocking to take advantage of low wages and anti-union "right to work" laws. A factor behind opposition by some South Carolina corporate leaders to the Confederate flag is that the tumult over this bloody rag is bad for business.

Any struggle to organize unions in the "right to work" South will run head-on into the entrenched racism and extralegal terror which has long served to keep this area union-free and greatly profitable for the capitalist exploiters. Only North Carolina has a lower proportion of unionized workers—4.2 percent—than South Caro-

lina, where a bare 4.5 percent of wage and salary workers are in unions. What this means for the bosses' bottom line can be seen in the fact that the average manufacturing wage in South Carolina—\$10.54 per hour—is almost 25 percent lower than the national average.

The inseparable connection between labor's rights and black rights in the South was brought home during a union organizing drive at a Perdue chicken plant in Alabama in 1995, when plant supervisors burned a cross on company property to intimidate workers into voting against the union. But the bosses' "labor lieutenants" in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, because of their ties to the Democratic Party, refuse to mobilize union power in defense of black rights, thus reinforcing the deep racist divisions which the capitalists have long used to poison workers' consciousness and divide and weaken their struggles.

There are important anchors of union power in the South which can serve as launching pads for organizing drives throughout the region, including the Charleston ILA local now under attack by the government. Last year, United Steelworkers Local 8888 at the Newport News shipyard, a major military contractor, fought off management in a bitter four-month strike waged in the heat of the U.S./NATO war of imperialist aggression against Serbia. *Workers Vanguard* teams noted that you didn't see the Confederate flag anywhere near the picket lines of this integrated union.

Last summer also saw the organizing victory of the UNITE textile workers in the anti-union bastion of Kannapolis, North Carolina. This victory for labor in the South was a contributing factor to the growth in union membership nationally last year, which climbed by more than a quarter million. Many of these newly unionized workers, in Kannapolis and elsewhere, are recent immigrants from Latin America, who are also in the cross hairs of the KKK terrorists. This points to the crucial need to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism and to mobilize labor against racist deportations and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

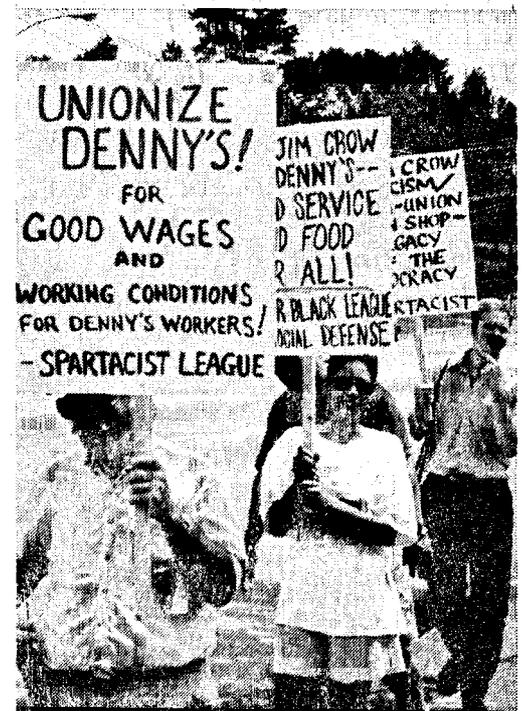
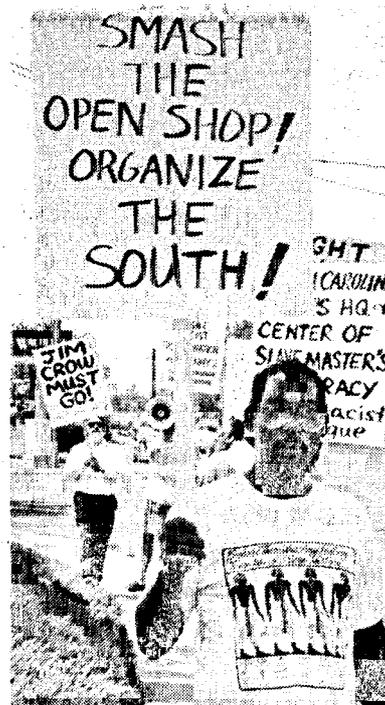
Nevertheless, as we noted in "The Fight to Unionize the 'Open Shop' South" (see page 43), "Unions are built in struggle, not through ballots. And this is particularly evident in the South, with its panoply of anti-union 'right to work' laws enforced by vicious racist terror." In the main resolution of the Spartacist League's Ninth National Conference in 1994, we wrote:

"The unionization of the South cannot and will not have a narrowly economist

character, nor will it likely emanate from the top echelons of the AFL-CIO. On the one side, the entire black community will tend to rally behind racially integrated workers fighting the local white power structure. On the other side, the Southern branch of the American ruling class will resort not only to the police, company goons and professional strike-breakers but, if hard pressed, also to the Klan and its ilk, while using racist demagoguery to turn backward white workers against the labor movement. In short, a union organizing drive in the South will become a major arena of political struggle between the oppressed black masses and the white ruling class."

This perspective requires a sharp struggle inside the unions against the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, which has never undertaken a serious attempt to organize the South. Here more than anywhere else in the U.S., the support of the union tops to the Democratic Party serves to perpetuate violent racist oppression and brutal exploitation. It is necessary to fight for a new, class-struggle leadership in the unions committed to the cause of black freedom and the political independence of labor from the Democrats and the capitalist government. Break with the Democrats—Forge a workers party! For a workers government!

A revolutionary workers party must act as a tribune of the people, fighting against every manifestation of injustice and oppression. Exemplifying this understanding was the nationwide united-front campaign organized by the Spartacist League and Labor Black Leagues in 1993 to demand "Down with Jim Crow at Denny's!" We organized pickets of restaurants of the Denny's chain—headquartered in Spartanburg, South Caro-



WV Photos

July 1993 protest in Atlanta was part of nationwide campaign organized by SL and Labor Black Leagues to demand "Down with Jim Crow at Denny's!"

lina—to protest their racist abuse of black and other minority customers. In contrast, the petty-bourgeois NAACP and Urban League sought "empowerment" by demanding black representation on Denny's board of directors, which would do nothing to change the restaurants' degrading treatment of thousands of black customers.

One speaker at the January 17 Columbia protest said that removing the Confederate flag from the statehouse would "bring an end to the Civil War." Indeed,

everywhere that banner flies is a reminder that there is much unfinished business from the Civil War—the second American Revolution—to take care of. While the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s led to an end to formal Jim Crow segregation, it is an indication of how little has fundamentally changed for the black masses in the "New South" that the hated banner of slavery continues to fly throughout the region. There is no road to eliminating the special oppression of black people other than the working-class conquest of power, and there will be no proletarian revolution unless the working class actively takes up the fight for black rights.

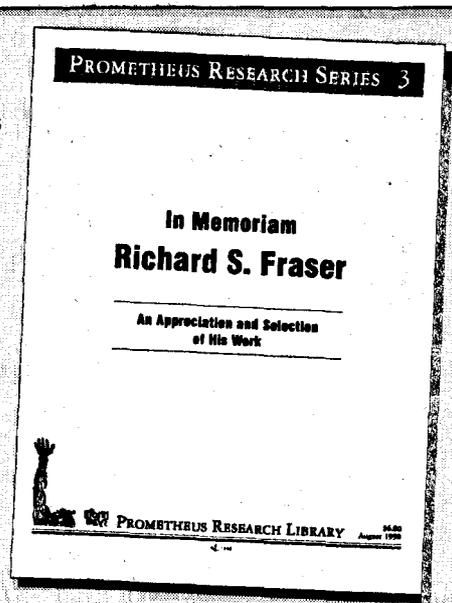
To achieve black freedom will require a third American revolution, placing in power a workers government committed to building a socialist economy with genuine equality. One of the first acts of a revolutionary proletarian regime would be to tear down every last Confederate flag and monument and replace them with the red flag of the working class and monuments to *our* heroes: from Denmark Vesey, an emancipated slave executed in 1822 for organizing a slave insurrection in Charleston, to the radical abolitionist Grimké sisters, to the black Union troops of the Massachusetts 54th who fell in heroic battle on the South Carolina coast in 1863, to the countless working men and women who gave their lives in the fight to establish unions in the South. ■

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## Labor Must Fight for Black Freedom

# The Fight to Unionize the "Open Shop" South

The success last June in the long struggle for union recognition by the heavily immigrant workforce at Fieldcrest Cannon in Kannapolis, North Carolina—the country's largest textile complex and a symbol for generations of the racist anti-union South—was an important victory for labor throughout the country ("Big Win for Unions in 'Open Shop' South," *WV* No. 716, 9 July). But the vote in favor of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) is only a first step. Unions are built in struggle, not through ballots. And this is particularly evident in the South, with its panoply of anti-union "right to work" laws enforced by vicious racist terror.

Thus, even though workers at New Orleans' Avondale Shipyards voted for a union more than six years ago, management has succeeded in keeping the union out through repeated appeals in the bosses' courts. United Steelworkers Local 8888 at Newport News Shipbuilding in the Virginia Tidewater area, the biggest integrated industrial union in the South, was consolidated well after the union won recognition—through bitter struggle on the picket lines in 1979. The recent four-month strike by Local 8888 pointed to the critical need to link defense of the union with the fight against racist discrimination. But the pro-capitalist USWA bureaucracy scuttled the strike, diverting it into impotent corporate lobbying and red-white-and-blue chauvinist appeals to the government. This underscores what we wrote following the union vote in Kannapolis:

"With their legalistic, pro-Democratic Party policies, the AFL-CIO misleaders are incapable of undertaking the kind of militant mass organizing drive needed to unionize workers throughout the South, where the racist cops and KKK lynchers have been instrumental in keeping unions out. It is necessary to unleash the social power of the working class, beginning with existing beachheads of integrated union power in the South—from mainly black longshoremen in the Southeastern and Gulf ports to shipyard workers and Teamsters truckers."

### Racist Roots of "Right to Work" Laws

Because of their program of class collaboration, the labor bureaucrats are tied by a thousand threads to the class enemy and are utterly incapable of waging the kind of class-struggle campaign needed to unionize the growing ranks of industrial workers in the South. Their dependence on the good graces of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), whose very purpose is to bind the unions to the state, has repeatedly caused organizing drives to flounder on the endless delays built into the law, setting up pro-union workers to be victimized. A former head of the AFL-CIO's Organizing Department vowed to "work better with employers in respecting their right to exist and make a profit," and pleaded: "In exchange, we ask that employers respect our right to exist" (*South Carolina Business Journal*, June 1996). The United Auto Workers (UAW) tops are currently trumpeting the contractual

pledge by DaimlerChrysler management to remain "neutral" in unionization efforts at the key Mercedes plant in Vance, Alabama.

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

But class struggle is the only way to bring down the "open shop" bastion which is the South. This was made clear by a spokesman for the employers in South Carolina, which has the lowest rate of unionization of any state in the country. Writing in the *South Carolina Business Journal* (September 1997), published by the state Chamber of Commerce, a lawyer who specializes in



Lyons/Daily Press

**Bastion of industrial unionism in the South: four-month strike in 1999 by United Steelworkers Local 8888 against Newport News Shipbuilding was scuttled by pro-capitalist labor tops.**

company anti-union campaigns declared: "Almost any South Carolina company should be able to defeat the union if they have 'prepared for the war'." And if you think they're not serious about war, consider the case of Gary McClain, a worker at Tenneco Packaging in Beech Island, South Carolina, who stood up in a plant meeting called by management last July and suggested that the union attempting to organize the plant be given equal time to address the workers. While driving to work a few days later, McClain was pulled over by six sheriff's patrol cars, taken from his car at gunpoint, and involuntarily committed to an insane asylum!

Above all, the crucial battle to organize the South must go hand in hand with the fight against racist discrimination. Only through an all-sided struggle against black oppression can the working class carry out the kind of integrated class struggle needed to defeat the bosses' attacks. America's rulers foster racial divisions in the North and South in order to obscure the division between classes, which is fundamental to capitalist society, and to head off united working-class struggle. The special oppression of black people as a race/color caste is a cornerstone of American capitalism. The mass of the black population is kept at the bottom of this capitalist society. At the same time, doubly oppressed black workers form a strategic component of the American proletariat. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will play a leading role in the struggle to emancipate the black masses and all working people by sweeping away the entire system of capitalist exploitation.

In the South, more than in any other region of the country, it is especially

clear that the support of the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy to the Democratic Party perpetuates violent racist oppression and the brutal exploitation of the working class. In the main resolution adopted at the Ninth National Conference of the Spartacist League in 1994 (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 51, Autumn 1994), we wrote:

"The unionization of the South cannot and will not have a narrowly economist character, nor will it likely emanate from the top echelons of the AFL-CIO. On the one side, the entire black community will tend to rally behind racially integrated workers fighting the local white power structure. On the other side, the Southern branch of the American ruling class will resort not only to the police, company goons and professional strike-breakers but, if hard pressed, also to the Klan and its ilk, while using racist demagoguery to turn backward white workers against the labor movement. In short, a union organizing drive in the South will become a major arena of political struggle between the oppressed black masses and the white ruling class."

For this perspective to become a reality will require a sharp political struggle against the politics of class collaboration and to oust the sellout labor lieutenants of capital who tie the unions to the Democratic Party. It is necessary to forge a class-struggle leadership within the unions as part of the fight to build a revolutionary workers party.

### Class Struggle Built Industrial Unions

A massive organizing drive in the "open shop" South, where conditions are ripe for unionization, is vitally necessary if the U.S. labor movement is to regain its strength in manufacturing. A major factor behind the gutting of the union

movement in this country since the late 1970s has been the massive transfer of industry from the North and Midwest to the "open shop," low-wage South and Southwest, particularly centered on the I-85 industrial corridor in the South. By 1990, North and South Carolina combined had more manufacturing production workers than any state except California. A few years ago, Philip Morris was blocked from building a \$100 million plant in South Carolina for fear that the workforce would be unionized.

The harsh laws and practices enforcing wage slavery in the South today are rooted in the black chattel slavery of the old South before the Civil War. The reestablishment of legalized racial segregation following the betrayal of Radical Reconstruction by the Northern bourgeoisie in league with the Southern landed aristocracy entailed the suppression of any attempt to organize labor, white as well as black. The heroic efforts of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the early years of this century to organize white and black workers in the South into "one big union" was met by laws against "criminal syndicalism." The "right to work" laws passed after the Second World War, which have perpetuated the South as the main regional bastion of social and political reaction in the United States, were the outgrowth of an entrenched apparatus of segregation and oppression, from the post-Civil War "Black Codes" and "anti-vagrancy" laws to the sharecropping system and prison chain gangs.

Every major organizing effort in the South has involved massive confrontations with the capitalist state—the cops, troops and courts which are at the core of this apparatus of repression through which the bourgeoisie defends its profits and class rule. Yet the pro-capitalist officials of the AFL-CIO cannot conceive of going up against their "friends" in the bosses' Democratic Party and the capitalist government. So strong are the bureaucrats' ties to the capitalist order that they have renounced the very means by which mass industrial unions were built in this country: sitdown strikes to occupy the plants and keep out the scabs, mass picket lines that defy injunctions, secondary labor boycotts (refusing to handle struck goods).

In 1934, a unionization drive led by the United Textile Workers Union of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was capped by a national textile strike involving more than 400,000 workers. Battling cops, company goons and National Guard troops, flying squads of strikers closed hundreds of mills along a broad front



Alabama magazine

Sit-down strike at American Casting Company in Birmingham, Alabama which won union recognition in 1937 was led by Communist organizers.

from Gastonia, North Carolina to Greenville, South Carolina. In Georgia, the governor declared martial law and had troops throw strikers and their families into concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire. Though 16 workers were killed and hundreds wounded nationwide, the strikers held firm. But textile union leaders cravenly called off the strike at the request of Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt for nothing more than his cynical promise to "survey" conditions in the industry.

The mass labor upsurges of the mid to late 1930s, often led by communists or socialists, brought together black and white workers in major class battles against the capitalists and their state, forging the mass integrated industrial unions that changed the face of American society. Breaking down the racial and ethnic job-trusting and segregated union locals of the old AFL, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) sought to mobilize black workers, who were critical to organizing most basic industries. United Mine Workers' efforts in 1934 to organize the Alabama coalfields relied heavily on black miners, who composed 60 percent of the membership of the locals organized there.

In 1936, black steel workers in Birmingham, led by Communists, won a strike by organizing Alabama's first plant sitdown. This challenge to the capitalists' private property terrified the bosses. Throughout this period, Communist union organizers were beaten, jailed and tortured by the Klan and cops, but their defiance attracted the downtrodden black masses. When the fascists warned, "Negroes Beware—Do Not Attend Communist Meetings—The Ku Klux Klan Is Watching You," black Communists responded with their own leaflets declaring: "KKK! The Workers Are Watching You!" In his history of Alabama Communists during the Depression, *Hammer and Hoe* (1990), Robin D. G. Kelley noted that Birmingham blacks saw the fight for industrial unions "as a crusade for racial justice" and poured into the new CIO unions.

Union organizers—black and white—confronted the same brutal terror that for decades had been used to keep blacks "in their place." A CIO organizer in Florida signing up black workers was kidnapped by the KKK, castrated, tarred and feathered, dipped into the boiling tar and left to die from his wounds. In 1938, the CIO reported: "Often an organizer dares not to enter a town in daylight; he relies upon a union-minded merchant or a handful of key men to keep in touch with those workers who are sympathetic to the



Schneider/Charlotte Observer

**Heavily immigrant workforce celebrates pro-union vote at Fieldcrest Cannon textile complex in Kannapolis.**



Redmond/NY Times

union. Mass meetings are seldom held, except in large cities, and unionists in the same village may not even know their fellow union members. In many areas, mill workers provide union organizers with day and night body guards for there have been beatings and shootings by mill police, thugs, and vigilantes" (quoted in Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker: 1619-1973* [1974]).

The formation of integrated industrial unions represented the biggest gain for black people since the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. Where barely 50,000 black workers nationwide were union members in the early 1930s, by the 1940s there were 500,000; and by the mid-1950s, almost two million black workers were unionized. But while the CIO brought better pay and working conditions along with some measure of job security for those blacks who had industrial jobs, the CIO leadership generally shied away from tackling head-on the pervasive racist discrimination in hiring and in the skilled trades. In 1940, three years after the UAW victory in the Flint sitdown strike, Jim Crow still reigned at GM plants, from the total exclusion of blacks at Fisher Body to the restriction of blacks to foundry jobs at Buick.

The tremendous working-class upsurge of the 1930s was accompanied by a political radicalization which opened possibilities for forging an independent workers party. This was clearly indicated in 1934 as three city-wide general strikes—in Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco—were led by reds. To head off the organization of the working class by leftist radicals, a section of the AFL bureaucracy, led by John L. Lewis, split and launched a mass unionization drive.

But the CIO leadership, including the reformist social democrats and Commu-

nist Party (CP), chained the new unions to Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democratic Party and its "New Deal" coalition. By the mid-1930s, the Stalinized Communist Party had embraced a reformist strategy of support to a liberal wing of the capitalist class. The New Deal coalition—which literally extended from white Southern sheriffs who were members of the Ku Klux Klan to black union organizers who were members of the CP—put organized labor in a self-defeating alliance not only with its liberal class enemies in the North but also with the Southern Dixiecrats, to whom Roosevelt gave a free hand to wage naked racist terror against blacks and unions. This was accompanied by energetic efforts by the capitalists, seeking to suppress the tremendous wave of class struggle sweeping the country, to create a body of laws and measures (for example, the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, which set up the NLRB) aimed at legally subordinating the new unions to the bourgeois state.

**Break with the Democrats!  
Organize the South!**

At its founding congress in 1937, the CIO launched a new organizing drive focused on the textile industry in the South. But from the start, the pro-capitalist CIO tops undercut any chance of success by aiming to "avoid strikes and show employers the value of unions" (F. Ray Marshall, *Labor in the South* [1967]). The black and white union organizers who braved beatings and kidnappings by cops and Klansmen succeeded in organizing a number of key mills, but these were the exception rather than the rule. By the end of the decade only five percent of the South's spindles were estimated to have been affected by union contracts.



AP



Young Socialist

Police attack civil rights march, Birmingham, 1963 (left); striking sanitation workers in Memphis, 1968. Defense of labor's interests cannot go forward without struggle against racist oppression and terror.

At its November 1941 convention, the CIO again resolved to launch a campaign to organize the South. But just two weeks after the convention came the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which led to Washington's formal entry into World War II. The fine words about organizing the South were all laid aside as the union leaders, the Socialist Party and the CP joined the capitalists in subordinating everything to the American/Allied imperialist war effort—from imposing a no-strike pledge to opposing the fight for black rights. The reformist misleaders painted this as a “war against fascism.” In fact, for the U.S. and all the imperialist powers, World War II was a conflict for division of the world's markets, sources of raw materials and cheap labor, as was the case in World War I.

In contrast to the social-patriots, the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) opposed both blocs of competing imperialist powers while calling for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. The SWP opposed the no-strike pledge and gave its full support to the fight against racist discrimination in industry and “Jim Crow” segregation in the military. For their revolutionary opposition to U.S. imperialism, 18 Trotskyist leaders were jailed under FDR.

The last, feeble attempt by the CIO to organize the South following World War II, grotesquely called “Operation Dixie,” was quickly shipwrecked on the shoals of the Cold War red purges, racism and the bureaucrats' ties to the Democratic Party. In many cases, the anti-Communist labor bureaucracy worked to *destroy* integrated union locals in the South, like at R.J. Reynolds in Winston-

Salem, rather than see them led by reds. Meanwhile, the union tops' loyalty to the Democrats made them incapable of waging a fight against the Jim Crow white power structure, which was run by the Dixiecrats and their KKK auxiliaries.

The CIO's abandonment of any effort to organize the South was part of an overall retreat and weakening of the labor movement in this period. The onset of the Cold War against the Soviet Union was accompanied by an anti-labor offensive on the home front, in part as a response to the massive strike wave of 1945-46. The main legal instrument of this union-busting offensive was the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act which mandated the purging of Communists and other radicals from union leadership, outlawed secondary labor strikes (a key tactic in extending unionization, especially in the South) and legitimized state “right to work” laws. Almost the entire AFL and CIO leadership stated that they would “live with” Taft-Hartley despite strong sentiment within the ranks to defy it.

### “Right to Work” Laws and Racist Reaction

The so-called “right to work” laws, which outlaw the “closed” union shop, are at the center of the reactionary legislation that Southern rulers use in trying to keep the region “free” of unions. Not coincidentally, among the 21 states with “right to work” laws—which includes practically the entire South as well as a number of plains and Rocky Mountain states—are those with the lowest levels of unionization. The average pay in these states is fully 15 percent lower than in the rest of the country. The billions of dollars in super-profits that this repre-

sents for the capitalists underlines why the bourgeoisie is determined to maintain this vast area of low-wage, non-unionized labor.

The intimate link between the fight for unionization of the South and the fight against black oppression is graphically illustrated by the history of the “right to work” laws. These statutes were largely enacted during and immediately following World War II as a counter to the expansion of unionism during the war. Also passed in that period were “anti-violence” bills to curb picketing, as well as measures requiring union organizers to register with state governments. In Georgia, a local ordinance required union officials to foreswear belief in communism and “in the overthrowing of the municipal or state laws in regard to segregation” (quoted in *Labor in the South*).

The organizations pushing for these reactionary laws combined vicious anti-unionism with virulent racism. One of these groups, the Southern States Industrial Council (SSIC), headed by the president of the Tennessee Association of Manufacturers, was formed in 1934 in opposition to the New Deal. The SSIC railed against unions, immigrant workers, and “dilution of racial purity” in the workforce (John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day*). Another prominent promoter of the “God-given right-to-work” was Christian America, a Texas-based outfit which had fanned the flames of racial and religious bigotry from its inception in 1936.

A measure of the all-sided reactionary nature of these racist Southern Bourbons was provided in Robert Sherrill's *Gothic Politics in the Deep South* (1968), which describes Roger Milliken, the boss

of the Deering-Milliken textile chain in the early 1950s:

"He is a great advocate of what he calls voluntary unionism, which sounds fair enough, but to Milliken, and in South Carolina, it has a special meaning: Shortly before Christmas 1956 he closed the Darlington Manufacturing Company, throwing 500 workers on the street, because they had voted to unionize. Desperate to get back on a payroll, on any terms, 83 percent of the workers signed a petition swearing never to even mention unionism again if he would keep the plant open and keep their jobs going. It wasn't enough to please Milliken. He wouldn't be satisfied, he said, if only 17 percent 'hard core' union people were left on the payroll; he didn't want *any*. He auctioned off his machinery and moved out of town. People don't talk unionism and liberalism in Darlington and nearby towns like they used to before the strike."

The SWP's *Militant* reported how a Steelworkers organizer from Birmingham, Alabama told the 1941 CIO convention that "it was the poll tax senators in Congress, representing those areas where the workers were unorganized and terrorized, who were the strongest advocates of vicious anti-labor legislation."

The *Militant* continued:

"Any serious struggle to smash the open-shop rule of the southern land and industrial barons will inevitably lead to a clash with the whole apparatus of the United States government, including president Roosevelt himself...."

"The most uncertain factor bearing on the ultimate success of this drive is the political tie of the CIO leadership to the Roosevelt administration and its war program. This political attitude confronts the CIO leaders with a fundamental contradiction. In the showdown fight that must ensue in any effective union organization drive in the South, they will in all likelihood meet the opposition of the government. The CIO has the choice of successfully organizing the South and smashing the greatest reservoir of open-shop strength, thus facing a break with the administration, or watering down the drive and retreating on the basis of the CIO leadership's political commitments."

— C.L.R. James, et al., *Fighting Racism in World War II* (1980)

### For a Revolutionary Leadership of the Working Class

Today, the "New South" of the likes of Bill Clinton and Al Gore tries to project a more "respectable" image than the openly segregationist Dixiecrats and vicious sheriffs of a generation ago. As a result of the civil rights movement, a section of the black petty bourgeoisie was recruited into the governmental administration and bureaucracy to help pacify the black masses. A black mayor of Atlanta is now a local institution. However, despite a substantial degree of industrialization, the *economic condition* of black as well as

white workers in the South has not fundamentally changed since the days of Jim Crow segregation.

And efforts to organize labor are still met with police-state measures abetted by fascist terror. Witness the 1979 killing in Greensboro, North Carolina of five members of the Communist Workers Party, some of whom were trying to unionize textile mills in the area, by Klan and Nazi terrorists acting in collusion with state and local officials. That same year, cops rampaged against Newport News picket lines. Strikers were dragged off in handcuffs as snarling police dogs bit their arms and legs. Just a few years ago, a burning cross was ignited by plant managers in Alabama to intimidate workers from joining a union.

The AFL-CIO bureaucracy's "America first" protectionism, which will only get more virulent as interimperialist competition intensifies, not only poisons the needed international solidarity between workers in the U.S. and their-class brothers and sisters abroad but also fuels racism against black and immigrant workers here. Complaining that workers in other countries are "stealing" American jobs, the labor bureaucrats tie the interests of the working class in the U.S. to maintaining the competitive edge of American imperialism.

In fact, in numerous struggles across the country—not least in the South—Hispanic, Asian, and other immigrant workers have breathed new life into unions crippled by the betrayals of the labor bureaucracy. But the bureaucrats have not only refused to defend the rights of immigrants but have called for increased state repression against "illegals." The seizure of thousands of foreign-born workers in

the South by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in the 1995 "Operation South PAW" ("Protect American Workers") came after the Atlanta Labor Council called for raids against undocumented workers there. The fight for full citizenship rights for *all* immigrants is a crucial part of mobilizing the power of labor in struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Racist divisions within the working class remain the fundamental barrier to political *class* consciousness in the American proletariat and the chief reason today why there is no mass workers party in this country. Because of the experience of both racial and class oppression, black workers are among the most conscious and militant sections of the U.S. proletariat. We fight for revolutionary integration: The understanding that the struggle for integration of black people into American society on the basis of full economic, social and political equality can only be realized through a proletarian revolution which uproots the capitalist system and ushers in an egalitarian socialist society.

As Karl Marx wrote at the time of the Civil War, "Labor in white skin cannot emancipate itself where the black skin is branded." There will be no effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people without the unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black, Hispanic and Asian poor. This requires a revolutionary workers party forged in opposition to the Democratic Party, which is supported by the labor lieutenants of capital in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, and committed to the struggle for a workers government, which alone can provide a decent life for all through a planned, socialist economy. ■



Greensboro Daily News  
Greensboro, North Carolina, 1979: Five Communist Workers Party members, including union organizers, were shot and killed by Klan and Nazi terrorists.

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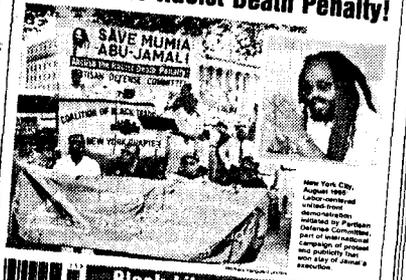
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