Supreme Court, Bush, Democrats—Enemies of Women’s Rights

Free Abortion on Demand!

Last week’s high court ruling on abortion read like it was hatched in an underground parking garage halfway between the Supreme Court and the White House. By a five-to-four vote, the Court endorsed the core of an odiously restrictive Pennsylvania law requiring a mandatory waiting period for women seeking abortions and forcing teenagers to notify their parents. At the same time it claimed to reaffirm the “essence” of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion nationwide, while in fact undermining the “fundamental right” to abortion by allowing any restrictions which do not entail what they deem an “undue burden.” The decision by the Reagan-Bush court was consciously crafted to split the difference with the aim of taking the explosive abortion question off the political agenda and saving George Bush’s ass in the polls. Nevertheless, it was meant to take the Supreme Court ruling was meant to take the explosive abortion question off the agenda and saving George Bush’s ass in the November election. Instead, the ruling made abortion an even bigger election issue.

With the population strongly in favor of the right to abortion, and Bush leaping in the polls against “pro-choice” contenders Democrat Bill Clinton and the sinister Ross Perot, the Supreme Court ruling was meant to take “the edge off a recurring Republican nightmare,” as the New York Times (30 June) commented. Yet the worries of the new “moderate conservative” center of the court, which the media has been playing up, went further. Reading from an opinion coauthored by Sandra Day O’Connor and Anthony Kennedy, Justice David Souter motivated the decision on explicitly political grounds. He warned from the bench that overturning Roe “under fire” and “under the existing circumstances” would cause “profound and unnecessary damage to the Court’s legitimacy, and to the nation’s commitment to the rule of law.” With the bourgeoisie split wide open over the question of legalized abortion, this elitist arbiter for the ruling class is clearly worried.

The “legitimacy” the black-robed judges seek to protect is their position as the judicial guardians of American imperialism’s “New World Order.” The same session asserted a U.S. license to “undercut, in the guise of striking down a misguided law against “hate speech,” defended KKK cross-burnings as “freedom of expression.” Appointing itself chief executioner, the Court chillingly swept aside legal impediments to the death penalty, working through the night to insist that the state murder machine go into high gear. Already many people have been executed this year on disproportionately black and Hispanic Death Row U.S.A., than in all of 1991.

This ruling aimed at pleasing everyone—a concession to an anti-abortion movement in the streets. Left: Philadelphia protest over Supreme Court ruling. Right: March 29 abortion rights rally in San Francisco.

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Both the anti-abortion bigots and the “pro-choice” liberals are pitching the coming election as one which will determine not just next session to the Supreme Court and the fate of abortion. At the age of 83, Justice Blackmun, author of the Roe decision, says he “cannot not remain on this Court forever.” But it was not particularly the political composition of the 1973 court—whose chief justice, Warren Burger, was a Nixon appointee—which led to the legalization of abortion. This was a concession to an upsurge of mass social struggle. The women’s liberation movement arose as hundreds of thousands of radicalized youth took to the streets in the struggle for black rights and in opposition to the dirty imperialist war in Vietnam.

Even the most minimal gains for working people, women and minorities have been achieved only as a result of social struggle, not through the ballot, and certainly not through lobbying the Congress or Supreme Court. But under capitalism, every reform remains eminently reversible, as the onslaught on abortion rights demonstrates. In its drive to rearm U.S. imperialism and restore its erstwhile hegemonic power in the world following its humiliating defeat in Indochina, the American bourgeoisie launched an all-sided reactionary onslaught aimed at reversing the gains of the civil rights movement, ending the “war on poverty” and crippling the labor movement. The campaign to rip abortion rights away from American women is the spearhead for a general offensive, organized by the White House and its Supreme Court appointees, against women’s rights and black rights.

Some 1.6 million abortions are performed every year in this country. Barely two people out of ten favor an outright ban on abortions, while even among Republican voters nearly two-thirds oppose such a ban. In recent years, particularly since the 1989 Webster ruling, hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets to demonstrate against the reactionary assault on this most personal of rights. But the “pro-choice” liberals offer only the most timid pressure politics.

According to National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) president Kate Michelman, the answer is to elect a pro-choice President and a veto-proof Congress,” in other words, a Democratic president with a Democratic Congress. In a picture that spoke two thousand words, Michelman was photographed on the steps of the Supreme Court as she rushed to report on its decision over a mobile phone to her supreme leader, Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton. NOW, NARAL and the other liberal abortion rights groups are firmly tied to the Democratic Party. Indeed, the challenge to the Pennsylvania law in the Supreme Court, initiated continued on page 8
Robert Buck, 27 years old, a popular member of Steelworkers at Ravenswood, West Virginia, has been in prison since last January, railroaded by the federal government for defending his union and his job from the scabs and thugs brought in by Marc Rich and Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation (RAC). Buck was slapped with a prison stretch of 33 months, sent far away from home and family to the hinterlands of Hinton, Oklahoma.

Buck was arrested in the fourth month of the coal strike and RAC, convicted of two charges of possessing an explosive device, after the feds alleged that he and another USWA member, Gerald Church, threw a small homemade black powder charge outside the home of a scab on 4 March 1991. The feds' "evidence" consisted of the testimony of the scab, Edward Piggott, and Church, who turned fink and got off with a year of house arrest for his "services."

Bob Buck's "crime" was to defend his union—not just off the picket line but by refusing to become a rat for the feds. Prosecutors and federal officers threatened Buck's family to make him talk, but he refused to talk. When I ever saw these people, the first thing they said was: "You're going to prison for 40 years. Reminded me of the bullies at school." Buck's mother told us, "I would have rather spent three years in prison myself than to see him wear a wire into a union hall."

Mrs. Buck described how the feds invaded her home and, brandishing a service gun, kept her and her husband in Buck's bedroom as they rifled through his personal belongings, including pictures of his young daughter. For sheer spite they confiscat ed Buck's pickup truck, and 15 months later they still haven't returned it.

Buck told us how the state's response to the struggle at Ravenswood has fir med his resolve: "When they threw us out of that plant, I thought in a few days, weeks, or to court, the state cops and everybody would come down here and straighten this out. They showed up and did not do what? To escort the scabs. Maybe I never noticed these things before. I spent six years in the military and it was all "USA all the way" and everything, but there's a lot of these things you just don't hear about. May be our government, but they don't always look out for us as much as they look out for where the big money and campaign contributions are."

"They want to come and bust a union hall. I think anybody that stands up to them scares them. They see an outfit like our group there, old men, old women, young women, young men and everything standing up to them, I think it scares them. Anybody that steps out of line or opens their mouth too much, they've got a place for them right here at Hinton."

By refusing to wear a wire, Buck did a great service for the entire labor movement. The fight for Bob Buck's freedom must be the fight of the entire labor movement. When the PATCO air controllers union leaders were marched off to prison in chains in 1981, and the labor tops did nothing, it ushered in an era of defeats. Strikebreaking injunctions, labor frame-ups, racist mercenaries from outfits like Vance security, and an arsenal of legal weapons recall the late 1800s, when the miners and plants were patrolled by private armies, and strikes

"An Injury to One Is an Injury to All!"
The principle of non-sectarian labor defense in this country goes back to the revolutionary syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World. This cause was taken up by the early Communist Party and headed by James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism. Looking not to the courts but to the power of labor, the IWL defended many "Wobblies" and others such as Sacco and Vanzetti.

Among the class war prisoners whose defense the I.W.L took up were San Francisco trade-unionists Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, framed up on bomb charges in July 1916.

Today the Partisan Defense Committee continues this tradition of class-struggle defense.

The path to freedom leads through a prison. The door swings in and out and through until your passes a steady procession of workers, members of the I.W.W., who had just finished a sentence under the criminal "justice" system.

The doors of San Quentin penitentiary swung outward the other day and three men destined to triumph. They rise triumphant over all their enemies and oppressors. Confined in prison, covered with ignominy, branded as criminals, they are not defeated. They are destined to triumph. They are the representatives of an idea that will crack the walls of every prison and crumble them into dust.

There is a way of saying that the class-war prisoners are victorious, which smacks of superficial optimism and which offers little consolation to men who spend long, almost forgotten years behind the gray walls of the jail. We do not mean to speak in this sense, as though it were an automatic process. The victory of the class-war prisoners is possible only when they are inseparably united with the living labor movement and when that movement claims them for its own, takes up their battle cry and carries on their work.

Two hours after the last of the scabs left the Ravenswood Aluminum Corpo­ration (RAC) plant in West Virginia on June 25, 1986, members of United Steel­workers (USWA) Local 5668 reclaimed their jobs. They had fought a bitter, monthlong battle of resistance with RAC and metals tycoon Marc Rich. The wife of a Local 5668 member proudly told the Park­ersburg News: "We've showed that com­pany that people all across the country are willing to fight union-busting com­panies like Ravenswood Aluminum."

Workers had endured the long lockout and defended their union. They approved the final contract by a margin of 1,287 to 181, but they are also angry. Under the agreement "hiring preference" is given to the hated scabs who held up in "Fort RAC." Over 100 have already been hired, while RAC uses physicals to screen out unionists. Militants are being provoked and disciplined. The final contract also gives RAC "hiring pre­ference" in job descriptions and work rules that will mean fewer, and more danger­ous, jobs. The USWA bureaucracy and RAC rushed to settlement, as an NLRB law­yer conveniently held back a rul­ing that could cost the company $70 million in back pay.

Criminally, the USWA tops also bar­gained away the job of jailed striker Bob Buck. Workers like Buck were the back­bone of the strike. At one union sup­porter wrote in thanking the Partisan Defense Committee for a donation to a fund for Buck: "Bob Buck, I didn't take the cure not to wear a bag and try to trap his co-workers. It didn't take courage for the rat that squealed." Twelve other unionists who were fired for picket line activity will come back to work, but the settlement explicitly deals away Buck's job. Local 5668 members, and all labor, must not forget men like Bob Buck.

In announcing the contract vote, USWA International VP George Beker told the strikers, "you've had 19 months of putting up with a lot of crap that wasn't necessary and you won." But what was "unnecessary" was that it took 20 months to win this "class battle. Sure, the Inter­national sent in strike support funds, and the Teamsters of other unions went support. But from the time RAC locked the gates and implemented their plan to smash the steel in the new union's fighting bureaucracy played by the bosses' rules. Coal miners in West Virginia have shown movement of labor plenty of times what to do with slave-labor laws like Taft-Hartley. But the USWA tops just bowed to the "secondary boycott" laws, and never called on bargemen to choke off the aluminum ore being shipped up the Ohio River. USWA can workers and Teamster brewery workers weren't even called on to refuse to handle RAC alu­minum. Instead, the labor fakers pleased with the brewing companies to drop RAC aluminum and relied on a campaign to scandalize Marc Rich in international banking circles. True, Richer, who may be trying to cut a deal with the Justice Department to slither back into the coun­try, finally gave in. But the bowing and scraping of the union tops to capitalist "law and order" cost the courageous Ravenswood workers 20 hard months—and cost Bob Buck his job.

True to form, the lesson that the labor leaders of capitalist draw from RAC is...more reliance on the bosses' state. The AFL-CIO traitors are so desperate in begging for a "strikers replacement" bill that Lane Kirkland supported an amendment that would have subjected all labor disputes to arbitration! The real lesson is the urgent need to forge a rev­olutionary party and class-struggle lead­ership that will stop begging and mob­lize workers in a fight for power.

Outrage Over NY NDP Murders

Domestic Community Explodes

Protestors in Washington Heights rally outside building where José García was gunned down.

JULY 7—New York's Dominican com­munity has exploded in two nights of angry response over the police execution-style killing of José García on July 5. Garcia was shot at pointblank range in the lobby of an apartment building on 162nd Street in the Washington Heights neighborhood of upper Manhattan. When policemen were in the streets last night word spread of another NYPD killing of a Domini­can man. The cops shot the 35-year-old Dagoberto Pichardo to the roof of his building where he "jumped" to his death. A eyewitness said the cops pushed Dagoberto off the ledge.

Today, over 1,000 people, surrounded by a police army in riot gear, marched on the killer cops’ lair at the 34th Pre­cinct chanting: “Policia asesino!” A Spartacist League contingent raised signs calling to “Mobilize the power of labor to stop racist attacks!” “For labor/ black/Hispanic unity against police and cop terror!” “Full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers! Jobs for all!” and “José García presente!”

Two months after the L.A. riots, NY­City’s rules in a “security” frenzy over the Democratic Convention which opens at Madison Square Garden on July 13. The city is seething with the anger of minor­ity groups over police action and civil­ization rights activists wading off attacks by clinic besiegers. Meanwhile, cop hel­icop­ters are buzzing rooftops and hay­phalaxens patrolling upper Broadway. "NYPD has been trained on the New­York Press (July 6, "reporting") radio message Saturday.

The killing of José Garcia was a cold-blooded execution. Cop Michael O’Keefe grabbed Garcia outside the apartments in New York City. He dragged him to the lobby, slammed him with a police radio, then shot him in the back and in the front. On the Spanish-language TV-Team­Dansinks revealed that the front wound “appeared to be a contact wound”—i.e., the cop put the barrel of his pistol up to Garcia’s abdomen and pulled the trigger. O’Keefe was a plainclothes cop; squad cop who operated out of the notorious 34th Precinct, one of ten NYPD pre­cincts now under federal investigation for corruption. He was part of the “Local Motion” team that roamed the neighbor­hood heating up and intimidating resi­dents. Deputy Police Commissioner Raymond Aley praised O’Keefe as an “aggressive cop.” Justifying shooting people like Garcia first and asking ques­tions later, Kelly said: "You don’t want to chase them down the street. They usu­ally run faster than you" (New York Times, 7 July).

City Council member Guillermo Linares told the press that just 20 min­utes before Garcia was shot, O’Keefe had been involved in a drug shakedown, where the cops beat up a drug dealer, confiscated $2,000, three pounds of cocaine and two hashish bongs, one of them a .38 caliber weapon. Conveniently, the cops “found” a .38 handcuff next to García’s dead body.

There are now more than 500,000 immigrants in New York City; 100,000 in the Dominican Republic, where IMF­ imposed “austerity” has brought the pop­ulation to the point of starvation. The Dominican community in upper Manhat­tan is one of the fastest growing, most
differently in the community of Hispanics and blacks. The

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politically active Hispanic neighbor­hoods in the city. And they are a partic­ular target of the racist cops, from the nerts to beat cops to the INS immigra­tion police, all of whom regularly shake down hodega owners.

Meanwhile, the cops have declared open season on Hispanics in New York. More than 70 Latin men have been gunned down by the police since early 1990. Their names are familiar to WF readers: David Cotto, José Luis Lebrón, Héctor Rivera, Federico Pereira, Tomás Vizueta, Juan Rodríguez, Andrew Gonz­ález, José Olivas and Cabino Figueroa are two recent victims gunned down by the NYPD in the last two months. And now host “Rico” Garcia and Dagoberto Pichardo must be added to this list.

Black “Democratic Socialist” mayor Dinkins sits atop the New York City powder keg, trying to balance between the minorities and the cops while pre­sid­ing over massive budget cuts and police­ terror. What better proof that the Democratic Party “popular front” makes the murder of Hispanics and blacks. The labor movement, with its heavy comp­nent of black and Hispanic unions, must take the lead in defending the beleaguered ghettos and barrios. Break with the Democrats, build an internation­alist workers party to fight for socialist revolution!
BERLIN—On June 23, supporters of the Spartacist Workers Party (SPaD) and the Committee for Social Defense tore down a huge Nazi flag which had been mounted high on a wall near the Brandenburg Gate. With this act, our comrades put an end to a revolting provocation, to which thousands of Berliners and tourists who daily pass by the Brandenburg Gate were exposed. Displaying the fascist flag was a direct threat against survivors of the Nazi terror regime and an offense to all decent people.

Werner Brand, a spokesman for the Committee, said, “We won’t tolerate this! The swastika stands for the gruesome murder of six million Jews, of Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals and other minorities, of Communists and all anti-fascists. Recently it brought death to the four of us, Nguyen Van Tu and Torsten Lamprecht, immigrant workers and a German youth who had been murdered by rampaging Nazi/kinhead killers.

The Nazi flag, with a giant swastika emblazoned dead center, had been hung from the fourth floor of the gallery on Pariser Platz, housing the former East German Academy of Art, on the famous promenade of Unter den Linden. This swastika flag was part of a so-called “historical exhibition” of all the flags of the German Reich since the time of the Kaiser. Since the exhibit was mounted in May, people passing near the Brandenburg Gate could be observed standing stock-still, necks craned as they gazed upward at this “exhibit” in horror and disbelief.

But after 4:30 p.m. on June 23, there was now a swastika hanging near the Brandenburg Gate. Spartakist Toralf Endrueweit and his comrades climbed out on the roof of a crumbling neighboring building, where Endrueweit leaned over the edge wielding a long metal device to rip down the flag. The swastika flag fell to the applause of those gathered before the gallery. Shortly afterwards, a Spartakist banner was unfurled from the roof with the words, “The Red Army Smashed the Nazi Regime.”

A representative of the gallery tried to “save” the Nazi flag as it fell to the ground, but anti-fascists seized this bloody symbol of genocide and burned it on the spot. The functionary then rushed off to summon police, on traffic duty at the Brandenburg Gate, who dutifully came over and took four people into custody, holding them in a police van. Those detained were: Werner Brand; Ronald Kruger (photographer for the newspaper Spartakist); Renate Dahlhaus and Toralf Endrueweit (Spartakist spokesman at the mammoth anti-fascist rally in Treprow in January 1990 and candidates for the SPaD in the last Bundestag elections).

As the four were held captive, a crowd gathered around the police van and an energetic protest ensued. Passers-by from various countries, immigrants hawking ’items near the Brandenburg Gate who were angry over working in the shadow of the swastika flag, as well as supporters of the Kurdish Workers Party, chanted, “One, two, three—Let them go free!” Under their protests, the anti-fascists were released.

In 1945 the Soviet Army smashed the Hitler regime, liberating Europe from fascist terror. Twenty-seven million Soviet citizens lost their lives in the struggle against the Nazis before the victorious Red Army could hoist the red flag on the Reichstag as a symbol of liberation. In the East German deformed workers state, the DDR, the swastika system was destroyed. Berlin is a workers’ city with deep anti-fascist roots. When in January 1990 the Spartakists initiated a rally against Nazi desecration of the Soviet memorial in Treprow, and the SPD (former Stalinist ruling party, now the PDS) took up this call, a quarter of a million working people came to express their outrage and their protest.

With the social-democratic SPD acting as the Trojan horse of counterrevolution and theSED-PDS selling out the DDR, the Spartakists uniquely opposed capitalist reunification of Germany. Its aftermath has brought unemployment for millions, an assault on women’s rights and a rise in rightist attacks. Now the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz is reaching out toward rule over Europe. As they do so, their minions in the SPD are leading the anti-Communist witchhunt. Meanwhile, the infamous Gustav Just, the murderer of Jews when he was in a Wehrmacht death squad, is a prominent member of the SPD.

The Fourth Reich wants to rehabilitate the Third. They won American imperialist backing in 1985 with Helmut Kohl and Ronald Reagan’s obscene obeisance before SS graves in Bitburg. On 9 November 1991, the anniversary of the fascist Kristallnacht pogrom, the Nazis staged a parade in the East German industrial city of Halle. There, and again with the provocative appearance of former SS man Schönhuber, Fäkere of the fascist Republikaner, in Berlin’s Alexanderplatz on May 21, the Nazis were protected by a massive police mobilization. Seeking vengeance for the victory of the Red Army, German imperialism has put Erich Mielke, former head of DDR state security (the Stasi), on trial on charges stemming from the Nazi period. And in the SPD-governed city of Hamburg, the anti-fascist Gerhard Bögelein was condemned to life imprisonment for supposedly having brought to justice in a Soviet POW camp a notorious Nazi hanging judge. The Spartakists demand freedom for Mielke, immediate release of Bogelein, and hands off Erich Honecker, the former head of the DDR, who was jailed for ten years in the Third Reich and is now a “wanted man” in the Fourth Reich!

The Christian Democratic Party of Helmut Kohl and the SPD prepare the soil for the fascists with their mass deportations of workers, and immigrant workers. Meanwhile, the PDS makes the pages of 
\textit{Neues Deutschland} available to those who want to keep their racist hate-mongering. The SPaD calls on the workers movement to defend the democratic right to freedom of speech, to oppose the Fascists’ demands for restrictions on freedom of assembly. To eliminate the false choices presented by the social democrats, we must pursue the true route that will end the Fascists’ career.

The Spartakists’ act of taking down the Nazi flag was welcomed by many Berliners, particularly among immigrant communities. In several cafes and local gathering spots, photos of the swastika, now the Third Reich, being torn down are on display. As Toralf Endrueweit stated, “We know what this swastika means and how we have to deal with it. Today we are also honoring in a modest way the heroic Jews of the Communist Herbert Baun (who led a underground resistance group in Hitler’s Berlin). To eliminate the fascists once and for all we need a workers revolution that will avenge the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. This is what the Spartakist Workers Party fights for. And our comrades of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalists) are fighting against Yeltsin’s counterrevolution, to win back political power for the Soviet workers and re-establish the country of the October Revolution as the vanguard of the world revolution.”

\textbf{WORKERS VANGUARD}

\begin{itemize}
\item 5/7/04 issues of Workers Vanguard (includes English language Spartacist)
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in the Persian Gulf." In response to Republican and Democratic claims that the American warship had the right to defend itself, we asked: "So what was the U.S. doing there in the first place? It is, after all, the Persian Gulf." Today Ted Koppel intones, "Governments lie; they do it all the time." But not just the government. As we wrote back then, "The capitalist media preferred to attention, telling the government’s lies, as the war criminals in Washington draped themselves in a blood-drenched Stars and Stripes for the Fourth of July." And so they did once again in 1991, regurgitating the Pentagon war propaganda in U.S. imperialism’s wanton "Desert Slaughter" against Iraq.

It is in uses like that, that the mystery curtain of lies is lifted, not just a bit. In his hard-hitting broadcast, Koppel takes the audience step by step through the U.S. version as presented by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William "Willie" Crowe. Correcting each lie as it was spoken by Crow, Koppel notes:

- The plane was not "outside" its prescribed route but was "flying well within the commercial air corridor."
- The plane did not head "directly for Vincennes" but was "actually turning away from it."
- The plane did not emit "electronic indications" of an F-14 but rather "its cockpit communications, identifying it as a commercial aircraft."
- The plane was not "decreasing in altitude as it neared the ship's" but had "been steadily climbing from lift-off and was still gaining altitude at the time of the missile impact."

This is undisputed by Koppel adds: "We know all these things now because the information was later retrieved through a detailed analysis of a tape made by the USS Vincennes' own Aegis radar tracking system."

The program quotes President Reagan saying that "the USS Vincennes and the USS Elmer Montgomery were operating in international waters." But Koppel produces Admiral Crowe, now retired, admitting under prodding that the Vincennes "was in international waters." Indeed, on screen we see actual footage of the action on the Vincennes out, "to take military bearing the ship's navigator shoot out, repeatedly, "we’re about 9.3 miles from Qeshm Island and about 45 miles from the 12-mile limit of Iranian waters. The Ira- quarrelling between the United States and Iraq, the U.S. military officers were stationed in Bagh- was called the "Vincennes," because it really was murder. The Nightline/Newsweek system quotes President Reagan: "By any standard of decency and morality, the captain and responsible offi- cers of the Vincennes could be held guilty of a court-martial. Instead, they’re being treated as heroes. Because their orders were cut right at the top: shoot first and ask questions later. Reagan’s cops of the world are subjecting the people of the Near East to a grotesquely magnified version of the medieval treatment that mete out to racial minorities in American ghettos."

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While the Congress rallied behind Reagan, and their "left" hangers-on re- mained silent, the Spartacist League joined a protest demonstration with signs including: "Reagan, Democrats: Blood Is On Your Hands!"

The media were willing handmaiden of the Pentagon anti-Soviet war drive, which served as the excuse for every kind of militarist provocation, from Libya to Grenada to the Persian Gulf. Only now that Washington is claiming victory in the Cold War are they willing to reveal some of their lies. Typically, the New York Times (2 July) buried its coverage of the spectacular Nightline revelations in the inside pages, with a doubting headline, "A Challenge to U.S. Version of Downfall of Iran Airliner," over a small article which reads like a limited part of the hot stuff and back- loaded that.

And of course, they’re still all wary of the most dangerous Reagan/Bush provocation—the 1983 KAL 007 affair, which should have left America aghast. While the American media were screaming murder over the KAL downing, even though they knew the Soviets weren’t aware it was a civilian plane. In the case of the Iranian Airbus, it really was murder.

The Nightline/Newsweek pieces show what serious in-depth reporting can do, when there’s the will. Koppel notes that the U.S. media and Watergate a myth was created of crusading journalists ferreting out the truth. But in reality the critical reporting of journalists reflected splits in the ruling class. Demo- crats went to Watergate, and so you began seeing David Halberstam’s dispatches contradicting the line put out by the U.S. Saigon in Saigon. The capitalist powers that be decided that Nixon had to go, for "the good of the country" (i.e., the stability of their rule), and so the Washington Post published— who happen to own Newsweek—printed the stuff dug up by Woodward and Bernstein.

But only certain truths are “fit to print” for the ruling class. So when Bush launched his wannaent air bombardment of Iraq last year, a cam- paign of deliberate mass murder world-wide. Of Hitler, the media willingly went along, defaming CNN’s Peter Arnett for reporting the truth about the U.S. bombing of a baby formula plant; claim-ing the bombed Amiriya bomb shelter was a military bunker; refusing to show photos of the carnage on the “mile of death” along the highway north of Kuwait. The White House has hands dripping with blood, as do the Democrats in Congress and their “Fourth Estate.” If this is "the Fourth Estate," as they recognize, it is a powerful weapon in the hands of revolutionaries, which is why they suppress it, and we report it.

Reagan/Bush lies about firing in self-defense, we wrote:

"By any standard of decency and moral- ity, the captain and responsible offi- cers of the Vincennes could be held guilty of a court-martial. Instead, they’re being treated as heroes. Because their orders were cut right at the top: shoot first and ask questions later. Reagan’s cops of the world are subjecting the people of the Near East to a grotesquely magnified version of the medieval treatment that mete out to racial minorities in American ghettos."

In 1992

OUR SPARKS ON THE ISSUE

"MASSACRE IN THE PERSIAN GULF"

"Just Thinking That the Newsweek Story on Vincennes Was a Hoax Was a Good Idea"

"Some of the Beans Finally Fall"
The Rap Flap

The fallout from the Los Angeles riots has continued to define the U.S. political landscape, including the recent presidential campaign proxy war over rap music and performers. After the racist acquittal of the L.A. cops who beat Rodney King, the nationwide escalation in police marauding has meant a surge of violence against blacks and Hispanics. This muscle-flexing is also reflected in the cops' campaign, now being championed by Bush and Quayle, against "gangsta" rapper Ice-T and his band Body Count for their hit song "Cop Killer."

Then came Democratic Party front-runner Bill Clinton's widely publicized denunciation of nationalist demagogue "rapper" Sister Souljah at Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition conference, which made headlines nationwide. Pick­ing up on Souljah's "get whitey" remarks made in a Washington Post interview, Clinton used the occasion to stage a calculated insult to Jackson on his home turf. Clinton's purpose was transparent: by turning Souljah into a new "Willie Horton," he was appealing for the white racist vote.

What's really behind all the claptrap about rap is little to do with the music, and a whole lot to do with the two cap­italist parties' playing up to racist reac­tionaries in an election year. The cops, of course, want a license to kick ass in the ghetto.

The hysteria surrounding Ice-T has reached ridiculous levels. Dan Quayle gets a standing ovation at a National Sheriffs' Association gathering for calling the rapper "revolting." Cops try to strong-arm record stores to boycott the album, to pressure Time-Warner (which owns the record label) to drop the band, and even to get theaters to stop showing Batman Returns because Warner Bros., its production company, is owned by Time-Warner.

Most recently, 60 mostly Republican Congressmen signed a letter expressing "our deep sense of outrage" over Time-Warner's distribution of the album. The campaign is undoubtedly having a chilling effect: last week it was revealed that Time-Warner had caved in by vetoing an album cover depicting a black man ambushing George Bush in front of the Capitol.

This is not the first time the cops have gone on the warpath to try to intimidate black musicians they don't like. In 1988, when Compton rap crew N.W.A. came out with the revenge fantasy "Fuck Tha Police," the FBI wrote threatening letters to N.W.A.'s record company, and cops around the country shut down the group's concerts—causing sales of the album to triple.

The racist hypocrisy of this latest campaign is so obvious even the New York Times (30 June) noted that while Bush intones, "I stand against those who use films or records or television or video games to glorify killing law enforcement officers," one of his biggest boosters is Arnold "Terminator" Schwarzenegger, whose character has killed and maimed dozens of policemen. In Hollywood, the trade term is "body count." Movies. But Schwarzenegger is, after all, an Austrian; Ice-T and N.W.A. are black.

What riles the cops is that rap songs like "Cop Killer" are immensely popular. Now why do you suppose that ghetto youth would groove on a celebration of cops eating lead? This is just fantasy; the reality is killer cops empying their service pistols (and "throwaway guns") into young blacks, killing several hun­dred a year.

And what really bugs these uniformed professional killers is the growing multiracial hatred of the cops ex­ploited by the L.A. riots. One of the rea­sons Ice-T's "Body Count" album may have been targeted is that it is a crossover attempt to reach a white audience: a black rap star singing (OK, screaming) with a white speed-metal band. Thanks in part to the reactionary campaign, it's selling like hotcakes.

Around the country, cops have been shutting down rap concerts in mid-song, beating and arresting black teenagers in the ensuing chaos, most recently last month in Boston and New Jersey. The reactionary campaign to force rap records to carry "Parental Advisory Explicit Lyrics" warnings has picked up steam, with a law passed in Seattle threatening arrest of store owners who sell such albums to kids.

Sure, lots of folks (especially older people and white folks) don't want young black music. But "hard core" rap's angry social commentary speaks to the experience of young blacks. Moreover, many white kids like rap, which irks mainstream conserv­atives and liberals no end; a partic­ularly spiky Newsworld (29 June) cover article sought to portray them as self-haters. Yet in many cases, a big reason is they go to schools that are still mar­gin­ally integrated, where they have black friends. The bipartisan assault on school integration seeks to undo that.

As a way of commenting on events, accessible to even the poor and illiterate, there is a worldwide tradition of troubadours composing lyrics about current events. There are reportedly already sev­eral Mexican corridos (popular songs) dealing with the L.A. riots. Ice-T says, "My life is violent, but violence is life." Peace is a dream, reality is a knife," a lot of black youth identify with it. In fact, it's one of the few things many black youth listen to. But rap is more than just passive reflection.

There certainly is an ugly side to the "messages" rap conveys, reflecting widespread backward attitudes in the ghettos, where anti-Semitism, sexism, anti-homosexual prejudice, and anti-Korean racism are noxious by-products of oppression. Thus former N.W.A. member Ice Cube's new album, Death Certificate, contains an anti-Korean threat called "Black Korea," addressed to Korean shop owners, in which he warns, "Pay respect to the black fist! Or we'll burn your store right down to a crisp." This vile racism toward another oppressed group can only serve the oppressor.

In contrast, Ice-T recently criticized his earlier putdowns of homosexuals, saying that to be consistent in defending freedom of expression, he had to support it for gays as well. He backed this up by performing at an AIDS benefit. And on the L.A. upheaval he remarked, "I just hope black people realize it's more a poverty-versus-money thing than a black-and-white thing" (Rolling Stone, 25 June).

Sister Souljah says her remarks quoted by the Washington Post—"if black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people?"—was taken out of context, that she was trying to convey the view of gang members, or she was afraid that whites don't care about blacks killing blacks but it would be different if whites got killed. Whatever—Sister Souljah's nationalist posturing makes all white people the enemy. Dead wrong. The racist capitalist system is the enemy.

Moreover, while fantasies about killing cops may have broad appeal, any attempt to carry this out would be stupidly suicidal. How many cops were killed in the L.A. riots? Zero. So what Sister Souljah's remarks feed into is going after the nearest available white person. It is this kind of false conscious­ness which led to the horrific beating of white trucker Reginald Denny during the L.A. riots, which is exactly what George Bush and Daryl Gates wanted.

In a more general way, no matter how offensive or misguided people may find particular songs, they are suppos­edly protected under First Amendment free speech provisions. But when Dan Quayle cynically cites the First Amend­ment, which he would dearly love to abolish, it's because he's more interested in promoting racist attacks by going after "PC" bans on "hate speech."

As we wrote two years ago during the Roundup of black youth in Los Angeles in aftermath of riots that exploded in outrage at acquittal of cops who brutally beat Rodney King.
June 7—Protest against exclusion of homosexuals and Trotskyists at the "LO Fête" (left said): "For LO ‘Death of Communism’ Means Comrades Get Out!"

controversy over Miami rappers 2 Live Crew and the Justice Department's stand on the rights of young people to get their hands on whatever turns them on and part of the actions that led to the exclusion of all homosexuals and Trotskyists.

Rappin' with the Enemy

It's not just the Republicans who find rap music and rap performers a convenient foil for advancing their reactionar- ary agendas. When Clinton denounced Sister Souljah he was deliberately stig- ing an incident to embarrass Jesse Jackson. Souljah's song "Date Rape" is not only about "riot," it's also an invective against the "white rule." A right-wing "communist" public figure, is the "real" stem of this revolution.

By bandying about "reverse racism," even grotesquely comparing Souljah to the black "picketer," Clinton is pushing with Bush for the white racist vote-by osten- tiously kicking blacks and labor in the teeth.

Meanwhile, Dan Quayle's recent "family values" campaign, directed against the "cultural elite" supposedly infesting the entertainment industry, schools and the social services of the country-the LFT (left), through its LCF (leftist group) published its own "rll" issue, at the end of the year, contrasting the cultural elite of the LFT (left) and the cultural elite of the Daily Worker. The LFT's position is that cultural elites are corrupt and reactionary, but that this corruption and reaction is not the same as that of the cultural elites of the LFT (left), which are the cultural elites of the daily worker.

As for the so-called angry "militant" Sister Souljah, what was she doing at Jackson's Rainbow Coalition? She was on a panel discussion of voter registra- tion as a road to "empower" black youth, by making them voting cattle for the Democrats. Souljah, aka Lisa William- son, was a spokesman for the Brooklyn-based December 12 Movement headed by the Communist Party USA. In the 1960s for his anti-Semitism, since Jew­ ish shopkeepers left the ghettoes he is now gone to the Asians.

As Reagan and Bush were hoping the "war on drugs" as a way to in- crease the presence in the ghetto, Williamson was tight with Carson's "Black Men's Movement Against Drug Raids" which conducted a number of raids. During the 1990 protests fol- lowing the murder of Yusuf Hawkins by white racists in Bensonhurst, the December 12 Movement was organiz- ing a racist boycott of the Korean­ owned Red Apple deli. Carson's bunch also played a despicable role in last year's turmoil in Crown Heights, whip- ping up anti-Semitism against Hassidic Jews, and leading marches against synagogues by black youth chanting "Shut 'em Down!"

In these elections every one of the cap- italist candidates is a certifiable racist— and everyone knows it. Jackson's pitiful bluster that he'll now consider endorsing the sinister corporatist rightist Perot reflects the utterly bankrupt black leadership in this country today. From Tom Bradley in Los Angeles, to Maynard Jackson in Atlanta, to David Dinkins in New York, the black leadership have been called in the racist cops to bust the heads of protesters against the King verdict. For all the talk of "fight the power," the most graphic rap songs of "dusting/ icing/ smacking" are cries of impo- tence. If the talentless Sister Souljah can get a hearing when she claims that "white people" want to destroy black African people wherever they are in the world, it is because the black public is so brutally correct that an oppressive force is out to destroy them. That force is spearheaded by the government of the capitalist class, which also oppresses and exploits tens of millions of white workers. As a result, the black mass of the people of every color around the globe.

To defeat that evil power and not just scream at it, you need to mobilize a su- premum power, the power of the working people. Black capitalism was a revo- lutionary, integrated vanguard party which can mobilize the proletariat, in- cluding the poor and oppressed of the ghettoes and barrios, in a victorious fight for socialist revolution.
Abortion...  
(continued from page 1)  
by Planned Parenthood and the ACLU, was a political maneuver calculated to bring about a reactionary decision, with which these liberals hoped to heat up the abortion issue and help elect a Democrat. Even among the overwhelmingly white and middle-class crowd who turned out for the mourned pro-choice rally in Washington on April 3, which featured Democratic and Republican speakers as well as repeated attempts by the NOW organizers to keep leftists limber," many young protesters were far from enthusiastic about electoral politics. While NOW, NARAL, et al. stick to the courts and the halls of Congress, these young women and men have time and again been prepared to put their bodies on the line, defending abortion clinics against reactionary bigots in Wichita, Buffalo and elsewhere. But between the lines, as the young people in mass social struggle to defend abortion, their energy and commitment are being cynically exploited to obtain a Democratic electoral victory.

Democrats Push Reactionary "Family Values"  
The Democrats hope to capitalize on widespread support for abortion rights to catapult Clinton into the White House. Clinton immediately seized on Blackmun's vote as a victory for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. This is a pretty thin reed for defenders of abortion rights to catch at in order to salvage abortion. The 1976 Hyde Amendment denying access to safe abortion to poor women was passed with one voice. Thus the bill would impose parental notification for teens, allow states to deny abortion. The 1976 Hyde Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot. The Democrats made it clear that they would push hard for the Freedom of Choice Act in the days before the Republican convention in August, knowing that Bush would veto it and hopefully shoot himself in the foot.

"cynically exploited to obtain a simple democratic right to a medical procedure which is now one of the safest in the world. But the reactionary bigots see abortion as a threat to the institution of the family, a bulwark of social reaction, which along with organized religion prop up the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. Therefore abortion is a threat to the ideal of the family, which these liberals hoped to heat up the abortion issue and help elect a Democrat. Even among the overwhelmingly white and middle-class crowd who turned out for the mourned pro-choice rally in Washington on April 3, which featured Democratic and Republican speakers as well as repeated attempts by the NOW organizers to keep leftists limber," many young protesters were far from enthusiastic about electoral politics. While NOW, NARAL, et al. stick to the courts and the halls of Congress, these young women and men have time and again been prepared to put their bodies on the line, defending abortion clinics against reactionary bigots in Wichita, Buffalo and elsewhere. But between the lines, as the young people in mass social struggle to defend abortion, their energy and commitment are being cynically exploited to obtain a Democratic electoral victory.

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SANTA ANA, July 7—The hated immigration police, the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) has threatened mass deportations of janitors and the thousands of unemployed drywall workers and offered them up to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.) in Santa Ana, adding to the already two million deportations.

Early in the morning on July 2, strikers were able to militantly shut down a construction site in posh Mission Viejo, but by the end of the day, they were held in a cage in the Orange County sheriff's headquarters.

In an ominous development, it was announced last month in Washington that the INS has increased its raids and deportations of undocumented workers.

In Los Angeles, a march of counterrevolutionaries against labor renewed in the form of raids and deportations. The march of countersubversion across East Europe has meant increasing attacks on women. In recent years, the labor movement has seen an increased use of immigration law to break labor union drives by janitors, hotel workers, and building contractors.

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The Anti-Defamation League, an organization that fights anti-Semitism, has called for an end to the INS raids.

The labor movement, especially the powerful industrial unions like longshore and aerospace, must defeat INS union-busting and the racist immigration police of the capitalist state.

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Los Angeles... (continued from page 12)

the pernicious channeling of black anger not against the state but against Korean store owners. But what really shook the rulers of this country was this was an integrated explosion of pent-up anger by the poor, minority and working people whom they have viciously ground down. The L.A. riots were widely seen as a “wake-up call to America.” Various liberals and reformists saw this as an opportunity to cement a new “popular front.” Thus Mike Davis wrote: “Most of our political and business leaders have suddenly given lip service to problems that have ‘the war between the haves and the have-nots.’ If they are sincere, then surely they must recognize what Los Angeles most desperately needs is not a Pyrrhic ‘victory’ over riots, but a truce between hostile ethnic and economic strata that can become a framework for negotiating a new social contract to replace the faded vision of the Bradley years.”

Los Angeles Times (15 May)

While Davis dreams of erecting some kind of “New Deal” on the smoldering ruins of South-Central Los Angeles, the only deal the bosses have to offer the working class, poor and minorities is an increasingly raw one. Rather than the pipe dream of class peace under a white liberal state, what we are witnessing is a desperate ruse to contain a potentially explosive class struggle. As we wrote in our article “L.A. Uprheaval Shocks the Nation” (No. 551, 15 May): “Conditions are overripe for a massive social explosion in this country extending from the ghettos and Hispanic barrios to white skilled workers, many of whom one paycheck away from bankruptcy and eviction. The eruption of integrated protests following the acquittal of the racist cops in the Rodney King case signals the potential for just such a new wave of militant social struggle.” To realize this potential, what is required is a multiracial revolutionary party that can bring to bear the consciousness and organization necessary to direct the anger and outrage that erupted in L.A., and reverberated across the country, into a revolutionary fight to sweep away this whole system of capitalist exploitation, racism and poverty.

Foot’s Paradise for the Rich, Nightmare for the Poor

The megatrends of the 1980s—brought home in massive union-busting, slashing social programs for blacks and Hispanics, starving the poor and aged, and a wholesale legal counterrevolution abrogating democratic rights—was a program that had been playing out in California over the last 25 years, ever since Reagan was elected governor in 1966. He then threw a liberal backlash following the 1965 Watts rebellion in L.A., he campaigned as the “law and order” candidate who would root out “welfare cheats,” hold the line against integrated “fair housing” legislation and otherwise use an iron heel to keep blacks, Hispanics and the burgeoning Vietnamese antiracist movement in line.

The Reaganites’ “supply side econom­ics” of cutting taxes for the rich and upper income suburbanites, while stealing money from welfare mothers and inner city school kids, was presaged in the 1978 Proposition 13 “tax revolt” led by Howard Jarvis, head of the Apartment Association of L.A. A white middle-class revolt against government programs viewed as benefiting the ghettos and barrios, in L.A. the Prop 13 “movement” was linked with BUSSTOP, a racist mobilization that smashed even the limited moves that were ordered in 1978 for school integration (after a 15-year court battle). Blacks, Latinos and the poor were increasingly immiserated and rigidly segregated. Welfare was slashed, libraries and hospitals were devastated, the public school system was ravaged. The former “education state,” California now ranks 48th among the 50 states in per capita expenditure on public education.

In the 1980s, big businesses reaped huge tax windfalls from Prop 13 (Stand­ard Oil for example saved $47 million a year). The California ‘defense’ indus­tries grew fat off the biggest peacetime military buildup in U.S. history. Real estate magnates secured tax breaks for development scams and speculation that earned them fortunes while looting rev­enue for social programs. The “L.A. 2000” report boasted of the region’s “robust” economy: “the largest aerospace center in the world; the greatest concent­ration of high-tech industries; and a healthy manufacturing sector. The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach presently handle the highest volume of shipping of any port in the nation. Moreover, the ports offer direct access to Pacific Rim countries, many of which are exhibiting spectacular economic growth.” But the rulers were living in a fool’s paradise on borrowed money and borrowed time.

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the counterrevo­lutionary ascendancy in the Soviet Union burst the bubble for war industry in the West. One-third of Southern California’s aerospace workforce has been axed and hundreds of thousands more layoffs are coming down the pipes. Last week the L.A.-based Hughes Aircraft announced the dismissal of 9,000 workers. Mean­while, East Asian flight capital has taken flight. Just as Reagan financed his “Star Wars” and other military boondoggles through massive borrowing from Japa­nese moneymen, German bankers and Arab oil sheiks, the “redevelopment” of downtown L.A. was financed by foreign capital. And while the L.A. ports were the busiest in the country, as Mike Davis points out, “more than half the contain­ers which arrive in San Pedro filled with computers, cars and televisions return with nothing in them” (City of Quartz). Of course, there isn’t much to trade.

The industrial heartland of Southeast Los Angeles has been transformed into a virtual “free trade zone” of low-wage sweatshop labor which, in the words of one economic analyst, was creating “head-to-head not with Germany and Japan, but with Bangladesh and the Philip­pines.” More to the point, Mexican workers earning the minimum wage in L.A. are competing with Mexican workers earning one-tenth the minimum wage over the border in the maquiladora plants of Tijuana, which has grown from a backwater town into an industrial center producing for the American market. At the bottom, L.A.’s “growth economy” is a nightmare of an increasingly marginalized black popu­lation, for hundreds of thousands of dis­enfranchised and bruised Puerto Rican, Latino and East Asian immigrants, and for white unionized workers who have seen their jobs disappear.

Over the past decade one of the biggest growth industries in L.A. has been private security firms who run Attempts in rich white neighborhoods. NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) yuppies have banded together in defense of the “environment” against new development. At a 1987 con­ference of “Not Yet New York,” one group called for a “New Bowery Room” (or as the Nazis called it, Lebens­raum) initiative to restrict immigration, seal the border with Mexico, impose an obligatory “family planning.” As Davis puts it: “hysterical homeowners’ associ­ations’ supported by the LAPD have begun to wage war against the very immigrant labor upon which their master­race fantasies depend.” Meanwhile real estate magnates and developers have demagogically presented themselves as the defenders of the “high-rise hous­ing for the working class and minorities against the “slow growth” NIMBYs.”

L.A. has not been the only place to see swift housing since the early 1950s, when any further plans were defeated by a Los Angeles Times-canvassed campaign designed to make them as “socialist.” Today whole families of immigrants are crammed into tiny apartments where they have to “hot bed it” (sleep in shifts) to get any rest. Others live in “reconverted” garages with no plumbing or electricity. To get to the office buildings and homes that they clean, they have to walk for hours by bus. (Until recently there has been no rapid transit in L.A., as it was also proclaimed to be “socialistic” by a cabal of West Side developers and General Motors.)

And while City Council members debate deporting the homeless to the Santa Monica mountains, they have implemented various “design innova­tions” to make life even more miserable for the completely destitute. The last public toilet in L.A.’s Skid Row, “Nickel,” directly abutting the Downtown civic center, was bulldozed. Round-top “bum-proof” benches, uncomfortable to sit on and impossible to sleep on, were installed at bus stops. An overhead sprinkler system in “Skid Row Park” is turned on randomly at night to drive out the homeless. In the winter of 1987, when the temperature plummeted and a number of people died on the streets, the cardboard shan­dies erected by the homeless to protect themselves were bulldozed. LAPD. The head of the Planning Com­mission explained that while it was not “illegal” to sleep on the sidewalk “any sort of protective shelter” was against the law.

“The Thin Blue Line”

L.A. has been a seething volcano just waiting to explode and the rulers sitting on it knew it. The police force “holding the line” against the majority of the city’s population—on whose backs a thin layer at the top were enriching themselves—was the LAPD. As John Gregory Dunning wrote in the New York Review of Books (24 October 1991), “the department functions more like a

WORKERS VANGUARD
panzer division than a normal police force, a high-tech army on wheels trained to respond to incidents in seven minutes or less. The LAPD, equipped with helicopters, equipped with 30 million candlepower spotlight called “Night- turn,” and a “Night Owl” that picked up targets 19 hours a day. To facilitate joint action with forces on the ground, rooftops have been rented as observation posts.” Davis’ words, “transforming the aerial view of the city into a huge police grid.”

In an article to the New York Times about Los Angeles,

sublevels of City Hall is housed the most powerful, state-of-the-art police communicato...
Four years ago, in a report commissioned by L.A. mayor Tom Bradley, Los Angeles was hyped as a "vibrant mosaic," the "leading hub of world trade," a "crossroads city" that "welcomes and encourages diversity." The 1988 report entitled PART ONE OF TWO LaA. 2000, sponsored by L.A. mayor Tom Bradley, Los Angeles will be the third-largest financial center in the U.S. With the highest percentage of immigrants of any city in the country (over 40 percent of the total population), it was perhaps the most ethnically diverse metropolis in the world. The L.A. school district reports that over 80 languages are spoken by its students, while the London Economist describes Los Angeles as a place where one can buy a kosher burrito in a store run by Koreans. But in this epoch of capitalist decay, the melting pot has become a pressure cooker. With this intense social change and strife on its doorstep, the film industry has produced a spate of recent films on the L.A. cauldron, from the white liberal Grand Canyon to the black nationalist Boys N the Hood.

There has also been an avalanche of books on changing L.A., including David Rieff’s vapid Los Angeles: Capital of the Third World (Simon & Schuster, 1991), the diverse collection of essays edited by David Reid, Sex, Death and God in L.A. (Pantheon, 1992), and leftist author Mike Davis’ wide-ranging and knowledgeable City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles (Verso, 1990). In The Third Century: America’s Resurgence in the Asian Era, Joel Kotkin argued that the massive immigration of Asians and Latinos to L.A. was emblematic of a new “Manifest Destiny” for the declining “American Empire,” in which the U.S. would emerge as a “world nation” with links to virtually every inhabitable part of the globe. But far from representing a revivified future for American imperialist global exploitation and competition, Los Angeles’ much-vaunted “growth economy” epitomized the decay and parasitism of U.S. capitalism.

The shameless looting of productive investment and destruction of industry was personified by Michael Milken, the ‘80s junk bond king who operated out of Beverly Hills. While Milken raked in a $500 million “salary” in one year, tens of thousands of workers in L.A.’s auto, steel and rubber plants were thrown out of their jobs as the plants were closed down in the deindustrialization of America. Today over half of black youth in L.A. are unemployed, driven back and isolated on increasingly mean streets. Hovering above them, the “Blue Thunder” helicopters of L.A.’s paramilitary police force maintain a reign of terror over the ghettos and barrios, against the poor and homeless. And then with the blatant injustice of the racist Simi Valley verdict letting the LAPD killer cops walk, to paraphrase the city’s motto, it “all came together in L.A.”

What followed was a multiracial social upheaval. The media show endless returns of the brutal beating of white truck driver Reginald Denny, trying to paint the conflagration as a vicious race riot (naturally, they play down the fact that Denny was rescued by blacks). There were ugly incidents, particularly continued on page 10