

## Binding Arbitration: Strikebreaking Trap

# Capitalist Rulers Rattled by GM Strike

**For International Labor Solidarity,  
Not Chauvinist Protectionism!**

JULY 28—As we go to press, a tentative agreement has been announced in the Flint, Michigan United Auto Workers (UAW) strike against General Motors. Workers will be voting on the proposed settlement beginning tomorrow. For seven weeks, 9,200 UAW members have virtually shut down the largest corporation in the world, which alone accounts for 1 percent of America's entire economic output. Yet on July 16, the treacherous UAW misleaders agreed to submit the question of the "legality" of the strike to binding arbitration, placing the fate of this crucial class battle in the hands of the class enemy—the capitalist courts.

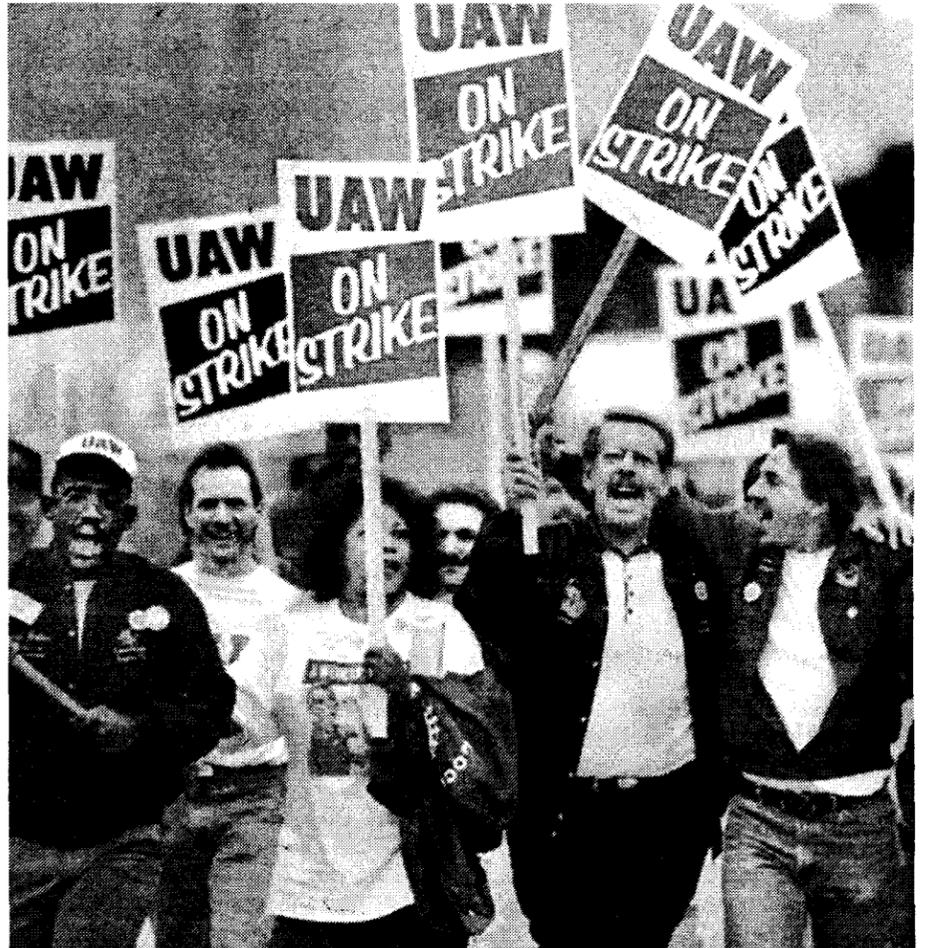
GM, backed by Wall Street and all the agencies of the capitalist government, has long wanted to take the ax to a workforce that one bourgeois press agency called "the last bastion of the closed shop in America." Amid the intensified imperialist competition that has followed the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, American bosses seek to restore the spectacular profit rates of capitalism's freebooting, non-union days. Standing in their way is the legacy of the 1937 Flint sit-down strikes, which more than six decades ago ignited an explo-

sion of labor organizing that created the UAW and other mass industrial unions.

The current Flint strike has been both solid and popular, particularly with other auto workers who, like the strikers, have been worked half to death through speedup and forced overtime but who also labor in fear that their jobs will disappear tomorrow. As Flint workers walked the picket lines, GM parts workers in Indianapolis and Dayton also voted to strike, as did UAW members at the GM-Toyota NUMMI assembly plant in Fremont, California, whose contract expires on July 31. But most significant of all was the 96 percent strike authorization vote on July 19 at the Saturn assembly plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee.

Saturn was the only GM assembly plant in the U.S. to continue production during the Flint strike. Just four months before, workers had voted to maintain the Saturn contract, which has been lauded as a model of union-management "cooperation" by supposedly giving workers a say in production procedures. But management threats to slash jobs by vastly expanding the number of parts made outside the plant spurred workers

*continued on page 6*



AP  
Flint UAW Local 659 members walk off the job, June 5, beginning strike action which led to almost complete shutdown of GM factories in North America.

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!**

# Death Row Speedup Targets Minorities

On July 13, the state of Florida agreed to give \$500,000 each to Freddie Pitts and Wilbert Lee to settle a wrongful conviction claim. The two black men were sentenced to die by an all-white jury for the killing of two white gas station attendants in 1963. Pitts and Lee were tried a

second time after a white man confessed to the murders—and again convicted by an all-white jury. After nine years on death row, they were finally pardoned in 1975. And it was not until 35 years after their frame-up that they won some token compensation for the racist horror to which they had been subjected.

What is unusual about this case is simply that Freddie Pitts and Wilbert Lee lived to see their vindication. As a new study by the Death Penalty Information Center documents—certainly not for the first time—the death penalty is racist to

the core. It is legal lynching, pure and simple. Blacks make up 42 percent of the country's nearly 3,400 death row inmates, well over three times their proportion of the population. And the states of the old Southern slavocracy account for an overwhelming percentage of those executed.

The focus of *The Death Penalty in Black and White: Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides* is far removed geographically from the Florida backwoods where Pitts and Lee had their near-fatal encounter with lynch law "justice." It is Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—not Philadelphia,

Mississippi—which has become known as "the capital of capital punishment." Home to only 14 percent of Pennsylvania's population, Philadelphia accounts for the bulk of the state's death row inmates—and 83 percent of them are black. In the period examined by the study, 1983-93, black defendants in Philadelphia were sentenced to death nearly *four times* more often than whites. In the years since, blacks received eight of the ten death sentences handed down in 1994, ten of ten in 1995, three of four in 1996.

Notably, the study omits *the* Philadelphia case which has come to exemplify the racist death penalty in this country: the frame-up of black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. In the 16 years since he was falsely convicted for the December 1981 killing of a Philadelphia policeman, Mumia's fight for freedom has become the focus of opposition to the death penalty. The pro-death forces made this clear in their own chilling way

*continued on page 10*



# Philly TWU Tops Scuttle SEPTA Strike

JULY 26—Manning picket lines for 40 days without strike benefits, 5,500 members of Philadelphia's Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 234 held strong against a full-scale union-busting offensive by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), only to be sold down the Delaware River by the union leadership. Although the strike was solid, shutting down public transit in the city, on July 10 the union tops reached an agreement that was like Christmas in July for the SEPTA bosses. Despite the "victory" claims of Local 234 president Steve Brookens, the union leadership largely capitulated to SEPTA, agreeing to solidify the union-busting two-tier system already in existence and give up union control over a whole range

of work rules. Under the agreement, new workers are to be hired at 60 percent of the top rate and can only reach top pay after four years. As the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (14 July) smugly noted:

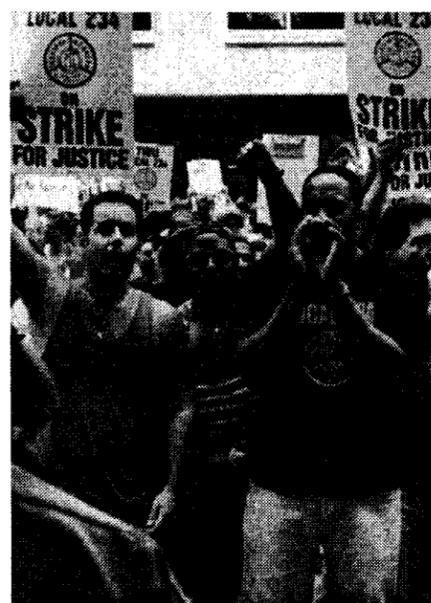
"SEPTA got much of what it demanded back in March in terms of work rules, workers' comp reform, health-care savings, attendance and disciplinary policy, and a near-zero-tolerance drug and alcohol policy."

Saddled by a leadership which was incapable of leading this fight to victory, on July 24 union members voted 3 to 1 to accept the contract, *even though key contract terms have yet to be agreed upon*. Brookens & Co. never wanted this fight to begin with, and all along looked to the racist, anti-labor government to effect a "fair" settlement. Throughout the strike,

union leaders announced they would call it off if SEPTA agreed to binding arbitration. Brookens got what he asked for, and on July 11 the picket lines came down. Key issues such as the hiring of part-time workers will be submitted to arbitration, i.e., placed in the hands of agents of the capitalist state charged with forcing through anti-union settlements. So beholden are the union misleaders to the bosses' government that the union doesn't even know what the terms submitted to arbitration will be, only that its members will be bound hand and foot.

Against this sell-out policy, we called for a class-struggle fight to win the strike, including extending the strike by picketing regional rail and bus lines which transport suburbanites to their office jobs in Center City. It also would have meant mobilizing the city's black and Hispanic poor, who are ready allies of labor in this city of grinding poverty, vicious segregation and brutal cop terror. To do so would have required defying the anti-union court injunctions and the notoriously racist Philly cops who were mobilized to enforce them.

But this is just what the TWU tops would not do, because they are thoroughly tied to the capitalist system and its anti-labor laws. Giving new meaning to the term "toothless leadership," Brookens boasted to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (19 July) about his ploy of sitting at the negotiating table in a union T-shirt (leaving his \$500 suits at home) and appearing on TV with his teeth missing in order to win "sympathy." While denouncing Democratic mayor and union-buster Ed Rendell, TWU officials preached reliance on "good" local Dem-



Philadelphia TWU rally. Strike shut down city transit for nearly six weeks before sellout by union tops.

ocrats and the Clinton administration. This was made clear through the role of "friend of labor" Democratic Congressman Robert Brady, whom the *Inquirer* (12 July) called the "pivotal intermediary" in reaching the rotten agreement.

As we wrote in *WV* No. 693 (3 July): "There must be a political fight inside the labor movement against its misleaders, whose strategy of reliance on capitalist politicians and the capitalist courts is a sure road to defeat. To mobilize labor's social power, not only in its own interests but on behalf of all those oppressed, requires the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party committed to ending racist capitalist rule through socialist revolution." ■

## The Anti-Colonial Struggle and Socialist Revolution



TROTSKY

*Championing the emancipation of peoples subjugated under the yoke of imperialism is critical in developing revolutionary socialist consciousness among workers in the U.S. and other capitalist powers. Writing on the eve of World War II, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky underlined the crucial importance of forging a revolutionary international party to link the struggles of the oppressed colonial and semicolonial masses to the fight for*



LENIN

*socialist revolution, particularly in the imperialist centers. Pointing to the role of pro-capitalist labor "leaders" like the AFL's William Green and John L. Lewis of the CIO, Trotsky stressed that in the U.S. such a party can only be built through sharp political struggle against the chauvinist trade-union bureaucracy.*

A year sooner or later, the question will be presented in a very acute form: Who is master on this continent? The imperialists of the United States or the working masses who people all the nations of America?

This question, by its very essence, can only be resolved by an open conflict of forces, that is to say by revolution, or more exactly, a series of revolutions. In those struggles against imperialism will participate, on the one hand, the American proletariat, in the interests of its own defense; and on the other hand, the Latin American peoples, who are struggling for their emancipation, and who *precisely for that reason* will support the struggle of the American proletariat.

It can be clearly deduced from what has been said that we far from recommend to the Latin American people that they passively await the revolution in the United States or that the North American workers fold their arms until the Latin American peoples' moment of victory arrives. He who waits passively gets nothing. It is necessary to continue the struggle without interruption, to extend and deepen it, in harmony with the actually existing historical conditions. But at the same time, one must comprehend the reciprocal relation between the two principal currents of the contemporary struggle against imperialism. By merging at a certain stage, definite triumph can be assured.

Naturally, this doesn't mean to say that Lewis and Green will become outstanding advocates of the Socialist Federation of the American continent. No, they will remain in the camp of imperialism until the very end. It also will not mean that the *whole* proletariat will learn to see that in the liberation of the Latin American peoples lies its own emancipation. Nor will the entire Latin American people comprehend that a community of interests exists between them and the American working class. But the very fact that a parallel struggle goes on will signify that an objective alliance exists between them; perhaps not a formal alliance, but, indeed, a very active one. The sooner the American proletariat *vanguard* in North, Central, and South America understands the necessity for a closer revolutionary collaboration in the struggle against the common enemy, the more tangible and fruitful that alliance will be. To clarify, illustrate, and organize that struggle—herein lies one of the most important tasks of the Fourth International.

—Leon Trotsky, "Ignorance Is Not a Revolutionary Instrument" (30 January 1939)

## Drop All Charges Against Ann Arbor Anti-Klan Protesters!

The following protest letter was sent by the Partisan Defense Committee to Washtenaw County, Michigan prosecutor Brian Mackie on July 28. The PDC has sent a contribution of \$200 for the legal defense of the anti-Klan protesters and encourages *WV* readers to send contributions earmarked "Anti-Klan Defendants" to United for Equality and Affirmative Action, P.O. Box 24462, Kensington Station, Detroit, MI 48224.

The Partisan Defense Committee condemns the arrests and sinister witchhunt of participants in an anti-KKK protest on May 9, organized by the National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition (NWROC) and Anti-Racist Action. Many of them face up to ten years in prison for the "crime" of protesting racist genocide. We demand that all charges against the anti-Klan protesters be dropped!

Two months after some 500 outraged demonstrators turned out to protest the KKK on May 9, your office has unleashed a chilling dragnet, attempting to round up all those targeted from photos and videotapes of the demonstration. More ominous is your threat to post the pictures on

the city's Web page and print them in law enforcement journals, a setup for random cop harassment and worse.

The State of Michigan has been carrying out a crusade against those who protest race terror. Being the first state to end welfare, Michigan has simultaneously devoted tremendous resources to protect those who wish to murder the black population as they are driven further into immiseration. The horrifying lynching of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas illustrates the Klan's program for blacks.

Part and parcel of the state's campaign against those who "step out of line" is their determination to exact revenge on all who dare to protest the fascist scum. We recall how Ann Arbor's racist city cops rioted against anti-Klan demonstrators in 1996.

Among those facing frame-up charges today are NWROC leaders Shanta Driver and Jessica Curtin. This blatant political witchhunt is clearly aimed at squelching the right to protest racist genocide. Hands off NWROC and Anti-Racist Action!

Sincerely,  
Cheri Mitchell, for the  
Partisan Defense Committee

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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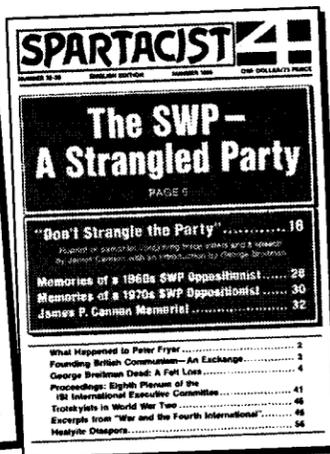
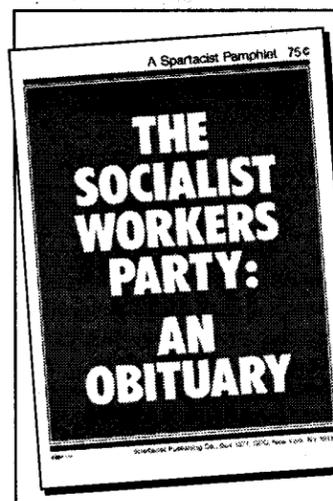
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# In Memory of Frank Lovell

Frank Lovell, a leading trade unionist of the revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the late 1930s, '40s and '50s, died of a heart attack in New York on May 1. He was 84 years old. A member of the SWP at its founding in 1938, longtime member of the party's National Committee and leader of its Detroit branch in the 1950s, Frank remained active in the SWP after it abandoned a revolutionary perspective in the early 1960s. Frank and his wife of many years, Sarah, were among the veteran party members expelled by the Jack Barnes leadership in 1983 after Barnes renounced Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, bringing the SWP's theoretical views into consonance with its (by then) thoroughly reformist practice.

At the time of his death, Frank was an active member of the editorial board of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism (BIDOM)*, the journal which he initiated for the "Fourth Internationalist Tendency" after his expulsion from the SWP. *BIDOM* continues the political orientation of the SWP of the 1970s, combining a nostalgic claim to Trotskyist heritage with uncritical enthusing for Fidel Castro, support to black nationalism, and an abject tailing of "progressive" labor fakers like Ron Carey of the Teamsters. Throughout Lovell's trade-union work, in the SWP and afterward in *BIDOM*, he defended a strategy of blocs and maneuvers with elements of the trade-union bureaucracy as more effective than the Spartacist League's programmatic intransigence, which he considered "sectarian."

Frank provided periodic assistance to archival projects of the Prometheus Research Library (PRL), library and archive of the Central Committee of the SL/U.S. We publish below a letter of condolence sent by the PRL's archivist to Frank's family, comrades and friends. Accompanying the letter is a historical document from the PRL collection pertaining to Frank's history as a revolutionist: a 1938 letter by then-SWP leader Max Shachtman asking Frank to move to New York City. Lovell had joined the Workers Party (as the Trotskyists were then called) in 1935 in California; shortly afterward, he began to sail as a member of the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP). He was among the first of the younger party members sent into the union movement during the working-class upsurge that built the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The Trotskyists concentrated their maritime forces in the SUP and the Marine Firemen's union on the West Coast and, on the East Coast in their affiliate, the Seafarers' International Union—all non-CIO unions which engaged in often bitter struggle with the CIO-affiliated National Maritime Union (NMU). Centered on the Eastern seaboard, the NMU was founded in 1937 and had a membership which was heavily black and influenced by the Stalinist Communist Party (CP).

Shachtman's letter asks Lovell to lead the party's fledgling work in the NMU, noting that the Trotskyist paper, then called the *Socialist Appeal*, was covering the internal situation in the union but that the Political Committee (PC) was unhappy with the personnel in the fraction. Frank did spend substantial time in New York in 1938-39, as he recounted in his memoir of SWP leader James P. Cannon (see *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*, Pathfinder Press [1976]). But Trotskyist work in the NMU did not then get off the ground. Lovell himself remained a member of the SUP, returning to California by 1940.

The SWP's bloc with the SUP leadership led by Harry Lundberg, a militant syndicalist but virulent racist and anti-Communist, undercut the Trotskyists' ability to appeal to the Stalinist-influenced workers in the NMU, as Dick Fraser, another veteran of the SWP's maritime work, later detailed in "A Letter to American Trotskyists: Too Little, Too Late" (originally published in *Revolutionary Age* in 1974, reprinted in "In Memoriam: Richard S. Fraser—An Appreciation and Selection of His Work," *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3 [August 1990]). The intense battle between the Trotskyists and Stalinists for influence in the maritime unions was reflected in a 1946-47 exchange of pamphlets—the SWP replied to Herb Tank's *Communists on the Waterfront* with Art Preis's *Stalinists on the Waterfront*. Tank, a particularly vicious Stalinist hack, wrote *Inside Job! The Story of Trotskyite Intrigue in the Labor Movement* around the same time.

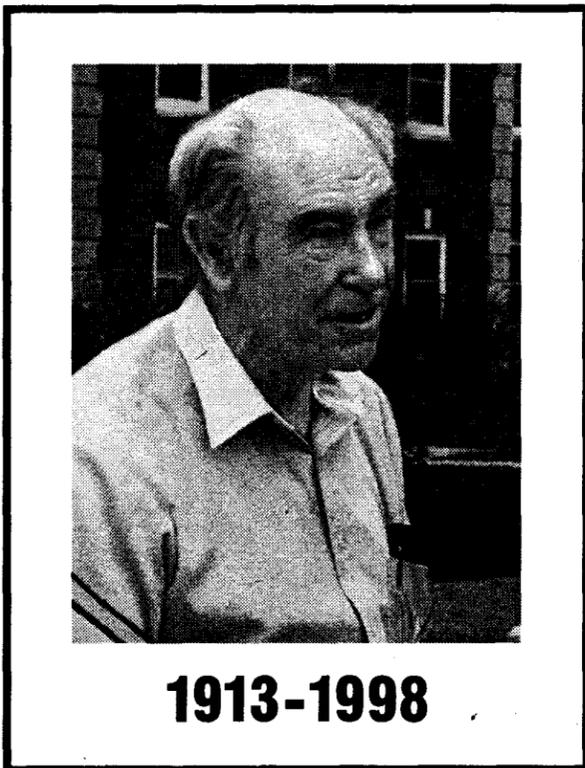
Frank Lovell's cothinkers in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* are planning a September 20 memorial meeting at New York University's Tamiment Library.

\* \* \*

8 June 1998

To the family, friends and comrades of Frank Lovell,

I share your sorrow at Frank's passing. He was a warm man, a good-hearted man who stood out among the remaining veterans of the American Trotskyist movement of the 1930s-1950s in the value he put on docu-



WV Photo

menting the history of American communism. Despite the wide political gulf that separates the Spartacist League from the veteran SWPers expelled by Jack Barnes in the early 1980s, Frank never let sectarian political concerns stand in the way of archival collaboration. He was always ready to answer a historical question or lend me some assistance in my work for the Prometheus Research Library. I will miss his resonant voice and his direct participant's knowledge of the history of the revolutionary Socialist Workers Party.

I first got to know Frank when we began working with George Breitman in 1984, compiling the material that became our book, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism, Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-28*. Frank brought George to the library on one occasion, and was present at a few of our working meetings. After George's death, when we put aside work on the book for a period in order to concentrate on our *Prometheus Research Series*, Frank was not happy. Every time I saw him at a political event in the city he would demand, "Where's that Cannon book? Why aren't you working on it?" He was overjoyed when I told him we had resumed work on the project in the early 1990s. He provided biographical details for some of the early American Trotskyists listed in the book glossary. In his review of the book for *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, Frank noted (with a predictable peevish nod to our considerable political differences), "The editors have produced a thoroughly professional work and deserve to be congratulated and forgiven their political lapses."

I had some sharp political fights with Frank, but he always remained ready to exchange information and the occasional political document. After I moved to California most of our contact was by phone, but I would visit him when in New York. He was always willing to plumb his memory banks when we had questions; occasionally the PRL could reciprocate when Frank called for a fact or date. He identified for us a number of the party names used in SWP Political Committee minutes of the 1950s; most recently he assisted when I had a few factual questions for the *Workers Vanguard* obituary for Myra Tanner Weiss. He was careful to underline to me that he had had big political disagreements with Myra too.

I found in the PRL collection the attached letter from Max Shachtman to Frank, written 2 August 1938, on the eve of the founding of the Socialist Workers Party. The letter urgently requests that Frank come to New York to take charge of the party's fraction in the National Maritime Union. I sent a copy of this letter to Frank in 1996, and thought you might appreciate seeing a copy now. It was as a leader of Trotskyist work in the maritime unions that Frank won his spurs as a leader of the SWP. In the collection of the Prometheus Research Library you can find Frank's book *Maritime: A Historical Sketch, A Workers' Program*, published in 1943 under the name of Frederick J. Lang and dedicated to the party seamen who lost their

lives in WWII (some of them on the deadly Murmansk run, attempting to carry Trotskyist propaganda to the workers of Stalin's Russia). Frank's contributions to the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party will be built upon by future generations of revolutionary Trotskyists.

Fraternally,  
Emily Turnbull  
For the Prometheus Research Library

\* \* \*

August 2, 1938

Los Angeles, California

Dear Frank,

I don't know just what your plans are at the present time, but I consider it of urgent importance that you orient immediately to coming to New York to establish a base here.

I will not go into great detail at the present moment on the general situation in the union on the east coast, you have probably read about it in the press, and will read even more in the current issue of the *Appeal*. Suffice it to say that the Stalinists have never been so hard pressed in the NMU as at the present time.

The danger at the present time is not so much the Stalinists as the weakness and confusion of the generally inchoate rank and file movement which has, no doubt, some excellent elements and, as you probably know, some very reactionary elements. If ever the indispensability of clear headed Bolshevik leadership in a union fight stood out, it is now in the NMU fight.

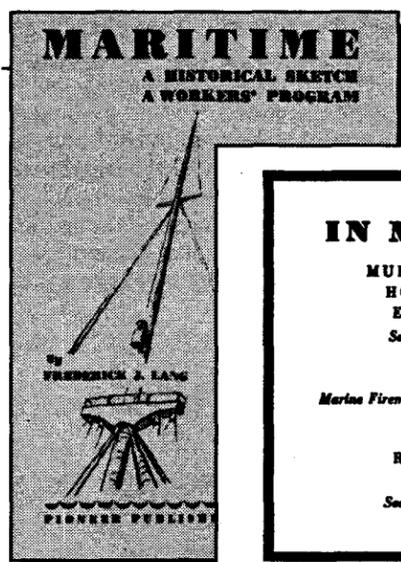
Unfortunately, the fraction in New York is rather weak and doesn't have experienced comrades at its head, and that is precisely what I am very much worried about. The situation is somewhat aggravated by the presence of Comrades DeLong and Potter who, with all their good qualities combine what I fear are such bad qualities as effectively nullify any contribution which they can make to our work. By, what seems to me, a bit of clique work, DeLong has been elected secretary of the fraction. The situation is not only unpleasant but may even dissipate all the great possibilities that we have before us now on the east coast.

While the P.C. expressed itself against the replacement of O'Brien as temporary secretary by DeLong, it nevertheless decided not to over-rule the fraction in what appears to be a minor organizational question. However, we do not want the situation to rest on its present basis. It is therefore imperative, in my opinion, that you come here as quickly as possible to take hold and take a leading and decisive part in the maritime fraction and in the maritime work generally.

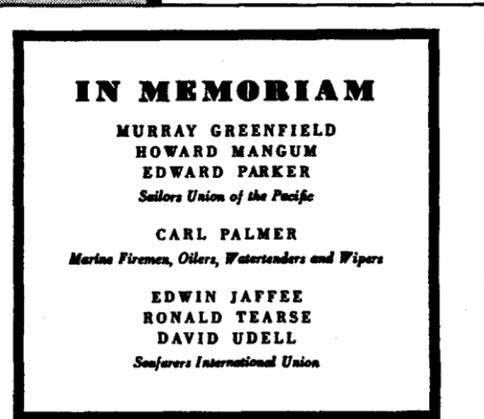
I do not write you at great length because I take it for granted that you will understand the importance of the situation and the necessity for your presence here at the earliest possible date.

With best personal wishes,

Fraternally,  
Max Shachtman



1943 book by Frank Lovell under the name Frederick J. Lang, dedicated to SWP seamen killed doing internationalist duty.



To these members of the Socialist Workers Party, who lost their lives at sea in the Second World War when the ships they sailed were torpedoed by Axis submarines, this book is dedicated.

These friends and comrades were more than skilled seamen and more than loyal union militants. They were class-conscious revolutionaries who devoted their energies to the great cause of freeing humanity from the depressions, wars, and fascism of the capitalist system. This, they believed, could be accomplished only through construction of a worldwide socialist society of peace and prosperity. In furthering this program, their first interest was to arouse seamen to the necessity of strengthening the union defense against the ship-owners and their agents by adopting a militant general policy based on a Marxist analysis of the maritime industry.

It is hoped that this book will help to carry on the work for which they gave their lives.

## Japan Economic Crisis Shakes Imperialist Order

We conclude below the article begun in *WV* No. 693 (3 July). Since this article was written, elections to the upper house of the Japanese parliament in mid-July saw a massive protest vote against the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). In the aftermath, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto resigned and LDP barons are jockeying to determine his successor. The London *Economist* (18 July), house organ of international financiers, worries that the political disarray in Tokyo "makes it less likely that Japan's economy is going to recover quickly, and less likely that radical reforms will be attempted." What the *Economist* means by "radical reforms" are mass layoffs and the all-round intensification in the exploitation of labor.

### Part Two

The big winners in the election were the bourgeois-liberal Democratic Party—which adopted a "pro-labor" posture by including among its candidates officials of the country's main trade-union federation, Rengo—and the reformist Communist Party (JCP). With 15 percent of the vote, the JCP emerged as the third largest party in the upper house after the LDP and the Democrats. With the working class facing falling real wages and the end of so-called "lifetime employment," the increased vote for the JCP was a clear expression of discontent over the current state of Japanese capitalism. But the ex-Stalinists turned social democrats of the JCP seek to demonstrate that they would be reliable political agents for Mitsui, Mitsubishi & Co. Thus the JCP's post-election statement denounced the LDP in nationalist terms as a "yes man for America" and offered to join any coalition that would work to overcome the LDP's majority in the lower house of parliament. The JCP's role in such a coalition would be to police the working class on behalf of Japanese capital.

The economic crisis has shaken Japanese working people out of political complacency. What is needed is a genuine communist party to fight for a workers government to expropriate the capitalist exploiters—the only road to a better future for the toiling masses in Japan and throughout East Asia.

\* \* \*

Japanese capitalism, as it was reconstructed during and immediately after the



Depositors making a run on Osaka bank. Economic crisis has caused widespread insecurity among Japanese working people.

American occupation, had a financial structure very different from the United States and also significantly different from Japan in the prewar era. Most important was the absolute predominance of banks in providing corporate finance and the corresponding insignificance of the stock and bond market.

The breakup of the *zaibatsu* which had

the financial system was therefore greatly strengthened. Over the next few years, the *zaibatsu* would be reconstructed around their respective "main banks" under the new label of *keiritsu*.

Between the mid-1950s and late 1970s, bank loans accounted for 83 percent of long-term external finance of Japanese corporations, the issue of stocks and

### U.S. Escalates Japan-Bashing—The Main Enemy Is at Home!

controlled 70 percent of Japanese industrial output directly and over 90 percent indirectly was one of the supposed liberal reforms of the American occupation authorities. Family members and many top managers of the *zaibatsu* were barred from executive positions, and the key holding companies (*honsha*) around which they were organized dissolved, their stock holdings sold to the general public. However, *zaibatsu* dissolution turned out to be illusory, as the top managers of Mitsubishi, Mitsui, et al. continued to meet informally and semi-legally throughout the occupation period. More importantly, American "trust-busting" exempted the major banks whose role in

bonds only 17 percent. The comparable figures for U.S. corporations in the same period are 32 percent for bank loans and 68 percent through the issuance of new securities. Furthermore, the allocation of money-capital by the banks was governed by *keiritsu* loyalties, not simply profit maximization. Thus the Fuji Bank might lend at 5 percent interest to a Fuji family firm like Hitachi but refuse a loan to an unrelated firm willing to pay 7 percent. In turn, the Bank of Japan discriminated in how it rationed money among the *keiritsu* banks. Those *keiritsu* with better connections to central bank bureaucrats got more money. This system, which was later adopted by East Asian "tigers" like South Korea and Indonesia, is now described and denounced as "crony capitalism."

The financial glue binding together the firms of a given *keiritsu* was the mutual holding of each other's corporate stock. Until the late 1980s, such share cross-holdings amounted to 70 percent of the total value of the Tokyo stock exchange. These financial arrangements rendered impossible either hostile corporate takeovers or successful stockholder revolts against the incumbent management.

The *keiritsu*/main bank system underlay both Japan's past success and its present economic distress. The top management of the big industrial corporations have had sufficient freedom of action and access to money-capital via their main banks to expand production and marketing at rates of profits which would have been unacceptably low to American, British or German stockholders. Even after profit rates declined sharply in the late 1970s, Japanese cor-

porations continued to borrow huge sums to finance investment projects on which the returns were marginal or even negative. Hence Japanese banks are now saddled with hundreds of billions of dollars of "non-performing" loans.

A key institution of *keiritsu* capitalism in its "golden age" was the tight control exercised by the Ministry of Finance over foreign exchange transactions, which was not substantially relaxed until 1980. This proved to be a highly effective mechanism for protecting industries favored by the government against foreign imports. Foreign exchange restrictions also prevented the export of money-capital from Japan, compelling Japanese bankers to finance Japanese firms only. Such policies led Western journalists to speak of "Japan, Inc."—a term first coined by a Japanese businessman. But the notion that Japanese bankers, industrialists and government officials functioned like an efficient hierarchy of a single large corporation was superficial and impressionistic, as the speculative mania of the bubble economy was to show.

### End of the Japanese "Economic Miracle"

During the 1960s and '70s both Western and Japanese bourgeois ideologues regarded Japanese capitalism as unique, and uniquely successful. But by the end of that period, the average rate of profit in Japan had declined from 23 percent to 15 percent. Why? Conditions of relatively full employment pushed up wage rates. Additionally, during the 1970s the Japanese economy was hit with the oil *shokku*, the tenfold increase in the price of petroleum manipulated by the American-dominated Seven Sisters cartel and its main client, the Saudi monarchy. Japanese exports were also facing rising trade barriers in North America and West Europe, as Washington strong-armed Tokyo into accepting "voluntary export restraints" first on steel and then autos. However, the most fundamental factor was that analyzed by Marx in *Capital: the tendency of the rate of profit to fall*, resulting from the fact that the rapid accumulation of capital stock (e.g., new machinery, advanced technology) is not offset by a corresponding increase in surplus value, i.e., profit.

*Keiritsu* capitalism responded to falling rates of profit in Japan by shifting manufacturing operations abroad, aiming to secure lower labor costs in Southeast Asia or to get under import barriers in the U.S. Direct Japanese investment in East Asia rose from \$400 million a year in the early 1970s to \$2.7 billion a year in the late 1980s. And in the decade following 1980, Japanese banks increased their share of international lending from 4 percent to 40 percent! In short, an increasing portion of the surplus value appropriated by Japanese capital was being generated outside Japan.

This development could not but have a profound effect on the internal structure and dynamics of Japanese capitalism. As Japan became a major exporter of capital, the *keiritsu* bosses no longer benefited from government control over foreign exchange transactions. Matsushita Electric and Sony did not want Finance Ministry bureaucrats interfering with their investment strategies in Southeast Asia. The Sumitomo Bank and Nomura Securities did not want these bureaucrats obstructing their maneuvers on Wall



Davis/Time

Homeless living in Tokyo train station. Looming mass unemployment threatens to condemn more Japanese to desperate poverty.

Street and in the City of London. And if Sumitomo and Nomura were going to operate on a large scale in New York, London and Frankfurt, Morgan Stanley and the Deutsche Bank demanded that they be allowed to operate freely in Tokyo. Grudgingly and gradually, the Japanese government acceded to these demands. Following the relaxation of foreign exchange controls in 1980 Japanese financial markets became increasingly freewheeling, not to say anarchic.

Again, the impetus for major changes in the Japanese economy came from Wall Street and Washington. In the 1980s, the U.S. federal debt mushroomed as the Reagan administration undertook a massive war buildup against the Soviet Union. The "strong dollar" had been killing American manufacturing exports while generating huge balance-of-trade deficits, especially with Japan. In the 1985 Plaza Agreement, the Reagan gang pressured Tokyo into almost doubling the price of the yen in terms of the dollar. The following year Japan suffered the "high yen recession," as it was called, marked by a fall in industrial production.

Hoping to reduce the cost of production and thereby offset the higher exchange rate of the yen in world markets, the Bank of Japan slashed its discount rate—the interest charged member banks—to encourage large-scale borrowing and investment in new technologies. However, in the "deregulated" Japanese capital markets of the 1980s the government's ultra-cheap money policy set off and fueled one of the great speculative manias in the history of capitalism. No longer centrally dependent on their main banks, big industrial corporations issued a mass of new stocks and bonds. The banks started lending to small businessmen and other individuals, who used these low-interest funds to speculate in stocks and real estate.

By the late 1980s, everyone and his uncle were playing the Tokyo stock market. The biggest individual player was



Reuters

Above: Protest by Japanese nurses, 1993, during collapse of "bubble economy." Below: September 1997 hospital workers rally in Philippine capital of Manila. Asian economic crisis has deepened worker unrest in region.

Gerry del Rosario



rates in 1989, the entire financial house of cards collapsed. Land prices nose-dived by 70 percent, wiping out much of the banking system's capital. The country entered its worst recession in four decades, industrial production falling more than 10 percent in 1992-93. And it was not just an accident that the end of the Japanese "economic miracle" ushered in by the Korean War coincided with the

Meanwhile, Japan's bankers sought salvation in their still booming East Asian neighbors, as outstanding loans to Hong Kong tycoons, the South Korean *chaebol* conglomerates, Indonesia's Suharto clan and the like ballooned from \$40 billion in 1994 to at least \$265 billion last year. These loans also served as a form of export subsidy, as East Asia displaced North America as Japan's main foreign market for manufactured goods.

To protect its enormous economic stake in the region, Japanese imperialism has been reasserting its military presence. During the Cold War, the Japanese ruling class acceded to American military dominance while pursuing its own interests and ambitions primarily through economic means. But in the post-Soviet world, the defense and furtherance of Japanese imperialism's economic interests requires its own military power. Thus is the road being paved to an inter-imperialist World War III, one which would be fought with nuclear weapons from the outset.

### Japanese Workers Under the Gun

The present-day image of Japan as an ultra-modern, gadget-laden society has obscured the country's relative backwardness in the period following World War II. In 1947, 51 percent of the economically active population was engaged in agricul-



Financial Times

Japanese soldiers sent to Cambodia in 1992 UN "peacekeeping" mission, as Tokyo reasserts its military presence in Southeast Asia.

former bar girl Nui Onoue, known as the "Dark Lady of Osaka." Owing only two restaurants in that city's red-light district, she nonetheless managed to borrow \$1.7 billion from the elite Industrial Bank of Japan: "To further her image as a stock market guru Onoue would hold midnight rites at one of the restaurants with the apparent aim of seeking financial advice from the divinities" (Christopher Wood, *The Bubble Economy*).

The stock market boom was comparable to those in other countries at other times. But what happened to the price of land was out of this world. At one point, the officially assessed value of metropolitan Tokyo real estate exceeded that of the United States and Canada combined. While absurd on the face of it, such hyperinflated land values had a big effect in the real world. Land was the main collateral for hundreds of billions of dollars in bank loans used by Japanese businessmen to buy everything from U.S. Treasury bills to Hawaii hotels and golf courses and factories in Thailand.

When the central bank moved to cool the speculative fever by raising interest

counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union.

The bubble economy did not simply entail the inflation of corporate stock and real estate prices. There was also a real boom in capital spending encouraged by soaring share prices and rock-bottom interest rates. The *keiretsu* bosses believed that they could sell whatever they produced in foreign markets at a rate of profit which would at least cover their greatly expanded debt service. In the late 1980s, Toyota, Nissan and Honda spent \$4 billion to build four of the most technologically efficient auto assembly plants in the world; a few years later, not one was operating at full capacity. Japan's industrial capacity had reached the point where its maximum output could be sold only by reducing prices so much that it would wipe out any profit as well as bankrupt Japan's major competitors. And U.S. imperialism was now pushing a much tougher line on trade.

Japanese industrial firms were thus saddled with productive capacity which they could not utilize profitably, financed by loans which they could not repay.

ture and only 28 percent in manufacturing, mining and transport. During the 1950s, Japanese industrialists were able to draw millions of poor peasant youth from the countryside to work in the new or expanded factories. Wage rates thus remained at Asian levels. As late as 1960 the average manufacturing wage in Japan was 15 percent below that in the Philippines, a country whose industrial production and overall economic productivity was a small fraction of Japan's.

After the surplus rural population was absorbed in the 1960s, wages increased appreciably but still lagged behind increases in productivity. A major factor here was the proliferation of company unions, particularly after the leftist-led unions were broken by the American occupation authorities and Japanese capitalists in the late 1940s and early '50s. Indeed, Japan is the only advanced capitalist country in which company unionism predominates in the core industrial sector. Independent unions tied to the Socialist Party (now the Social Democratic Party) continued to exist in the public sector, for example, among workers in the state-owned (now privatized) railway system. In the private sector, however, such unions were subverted largely through the promise of "lifetime employment"—permanent job security and wage increases based on seniority.

In the 1960s and '70s, when the profits of corporate Japan were booming, workers in large corporations could look forward to steady increases in income over the course of their lives. Now most people think "lifetime employment" is a thing of the past. Average wage increases granted during this year's annual "spring offensive" of contract negotiations were the lowest ever, amounting to a *drop* in real wages for the first time in four years. Official unemployment figures have climbed to new records from one month to the next, with the actual unemployment level much higher even than the 4.1 percent rate released for April. Among those aged 15 to 24, unemployment tops 9 percent. The desperation masked by these cold statistics is reflected in a report in the *Asahi Evening News* (12 June) that half of the more than 24,400 people who committed suicide last year were unemployed. In an article headlined "Jobless Rate Sparks Anger, Fear," one computer engineer told the *Japan Times* (30 May): "Japan as a country is fast losing the loyalty of its people by throwing them to the dogs."

The system of "lifetime employment" has nothing to do with the mythology that Japan's ruling elite embraces patriarchal attitudes inherited from the country's relatively recent feudal past. Japanese industrialists have historically been just as willing as their Western counterparts to lay off workers during economic downturns. In any case, "lifetime employment" benefits probably no more than a quarter of the industrial labor force—permanent workers in the big corporations, who are

*continued on page 9*



Kyodo

Bloody police attack on Tokyo May Day demonstration, 1952. U.S.-backed "red purge" laid the basis for docile company unionism in Japanese industry.

# GM Strike...

(continued from page 1)

to look to the very strike weapon that the "innovative" work rules there were designed to prevent. Fearing that Saturn's institutionalized "labor peace" was about to be shattered, UAW vice president Richard Shoemaker announced a day after the strike vote that there would be no walkout for at least 30 days.

## Binding Arbitration: A Deadly Trap for Labor

A real fight for jobs—the most basic right of the working class—leads directly to challenging the entire capitalist system which is based on the exploitation of labor and in which the inherent drive for profit will always be realized through trying to drive down wages, increase productivity and cut back the workforce through layoffs. The main obstacle to waging such a fight is the "Solidarity House" bureaucracy which preaches the lie of a "partnership" between labor and capital. The UAW International's ready agreement to binding arbitration stems from their view that the agencies of the capitalist class enemy—the government, the courts, the cops—are potential "allies" of labor.

Far from being "neutral," binding arbitration is a crucial weapon of the exploiters, devised to weaken and demobilize the power of labor. Its whole purpose is to stop strikes from happening or to end



1937 auto sit-down strikers defy anti-union injunction. Labor upsurge of 1930s gave rise to UAW and other CIO industrial unions.

Arbitration—which was instituted to gut the very purpose of unions, i.e., the defense of the workers against the bosses—has become the heart and soul of the labor bureaucracy's pro-capitalist legalism. This class collaborationism, which ties the interests of labor to their exploiters, has long been rooted in the allegiance of the trade-union bureaucrats to the Democratic Party, which they

only be wielded by a leadership which recognizes that the interests of workers and bosses are *irreconcilably counterposed*, which instead of embracing the "national interests" of the U.S. ruling class calls for joint labor action across national boundaries. What is needed is a class-struggle leadership of labor—a multiracial revolutionary workers party—built through sharp political struggle



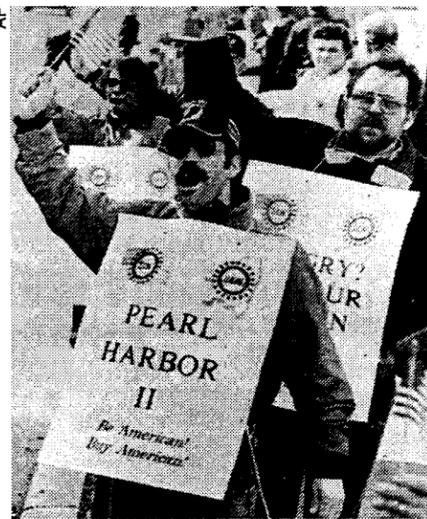
Alameda/Times

Left: AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney with Vice President Al Gore at 1996 Democratic convention. Right: GM workers rally in New Jersey. Pro-capitalist union tops embrace anti-labor Democratic Party, foment chauvinist protectionism.

them. In the case of Flint, a ruling favorable to the company could have resulted not only in liquidating the Flint strike but also outlawing the local strikes that the union has relied on for several years to resist GM's frenzy of job cuts. It might also have meant more than \$1 billion in punitive damages against the union. Any labor leadership worthy of the name would be prepared to *rip up* any such strikebreaking order. But such class-struggle methods are the last thing the UAW tops have in mind. In fact, the UAW bureaucracy clearly used the threat of a negative arbitration ruling as a club against the strikers, to get them to accept whatever deal they got from GM.

falsely portray as a "lesser evil." A key prop of this alliance is the labor tops' chauvinist protectionism, binding unions to support for American corporations against their rivals overseas. Labor's ties to the Democrats—which no less than the Republicans is a capitalist party—have retarded American workers' understanding of their class interests and lie behind the string of defeats suffered by the unions.

Urgently needed today are the class-struggle methods that built the UAW in the 1930s: defiance of anti-union injunctions, sit-down strikes, refusal to handle struck products, mass picket lines that no one dares cross. But such weapons will



against the class-collaborationist labor bureaucracy.

## "In Bed with GM"

The effect of last summer's solid UPS strike—which reversed a 17-year string of major defeats for organized labor and encouraged workers across the country to consider that strikes *can* be won—can be seen in the GM strike and other recent outbreaks of labor struggle, from the Philadelphia transit strike to the 40,000-strong protest by New York construction workers against non-union labor. As columnist Juan Gonzalez noted in a New York *Daily News* (2 July) piece titled "Labor Movement Reborn, and Strong":

"A growing number of workers are fed up with having their jobs downsized, cut back, contracted out, shipped overseas or otherwise redefined almost always for less pay.

"They are tired of hearing news reports about the greatest economic boom and lowest unemployment in decades, when the fact is a third of American workers have been reduced to part timers, many with no health insurance.

"They are fed up enough to fight back, and the low unemployment rate has made them secure enough to stand up to their bosses."

Flint has become a flash point in the struggle for decent jobs. America's low unemployment statistics mask a decades-long deterioration of living standards by a glut of part-time employment that doesn't provide a stitch of medical coverage or even pay enough to cover childcare. In the past 20 years, Flint has lost a third of its population as the number of union workers at GM plummeted from 77,000 to a mere 33,000—and the hemorrhage continues. With the Buick City complex in Flint already slated to close in

1999, many strikers have wondered whether they will still have jobs in a couple of years, whatever the outcome of the current strike.

Preceding the latest showdown have been half a dozen local GM strikes since the 1996 national contract was signed. While these were essentially rearguard struggles, they nevertheless gave evidence of the increased leverage of workers at parts plants due to the "just in time" production system, which is premised on there being no strikes. A key reason that the GM strike has shaken Wall Street is that it is precisely in such times of low unemployment when strike waves and widespread union organizing campaigns have broken out. It was in response to the demands of Wall Street investors to reach "a finality to these ridiculous annual strikes" (*Detroit News*, 5 July) that GM sued the UAW, setting up the arbitration proceedings.

GM's appetite to crush the union has been whetted by the gamut of concessions the UAW has given companies like Ford, where the average vehicle assembly time is now under 23 hours compared to over 30 hours at GM. And the American capitalists are all too aware of UAW president Stephen Yokich's abject surrender of the Caterpillar strike in 1995 after a bloody 18-month battle in the heart of the Illinois "war zone," which was a signal defeat for the UAW and all of labor.

Even as the Flint strike bled GM, the UAW tops sapped the union's power, encouraging Delphi strikers to take turns *crossing their own picket lines* so that GM could make enough parts to honor its contracts with Harley-Davidson and other companies. "They're sleeping in bed with GM, Inc.," said one Delphi striker. "GM's still making money." When the company two days ago returned dies they had stealthily removed from the Flint Metal Fabrication plant in late May, sparking the walkout there, the UAW tops directed strikers to cross the picket lines to set up the dies so that GM wouldn't lose a minute of production once the strike was settled! Further demoralizing strikers, the UAW's \$725 million strike fund dribbled out a paltry \$150 per week to the strikers. Several pickets told WV they didn't know what the UAW needed to do, they just knew it had to be different from what Yokich & Co. had in mind.

Encouraged by such treachery, GM stiffened its resolve to go for the kill. While the strike cost the company more than \$2 billion, GM still has more than \$9 billion cash in its war chest. Prior to the settlement, GM threatened to reopen at least ten assembly plants by October, replacing strike-bound production with parts purchased from non-union suppliers. Buckling to this pressure, the UAW tops have reportedly promised as part of the settlement that there will be no strike at the Dayton parts plant.

## Unions and Reds

The treacherous legalism and class collaborationism of the UAW tops stands in stark contrast to the hard-fought class battles that built the union. Virtually every Flint and Detroit auto worker learned about the great sit-down strike of 1937 when they were children. In February of that year, Judge Paul V. Gadola, the father of the judge presiding over the current Flint strike, declared the sitdown a violation of GM's sacred property rights and set a deadline for the evacuation of the two Fisher Body plants occupied by the strikers. The workers immediately wired the Michigan governor that they intended to stay in the plants even in the face of police, sheriffs and militia. On the day of the deadline, thousands of unionists from throughout the region flooded the streets around the plants, preventing the sheriff from enforcing the eviction order. The strikers refused to budge even when the National Guard took over the city a few days later. That's when GM caved in and recognized the union.

At the height of the sitdown, the governor appealed to John L. Lewis, United Mine Workers president and head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations

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(CIO), to intervene to end the strike. Lewis answered, "I did not ask these men to sit-down." "This was the literal truth," wrote Art Preis in *Labor's Giant Step* (1964):

"The GM strike was an uprising of the rank and file. Its leadership was mainly local young workers with radical social and political views. A short while later most of them...became more and more adapted to capitalist politics and class collaboration. But for that one brief period of the historic GM sit-down, they were still close enough to the militant ranks, still sufficiently imbued with socialist ideas and the traditions of the old IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] and socialist fighters, to rise with the masses."

Socialist militants—reds—played a leading role in many of the decisive battles that forged the CIO. Many of them, like Flint sitdown leader Robert Travis, supported the Stalinist Communist Party (CP). But while such organizers stood out as union activists compared to the conservative, racist AFL craft union officialdom which openly recognized the capitalists' "right" to make profits, the CP was a bulwark of the CIO's alliance with Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt through which the CIO bureaucracy congealed. It would further solidify under Democratic Party stalwart Walter Reuther through the purge of Communists and other militants as the anti-Soviet Cold War unfolded. Since then, the UAW and AFL-CIO tops have acted as loyal guard dogs for the American capitalists, hailing their predatory imperialist wars, helping

## Pegged Production Standards: "This is hell!"

The centerpiece of the attempts by the capitalist press to portray the Flint strikers as overpaid loafers is the issue of "pegged production standards." GM claims its entire North American operation is being held hostage by selfish Metal Fabrication workers who go home after five or so hours of work but get paid for eight. This is a blatant campaign to blame Flint workers for the antiquated and decrepit conditions of a plant that Wall Street sees as an albatross around the company's neck.

One WV reader who recently retired from the Metal Fab plant told us that the issue really concerns only a couple of dozen workers in the cradle operation. Here, "pods" of up to ten workers dressed in stifling head-to-toe protective gear do the final welds on engine

cradles. "This is hell," the retiree told us. "It looks like hell—and it is—to work in that cradle operation." Few high-seniority workers willingly stay in this sweltering, toxic and physically demanding department.

For decades, GM has relied on pegged production rates that set a standard number of engine cradles to be done in an eight-hour shift, holding out the possibility for workers to knock off early once the standard is met. This incentive "allows GM to get *higher* production" out of the workers, said the former Metal Fab worker. He added that it has imposed a form of self-discipline on employees, inducing them to work like slaves while taking unnecessary risks in handling the red-hot welding wires, which can inflict severe wounds. Essen-

tially, he said, "it's piecework," except that the incentive is increased leisure time instead of higher pay.

As Karl Marx wrote in *Capital* (Volume 1) in 1867: "Given piece-wage, it is naturally the personal interest of the labourer to strain his labour-power as intensely as possible; this enables the capitalist to raise more easily the normal degree of intensity of labour." The formation of mass industrial unions in the 1930s by and large drove piecework out of American industry, but it has survived in modified form here and there. The real crime in all this is that the misleaders of the UAW are complicit in the return to 19th-century modes of exploitation, through their acquiescence to the auto bosses' "productivity" schemes.

ests of workers and capitalists are fundamentally counterposed, that the proletariat can only defend its interests by maintaining complete independence from the political agents of the ruling class, first and foremost the Democratic Party. The second is that the state is not neutral in this class struggle but is a central executive body of the capitalist class, enforcing its rule through the courts, police,

"partnership" was a source of widespread anger among Flint UAW members. Many were furious that work continued in plants like Saturn even after the workers overwhelmingly voted to strike. "The UAW has to call everyone out nationwide," one Metal Fab worker told WV. Over and over again, strikers referred to the lesson of the 1981 PATCO air traffic controllers strike, when the Machinists, led by social-democrat William Winpisinger, and other AFL-CIO unions sat by with folded arms while Republican president Reagan smashed the union and fired the entire workforce. This defeat paved the way for almost two decades of union-busting and intensified exploitation throughout the United States, continuing today under Democratic president Clinton.

At the time, WV called on the Machinists, Teamsters and other airline industry unions to *shut down the airports*. This basic act of labor solidarity would have found enthusiastic support among union ranks eager to deal Reagan a defeat. But only a labor leadership willing to confront the bosses' state would have been able to carry it out. It was the U.S. government that employed the air traffic controllers and declared their strike illegal. It was federal agents who dragged away strike leaders in shackles. U.S. military personnel manned the country's air traffic towers until a new workforce could be hired and trained. And this strikebreaking scenario was a bipartisan affair, initially worked out under Reagan's Democratic predecessor, Jimmy Carter.

The lessons of the PATCO strike fully apply to the battle against GM. At bottom, the question is one of the leadership of the labor movement. The sellouts at Solidarity House run to the bosses' courts

and so-called "neutral" arbitrators because their role is to ensure a stable workforce for American capital, to guarantee that its workings will not be "upset" by class struggle. These bureaucrats are, in the words of early American socialist leader Daniel De Leon, the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class," whose purpose is to police the unions for the exploiters. The power of labor is inherent in its numbers, its organization and particularly the fact that it makes the wheels of profit turn. But to bring that power to bear in struggle against the capitalists' war on labor, the poor, blacks, immigrants requires a revolutionary leadership of the labor movement imbued with the understanding that for there to be any fundamental change, those who labor must rule.

### American Chauvinism: Anti-Labor Tool

A key part of the union bureaucracy's work in disciplining the ranks of labor and squelching social struggle is its function as an ideological champion of U.S. imperialism, diverting the class anger of American workers into the chauvinist embrace of their own exploiters. The UAW misleaders in particular have long been purveyors of the social-democratic program of a tripartite alliance between the government (in its Democratic Party face), the bosses and labor. The effect of this class-collaborationist "American dream"—which is premised on strengthening U.S. imperialism against its rivals—is to erect a wall between the American proletariat and its class brothers and sisters abroad, while furthering the political subordination of the American working class to the bourgeoisie.

*continued on page 8*



Archambault/U.S. News & World Report

**GM workers in Matamoros, Mexico make poverty-level wages. UAW bureaucracy's "America First" tirades poison the struggle for internationalist labor solidarity.**

smash Communist-led unions overseas and policing the unions at home. Thus the union bureaucracy has contributed mightily to the expansion of U.S. power abroad, enabling GM and other American corporations to savagely exploit workers in the colonial and semicolonial world.

The program of revolutionary Marxism was represented by the Trotskyists, who put forward a class-struggle perspective in leading a series of Teamsters strikes in Minneapolis in 1934 and 1936 that briefly put the city's streets under working-class control. Citywide general strikes in Minneapolis, San Francisco and Toledo in 1934 paved the way for the big CIO organizing drives of the late '30s. The victorious Minneapolis strikes in particular launched the recruitment campaign that transformed the International Brotherhood of Teamsters from an insular craft organization into a powerful industrial union.

Unlike the Stalinists in the late 1920s and early '30s and the Wobblies (IWW), who put forward the idea of building separate "red" unions, the presence of the Trotskyists in the existing unions—however reactionary they may have been—meant they were able to wage a class-struggle fight for leadership. The ability of a small group of revolutionaries to make such a major impact in the labor movement was based on two essential ideas drawn from the arsenal of Marxism. The first is that the class inter-

prisons and armed forces. Trotskyists, therefore, oppose all government intervention in the labor movement. As Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon wrote regarding the Minneapolis strikes:

"The policy of the class struggle guided our comrades; they couldn't be deceived and outmaneuvered, as so many strike leaders of that period were, by this mechanism of sabotage and destruction known as the National Labor Board and all its auxiliary setups. They put no reliance whatever in Roosevelt's Labor Board; they weren't fooled by any idea that Roosevelt, the liberal 'friend of labor' president, was going to help the truck drivers in Minneapolis win a few cents more an hour....

"Our people didn't believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity."

—James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944)

Yesterday, it was announced that former Teamsters president Ron Carey was expelled from the union for life by a "review board" which included the former head of the FBI and the CIA! Carey himself was installed as the union president through the intervention of the capitalist state. Here is the bitter fruit of looking to institutions and agencies of capital to serve labor's cause.

### Lessons of PATCO

During the strike, Yokich & Co.'s sacrifice of the simplest measures of trade-union solidarity on the altar of class

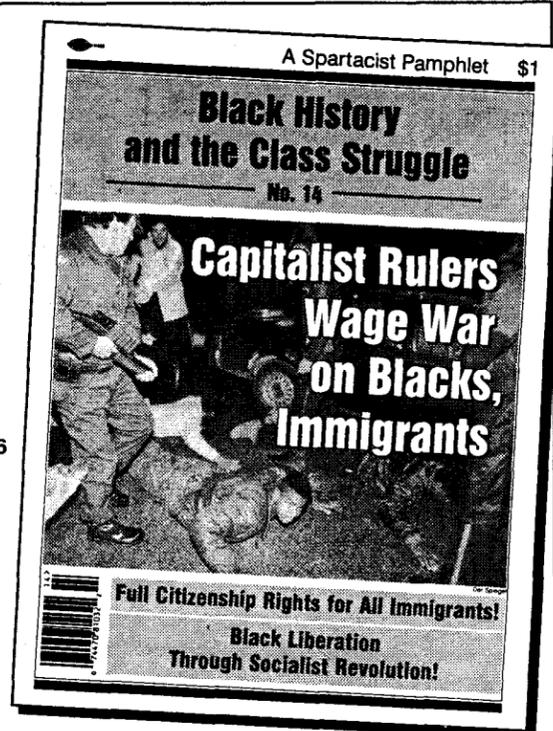
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# GM Strike...

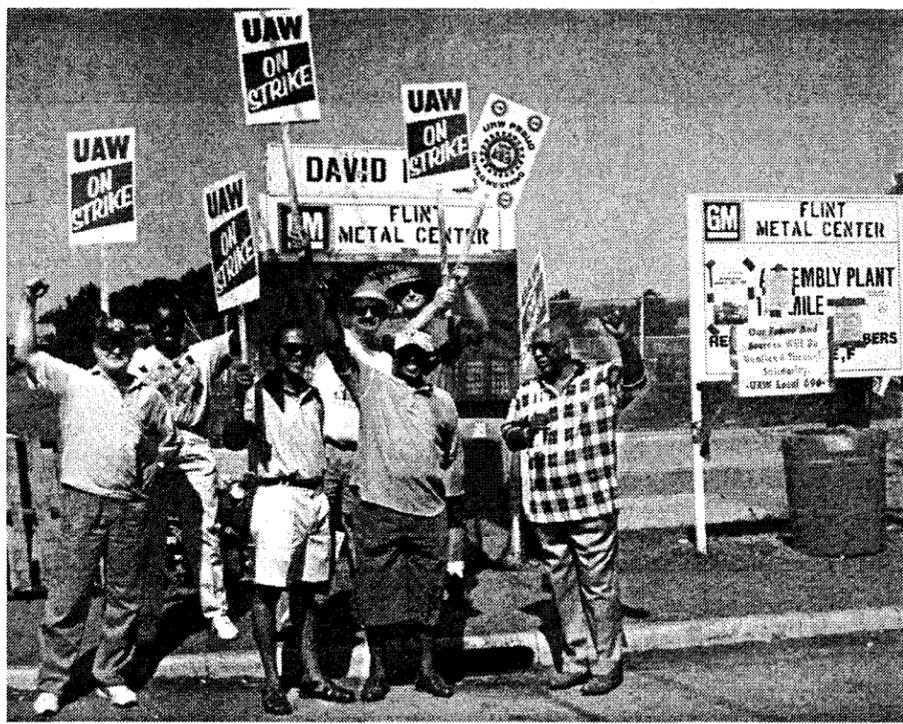
(continued from page 7)

UAW rallies in Flint on July 20 were used not to organize mass picketing or to spread the strike but to build support for Democrats like gubernatorial candidate Larry Owen, who railed about Mexican factories "taking jobs out of Michigan." Workers at a V-8 engine plant in Romulus, Michigan tried to block the use of non-GM parts at the plant when their stock of Delphi parts ran out, not because they were scab parts but because they were Japanese-made. In an address to the UAW convention in June, AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney argued that it was "wrong for corporations like GM to disinvest in communities like Flint by shipping American jobs overseas and selling American families down the river" (*Today's UAW*, 25 June).

It is not capitalist investment overseas—an inherent feature of imperialism that has been going on for as long as there has been an auto industry—that is the cause of the devastation of Flint, Detroit and other Rust Bowl cities. Scores of non-union auto parts plants have sprung up throughout the U.S., especially in the "right to work" South. UAW leaders don't complain about those because that would focus attention on their unwillingness to launch a struggle to unionize these facilities, which would require above all a break with the Democratic Party.

The UAW tops' racist campaign against Asian and Hispanic workers is also a dagger aimed at black workers in the U.S. Ever since the 1898 Spanish-American War—whereby the U.S. took over Spain's colonial empire, including Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and emerged as a world imperialist power—national-chauvinist hatreds have inevitably been accompanied by anti-black racism. Black workers, historically the "last hired and first fired," for whom union-won seniority rights provided a partial shield against discrimination, have been hardest hit by the mass layoffs in auto. It's no accident that Ku Klux Klan and militia groups have been particularly active in regions where the outcry against Mexicans and Asians supposedly "stealing jobs" has been the most strident. The race-terrorist Klan is a dire threat to integrated industrial unions like the UAW, which must take the lead in mobilizing mass labor/black action to crush these vermin!

Solidarity House hypocritically intones that GM employees in Mexico are paid a pittance and face slave-labor conditions on the job. Such conditions are proliferating in the "free trade" factory zones which have been given a tremendous impetus by the NAFTA agreement, which we have called the U.S. "free trade" rape of Mexico. But Sweeney's AFL-CIO opposes NAFTA on the grounds of "America First" chauvinism, while Yo-



WV Photo

Outside Flint Metal Center, July 20, as UAW entered seventh week of GM strike.

rich calls for GM to invest "at home" and return Mexican workers to unemployed immiseration in the rural hellholes and urban slums. Foreign capital investment has created a powerful proletariat in countries like Mexico and Indonesia. A key to unlocking that power is the fight to organize these workers into unions pursuing class-struggle means to combat the hideous exploitation meted out by corporate giants like GM and Nike.

Opposed to such a perspective, as part of their protectionist program the UAW tops call for labor to have a say in how and where GM invests its capital, either through contractual agreement or government legislation. What a pipe dream! The capitalists are hardly going to allow the workers to have a say in where they invest their profits. For workers to determine where the wealth that is generated by their labor will be deployed requires a fight for a workers government that will expropriate the bourgeoisie and, on the basis of an international planned economy, construct an egalitarian socialist society. When those who labor rule, the fruits of their labor will be applied to providing a decent life for working people, the poor, blacks, immigrants, the young and the aged.

### For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Predictably, the bulk of the U.S. reformist left, who act as pressure groups on the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, has capitulated to the UAW leaders' pro-imperialist chauvinism. Particularly egregious have been the CP's *People's Weekly World* (PWW) and the fake-Trotskyist *Socialist Action*, which routinely retail the UAW chiefs' condemnations of GM's "America Last" strategy.

Nowhere in its coverage of the UAW strike does *Socialist Action* (July 1998) even mention the word protectionism, much less condemn the UAW leaders' flag-waving chauvinism. Rather, they quote approvingly the UAW's Shoemaker as he rails that "GM's claim that they are committed to investing in their American operations is belied by their actions.... The end result is the same; America and communities like Flint come last in their strategy."

The PWW (27 June) even uncritically quoted one UAW official's repulsive anti-Japanese comment that GM "pulled a Pearl Harbor on us." This is not surprising, coming from an organization that expelled its Japanese American members during World War II and enthusiastically supported U.S. imperialism's A-bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. An article on the auto strikes by CP vice chairman Sam Webb in PWW (20 June) raises the protectionist call for "controls on outsourcing" while calling for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and for "public ownership of the auto industry under democratic control." Such calls for "public ownership" spread the illusion that this supposedly "democratic" capitalist system can be pressured to serve the interests of working people. In those cases

where the capitalists do resort to such measures, it is normally to bail out money-losing concerns (chiefly through working people's tax money).

Similarly, the CP twists the crucial call for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay into a reformist scheme to solve unemployment under capitalism. This demand, raised in the 1938 Transitional Program drafted by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky for the Fourth International, was aimed at raising workers' consciousness that the solution to their most pressing needs lay in the fight for socialist revolution. As Trotsky explained:

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

One fake-left outfit appearing in Flint, the "Socialist Equality Party" (SEP) of David North, claims to oppose the "economic nationalism and American chauvinism" of Solidarity House. But the SEP's posture as opponents of the UAW tops' sellout policies is a complete fraud. The Northites are opposed to the defense of the unions as a whole, which they have written off as not being any kind of working-class organizations. During the 1994-95 Caterpillar strike, this view led them to *defend scabbing* with the argument that "the large majority of the 4,000 union members who returned to work were not right-wing or anti-union. Most simply recognized the futility of the policies being pursued by the UAW" (*International Workers Bulletin*, 18 December 1995).

The struggle against the auto bosses cries out for the intervention of a multi-racial revolutionary workers party committed not to reforming the capitalist profit system but to destroying it root and branch. Such a party can only be forged through breaking the sway over the workers of the trade-union bureaucracy—capitalism's political police in the labor movement. As opposed to the class collaborationism put forward by reformists and labor bureaucrats alike, the Spartacist League advances a Marxist program—for a socialist revolution to establish a planned economy based on production for human need. ■

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# Japan Crisis...

(continued from page 5)

overwhelmingly male and ethnic Japanese. Even these workers increasingly face transfer to subsidiary firms, resulting in loss of seniority and pay cuts.

Small subcontractors who service the big corporations do not offer their employees permanent job security. Yet such companies account for a majority of the total workforce; some 40,000 firms exist primarily as parts suppliers for Toyota alone. Moreover, big and small firms alike hire large numbers of part-timers, predominantly women, who have no job security whatsoever. By the early 1990s, part-time women workers in the corporate sector accounted for 12 percent of the labor force. The large number of workers of Chinese or Korean descent have little in the way of job protection and face rampant discrimination, as do the low-caste Burakumin and indigenous ethnic minorities like the Ainu. The past decade has also seen an influx of low-paid immigrant workers from Southeast Asia, the Near East and Africa.

While the ruling class still fears that laying off workers en masse could lead to social unrest, since 1993 some sections of the bourgeoisie have argued for the out-

fight against the new labor laws "with all its energy," these reformists abjure the class struggle in favor of "building public opinion and collecting signatures against the government moves" (*Zenroren Newsletter*, February 1998). Reflecting the racist and chauvinist outlook of the ruling class, neither Zenroren nor the other two labor federations has fought to organize workers of Korean and Chinese descent or the super-exploited immigrant workers from Asia and Africa into common unions with Japanese workers.

As the Spartacist Group Japan stresses, mobilizing the unions to combat unemployment requires a fight to organize the unorganized, to break the ban on minority and immigrant workers in basic industry and to win full citizenship rights for all immigrants: "The fight for a shorter work week is literally a life and death question and is directly linked to breaking the racist 'Japanese only' employment system in major industry. Women, minority and immigrant laborers are a key ally in the fight for a shorter work week" (*Spartacist [Japan]* No. 12, May 1992).

Barred from leadership positions in industry, government and education, many women thought the "bubble economy" of the 1980s would bring real economic and social change. Women now make up over 40 percent of the workforce, but they earn

the revanchist demand of Japanese imperialism for the return of the Kurile Islands which had been taken over by the Soviet Red Army at the end of World War II. Today, with *keiritsu* capitalism buffeted by the deepening economic crisis throughout East Asia, the Communist Party has gained a certain support and credibility as the main left opposition. But these one-time Stalinists turned social democrats will only utilize that enhanced support and credibility to betray the interests of the working class and all the oppressed.

It is necessary to forge an internation-

these relatively more combative sections of the Asian proletariat can be a powerful impetus to class struggle on the Japanese archipelago. The South Korean proletariat has a history of militant struggle against the *chaebol* bourgeoisie and its police state. More recently, the workers of Indonesia and Thailand have engaged in sharp combat against the starvation conditions which have meant fabulous profits for Japanese, German and U.S. industrialists and financiers and their local henchmen. And in the Philippines, a strike against Philippine Airlines (PAL) in early June led to a union-busting attack under the auspices of the U.S.-backed "democratic" regime there, as 600 striking pilots were fired after defying a back-to-work order. Now, after layoffs of 5,000 more PAL workers, a strike of ground crew workers is again crippling the airline.

The fight for a socialist Asia is today posed with stark urgency. A workers republic in Japan would serve as a motor force for the socialist development of the semicolonial peoples of the region and as a beacon for proletarian revolution in other imperialist countries. Only the proletariat, leading all oppressed sections of society—women, Burakumin, Koreans and other non-Japanese workers and their families—can put an end to exploitation by the Mitsubishis and Mitsuis. As the SGJ wrote in an article denouncing the resurgence of Japanese nationalism (*Spartacist [Japan]* No. 18, May 1997):

"It is only the overthrow of this racist, arrogant bourgeoisie by the proletariat led by a revolutionary party that will avenge the unspeakable crimes against the *ianfu* ['comfort women'] and the countless other victims of Japanese imperialism."

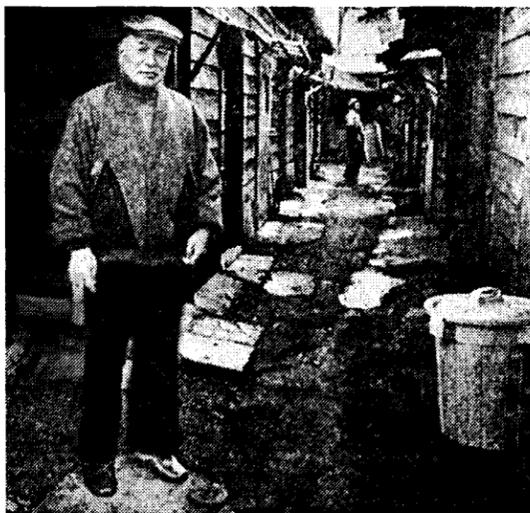
To achieve this historic task, the working class must be broken from the reformist agents of the *keiritsu* capitalists and won to a revolutionary Marxist leadership. This is the perspective of the SGJ, as part of the fight to reforge a Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

The collapse of the East Asian economic boom, the resulting turmoil in world financial markets, the increasing tendencies toward protectionism and regional economic blocs prefigure a new interimperialist war for the division of markets and spheres of exploitation. Today, more than ever, the struggle for socialist revolution against a nuclear-armed capitalism is the struggle for the survival of civilization. ■



Hostesses bow to businessman at typical Tokyo reception, symbolizing gross male chauvinism and cult of corporate loyalty in Japan.

Ethan Hoffman



Left: Japan's Burakumin "untouchables" are confined to segregated, decrepit neighborhoods. Right: Former Korean "comfort women," forced to work in brothels for Japanese troops during World War II, protest in Seoul against visit of Japan's prime minister, 1992.

AP Photos



right elimination of "lifetime employment." The Diet is almost certain to pass a series of amendments to the 1947 Labor Law which would permit overtime without pay and raise the legal limit on forced overtime, allow for more non-union contract workers and cut holidays. Japan is already infamous for *karoshi* (death from overwork): at the Hiroshima Dentetsu railway firm, which has increased annual working hours by 700, five workers recently died as a result of overwork—either from ill health or suicide—in the space of seven months.

The impact of the escalating attacks on labor is seen in the fact that Rengo, largest of the country's three union federations, organized a May Day march through the streets of Tokyo, joined by some 100,000 workers, for the first time in seven years. The right-wing Social Democratic Party is on the verge of disintegration, particularly after its latest ill-fated foray into an LDP coalition government, with its electoral base largely turning to the JCP. But while the JCP-led Zenroren union federation has vowed to

only 63 percent of what their male co-workers make. And with the economy mired in one of the deepest recessions this century, many are being driven out of the workplace and back to the grinding drudgery of household slavery. In an article titled "Economic Recession Targets Women Workers" (*Spartacist [Japan]* No. 16, April 1994), the SGJ wrote:

"Liberating women from family servitude and the myriad of feudal traditions tied to the continued existence of the *tenno* [emperor] system is a central task of a Japanese workers republic. We call for the integration of women into the industrial work force; for equal pay for equal work; for free, 24-hour child care centers; for free, safe birth control, including the pill and abortion."

## For Workers Revolution!

In its whimpering against "capitalism without rules," the JCP expresses its commitment to maintaining the capitalist system, which is necessarily based on the exploitation of the working class at home and imperialist domination and expansion abroad. After breaking its ties to Moscow in the 1960s, the JCP openly supported

alist vanguard party based on the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky. The current economic crisis underscores the ties binding Japan with the rest of East Asia. From boycotts of imperialist arms shipments during the Vietnam War of the 1960s and '70s to recent protests in solidarity with the sacked dockers of Liverpool, England, Japanese workers have demonstrated a capacity for internationalist actions. At the same time, capitalist Japan is a deeply racist and chauvinist society. A revolutionary workers party can only be forged through uncompromising political struggle against the reformist misleaders of the labor movement, who push poisonous economic protectionism and nationalism.

The proletariat of Japan, objectively the most powerful in the region, must reach out to the worker and peasant masses throughout East Asia. In particular, this means breaking with the virulent anti-Korean chauvinism of the Japanese bourgeoisie and rallying around the call for unconditional military defense of the North Korean deformed workers state against capitalist attack and internal counterrevolution. This call applies with even greater force to Stalinist China. Capitalist restoration in China would be a tremendous blow not only to the workers and rural masses of that country but to the proletariat of South Korea and Japan. For its part, the Chinese proletariat must repudiate the Beijing bureaucracy's anti-Japanese nationalism, which today serves as a cover for closer ties to U.S. imperialism. The political revolution needed to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucrats driving toward capitalist counterrevolution must be rooted in proletarian internationalism.

Concrete solidarity actions by the Japanese working class can provide key material support to workers in Thailand, Indonesia and elsewhere who go on strike against Japanese and U.S. "multinationals." At the same time, the struggles of



Spartacist Japan

January 1997: Yokohama waterfront workers demonstrate solidarity with victimized Liverpool dock workers. Spartacist Group Japan sign calls for international labor action in defense of Liverpool dockers.

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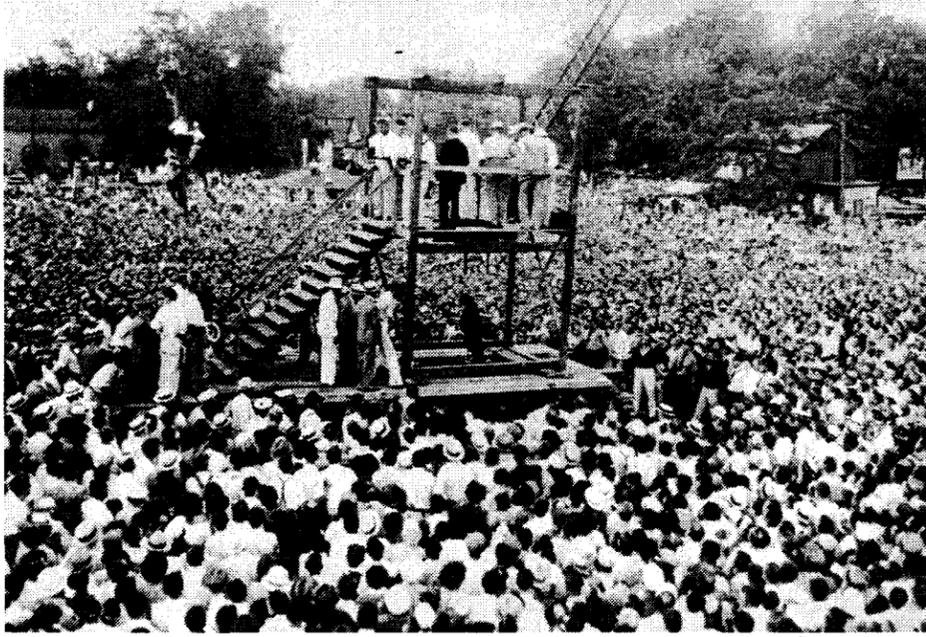
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Der Spiegel



Gerald Davis

Death penalty is racist legal lynching. Left: 20,000 watch hanging of black man in Kentucky, 1936. Right: Huntsville, Texas death row. Texas machinery of death slaughtered 37 last year, half the national total of executions.

## Death Row...

(continued from page 1)

barely a week after the new study was released, when the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) organized a full-page "advertisement" in the *New York Times* (14 June) screaming for Jamal's death (see "Racist Cops Escalate Campaign for Jamal's Execution," WV No. 693, 3 July).

The Death Penalty Information Center and other liberals seek to pressure Congress to pass a "Racial Justice Act" mandating that the death penalty somehow be applied in a "non-racial" manner in this profoundly racist country—an utterly utopian proposal. Those liberals, like Jesse Jackson, who oppose the death penalty proffer "alternatives" like life imprisonment without parole—a living death. Tailing the liberals, reformist "socialists" like the Workers World Party, the International Socialist Organization and Socialist Action have variously focused on demanding a "new trial" for Mumia or argue against the death penalty from the bourgeois standpoint of how much it costs or whether or not it is "effective" in "fighting crime."

As Marxists, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee oppose the death penalty in principle. We do not accord to the state the right to decide who shall live and who shall die. This barbaric legacy of medieval torture is today part and parcel of the machinery of repression wielded by the capitalist rulers against workers and minorities. That the U.S. remains one of the few industrialized capitalist countries to retain the death penalty is directly related to the black oppression which is a bedrock of American capitalism. The origins of capital punishment in the U.S. are rooted in the Southern slave system which was smashed by the Civil War. But the struggle for black equality was soon thereafter betrayed by the Northern capitalists, leading to a century of formal Jim Crow segregation in the South and the continuing subjugation of the black masses as an oppressed race-color caste.

To fulfill the promise of black freedom and smash the racist apparatus of capitalist injustice requires a proletarian revolution led by a multiracial Leninist vanguard party. This is the task to which the Spartacist League is committed. And it is this understanding which has informed the campaign waged for more than ten years by the SL and PDC to mobilize the social power of the integrated labor movement in united-front actions in Mumia's defense and for abolition of the racist death penalty.

### No Justice in the Capitalist Courts

Mumia did not and *cannot* get a fair trial under this capitalist "justice" system. His 1982 "trial" was a travesty. The prosecution coerced "witnesses" to lie on the stand and withheld crucial evi-

dence from the defense. Mumia was denied the right to defend himself and saddled with a court-appointed attorney who was allowed a total of \$150 to interview witnesses and later admitted his own incompetency. Blacks were systematically excluded from the jury. The judge, Albert Sabo, was a member of the F.O.P. who has sentenced more men to die than any other sitting judge in the

Ronald Castille, who was the Philly D.A. at the time of Jamal's first appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1985. The D.A. at the time of Mumia's trial, Ed Rendell, is now mayor. Current chief prosecutor Lynne Abraham, described as the "Deadliest D.A." in a *New York Times Magazine* (16 July 1995) profile, was the municipal judge who presided over Jamal's December 1981 arraignment.

which showed that black defendants accused of killing whites in Georgia are sentenced to death far more frequently than those accused of killing blacks—and that whites charged with the murder of black people almost never receive a death sentence. That research was the basis for a 1987 appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court by Warren McCleskey, a black man convicted of killing a white police officer in Georgia. In its ruling on *McCleskey v. Kemp*, even the right-wing Rehnquist Supreme Court acknowledged the Baldus findings, only to decide these facts were "irrelevant"—i.e., that they were *all too relevant* to the workings of the capitalist "justice" system.

Exactly 130 years after the Supreme Court pronounced in the 1857 Dred Scott decision that black people "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect," Rehnquist & Co. examined overwhelming evidence of the racist application of the death penalty and proclaimed that this was an "inevitable part of our criminal justice system." The Court rejected McCleskey's claim because its premise "throws into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system"—the most sacred "principle" of all being "the validity of capital punishment in our multiracial society."

### From Lynch Law to "Legal" Lynching

That sanctified principle is embedded in the racist history of this country. In the colonial era, special "Negro courts" were set up for slaves who, in the words of a South Carolina statute, could expect to be tried "in the most summary and expeditious manner" and executed by means "most effectual to deter others from offending in the like manner" (Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* [1956]). The early Slave Codes defined the black slave as chattel—property—to be slaughtered with about the same "safeguards" as might befit a recalcitrant mule. Among the numerous "crimes" deemed capital



Der Spiegel

Miami cops round up black youth as part of racist "war on drugs."

U.S. And when Mumia pursued his Post-Conviction Relief (PCRA) appeal in 1995, it was presided over by the very same hanging judge, who rejected the appeal out of hand.

On the eve of the filing of Mumia's 1995 PCRA petition, Republican governor Tom Ridge signed a warrant for Jamal's execution, which was stayed only as a result of a massive international campaign of protest and publicity. Ridge, who was elected in a campaign centered on speeding up the pace of executions, has already vowed to sign another warrant in the likely event that Jamal's PCRA petition is rejected by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which may be imminent. Among the Supreme Court justices is

During the 1995 hearing, Sabo ordered the arrest of one of Mumia's lawyers, PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, for daring to raise the issue of racial disparity now documented by the Death Penalty Information Center. Today, Abraham dismisses the new study with the laughable argument that the appeals process "is sufficient to make sure that our death penalties are handed down in a nondiscriminatory fashion" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 June). Denouncing University of Iowa law professor David Baldus, one of the authors of the study, Abraham sneered: "This is no more valid than his other studies, which have been discredited." This is an utter lie.

It was an earlier study by Baldus



1917 march in New York City protested national wave of lynchings by race-terrorist KKK.



William Loren Katz Collection

offenses for slaves in every Southern state before the Civil War were rebellion and attempted rebellion. In Louisiana, death was mandated for a slave who struck his overseer or any member of the slaveowner's family, or for a third conviction for striking any white person—a precursor to the "three strikes and you're out" laws being imposed around the country today. And in the legal prohibition on slaves learning to read and write can be seen the motivation behind the current drive to forever silence an articulate spokesman for the oppressed like Mumia Abu-Jamal.

It took a bloody Civil War, in which 200,000 black troops helped turn the tide, to smash the slave system. That social revolution ushered in the most democratic period in American history, Radical Reconstruction. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the Northern capitalists, who were not about to take any action which would threaten the dominance of private property, North or South. Even minimal land redistribution was stopped and the large plantations maintained, with the former slaves becoming impoverished sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Following the defeat of Reconstruction, formalized by the Compromise of 1877, the black freedmen were again disenfranchised under Jim Crow laws steeped in the spirit, and at times the letter, of the old Slave Codes. In the 1896 *Plessy* case, the Supreme Court codified "separate but equal" segregation as the law of the land.

At the heart of Jim Crow was lynch law

ocrats now place their hopes for "racial justice" in the Democratic Clinton White House. In fact, racist "law and order" was the centerpiece of Clinton's 1992 election campaign, which was marked by his personal supervision of the Arkansas execution of Rickey Ray Rector, a brain-damaged black man. Since taking office, Clinton has joined with the Republican Congress in pushing through one draconian "anti-crime" bill after another. The 1996 "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" vastly expanded the legal domain of capital punishment while gutting the right to federal *habeas corpus* appeals. In a recent column in the *Nation* (15 June), Alexander Cockburn wrote:

"In the fifties 'law enforcement' was primarily the local police and the F.B.I. Today it has expanded into every government agency. The Army is being used domestically in drug enforcement and border control. Between 1990 and 1995 forty-five federal prisons were built, and at least five are under construction today. We have over 3,000 on death row, ever-expanding police powers, ever-diminishing civil liberties."

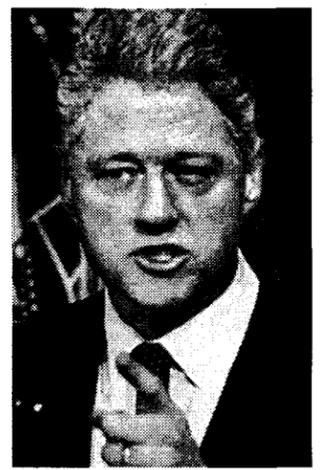
Two years ago, New York became the latest in a long line of states outside the Deep South to restore the death penalty, now on the books in 38 states. Last month, a New York City court meted out its first death sentence in over 30 years. Last year, 74 people were executed, the largest number since the 1930s. This year's roll call of death already includes the first woman executed since 1984—Karla Faye Tucker in Texas—in spite of a spectrum of opposition including the



Philadelphia Daily News



Philadelphia Tribune



Simon/SABA

**Rogues gallery of death, from left: Albert Sabo gave out more death sentences than any other sitting judge in U.S. Philly D.A. Lynne Abraham seeks death penalty more than any other D.A. Democrat Clinton oversaw execution of brain-damaged black man during 1992 election campaign.**

been tried—not only in Dr. Mengele's torture chambers at Auschwitz but in the "medical" facilities at Pennsylvania's Holmesburg penitentiary, not to mention the infamous and inhuman Tuskegee "experiment" beginning in the 1940s.

More than half of all death row inmates today are blacks, Hispanics or other minorities, sent there through a court system reminiscent of the colonial "Negro courts." Eddie Lee Ross, a black man sentenced to death in Georgia, was assigned an "attorney" who had been KKK Imperial Wizard for 50 years and, not surprisingly, fell asleep during the trial. The constitutional rights to legal representation and a jury of one's peers have always been a fiction for minorities and the poor, and are no less so today—as Jamal's 1982 trial and countless others since demonstrate. Racist jury-rigging is systemic, as shown last year when a videotape instructing Philadelphia prosecutors in the "art" of excluding black jurors came to the surface.

#### COINTELPRO: Capitalist State Terror

All this and more was evident in Jamal's case. But it was not just the "normal" racist workings of the capitalist state which put Mumia on death row. He was specifically targeted because of his lifetime of struggle against this system of oppression. In the 1960s, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover warned: "The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries." The FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program) vendetta left 38 Black Panther Party activists dead and hundreds more imprisoned. Sundiata Acoli, Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter are just a few of those who remain behind bars. Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) was only released last year after 27 years in California prisons for a crime the government knew all along he didn't commit.

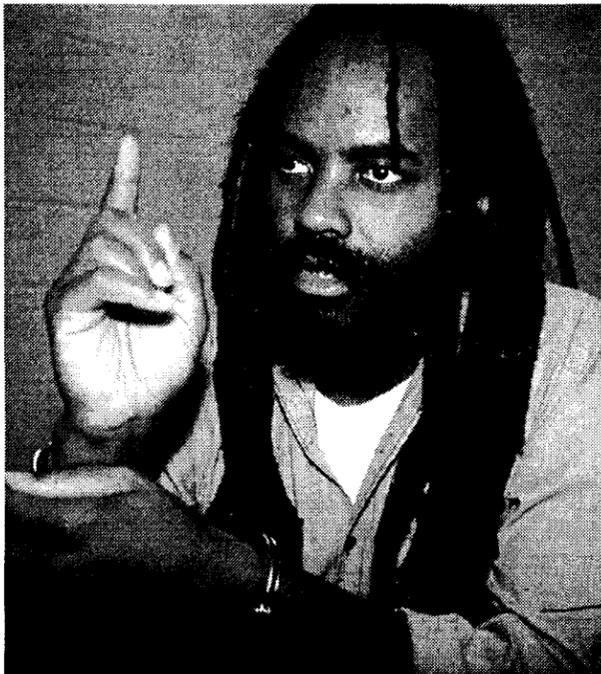
As some one thousand pages of FBI files document, from the time Mumia emerged as a 15-year-old Panther spokesman in 1969, he was subjected to constant surveillance, harassment and frame-up attempts (see "Mumia Abu-Jamal: The COINTELPRO Files," WV No. 624, 2

June 1995). The feds and cops never found Jamal to be engaged in anything other than public speaking and writing. Yet he remained in the cross hairs of the FBI and Frank Rizzo's kill-crazy Philadelphia cops—who were then gunning down unarmed "suspects" at a pace seven times greater than New York City police—as he went on to become an award-winning journalist widely known as the "voice of the voiceless." When Jamal reported on the August 1978 cop siege of the MOVE organization's Powelton Village home and became a MOVE supporter himself, then-mayor Rizzo ranted, "They believe what you write, what you say. And it's got to stop." Three years later, the cops and FBI saw their chance to stop Jamal, when he was found with a near-fatal bullet in his chest at the scene of the shooting of police officer Daniel Faulkner.

The fate the ruling class has in mind for Jamal has been meted out to untold numbers of other fighters for the rights of labor and the oppressed: the 1887 Haymarket martyrs, IWW militant Joe Hill, anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s, Cold War witchhunt victims Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In fact, the origins of the COINTELPRO terror operation wielded against the Panthers can be traced back to the "red scare" launched in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Thousands of labor radicals were imprisoned or deported in the Palmer Raids led by Hoover, who as a young Justice Department attorney cut his teeth in that anti-Communist witchhunt. And, as Theodore Kornweibel Jr. writes in his book, *Seeing Red* (1998): "One of its victims would be the African American population. Aggressive advocacy of a civil rights agenda and demands for fundamental changes in the racial status quo would be defined as Bolshevik-inspired."

In the hot summer of 1919, Hoover directed that "special attention should be given toward the Negro agitation which seems to be prevalent throughout the industrial centers of the country and every effort should be made to ascertain whether or not this agitation is due to the influence of the radical elements such as the IWW and Bolsheviks." The Military

*continued on page 12*



Terry/Gamma-Liaison

**Struggle to free death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is central to fight to abolish the racist death penalty.**

terror. With the withdrawal of the last Union troops in 1877, KKK terror stalked the South unchallenged. From the late 1800s on, some 5,000 or more people were killed by lynch mobs. An anti-lynching campaign initiated by black journalist Ida Wells did not even pretend to seek equal justice, but simply to get those blacks charged with crimes into a courtroom. To the extent this happened, "legal" lynchings largely supplanted the extra-legal ones. More than 1,600 people were executed during the 1930s alone. Between 1930 and 1967, black people accounted for more than two-thirds of all U.S. executions.

It was only as a result of social struggle—the civil rights movement and mass protest against the dirty, losing imperialist war in Vietnam—that the capitalist rulers felt compelled to put the death penalty on hold in 1967. Five years later, the Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was "wanton and freakish" in its application and ordered the states to rewrite their laws. But by 1976, the protest marches had long since stopped, and the same Court now gave the executioners the green light to resume their barbaric deeds. We declared: "Stop Supreme Court Bloodbath of Blacks and Poor! Abolish the Death Penalty!" (WV No. 117, 9 July 1976).

With Rehnquist as head of the Supreme Court and a Republican majority in Congress, the liberals and black Dem-

Pope and right-wing televangelist Pat Robertson. This was a statement, as we wrote at the time, "that the American ruling class will accept no constraints in implementing the ultimate weapon in its bloody arsenal of state repression" (WV No. 684, 13 February). Weeks later, Florida followed suit by executing Judy Buenoano.

As well, Paraguayan, Honduran and Mexican citizens who were convicted in violation of international law have been put to death. Among those executed in recent years were people whom even the courts acknowledged to be innocent of the charges for which they were strapped into an electric chair or slapped onto a gurney for lethal injection. In its bloodlust, the racist American ruling class is unimpressed and unimpeded by either the U.S. Constitution, the World Court or even the spectre of "divine intervention."

Like the ideologues for the Southern slavocracy and Hitler's Nazis, hired "academics" churn out pseudoscientific tomes to portray the victims of state slaughter as less than human. When Illinois prepared for its first execution in 28 years in 1990, it hired Holocaust apologist Fred A. Leuchter to build the state's death machine. Graeme Newman, dean of criminal "justice" at the Albany campus of the State University of New York, proposes subjecting prisoners to "risky medical research" (*In These Times*, 19 August 1996). This idea has, of course, already

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# Death Row...

(continued from page 11)

Intelligence Division (MID) censured black newspapers like Socialist A. Philip Randolph's *Messenger* for its "vicious" attack on the KKK, which the MID claimed was "merely" trying to prevent "the encroachment of the negroes in those neighborhoods populated by white people." The *Chicago Defender* was condemned simply for promoting a day of prayer for victims of lynching.

Special attention was given to those like writer Claude McKay, who traveled to Moscow for meetings of the Communist International. The American political police feared that black Communists were returning with instructions from Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky to set up a "colored Soviet." Dispatches from the U.S. consulate in counterrevolutionary Latvia called attention to a speech by American Communist John Reed at the Comintern's Second Congress in 1920 focusing on the critical need for the young American Communist Party to champion the cause of the oppressed black population. Over the coming years, every perceived spokesman for black rights—from the "Back to Africa" Garveyites of the 1920s to Democratic Party liberals like Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s—was subjected to surveillance, harassment, provocation and outright terror.

At the pinnacle of the apparatus of state repression is the death penalty. This was made clear in the D.A.'s reply to Jamal's motion for a stay of execution in 1995: "The death penalty...is the highest exercise of the state's authority; and it should not lightly be disturbed." Yet despite its patently racist character, the death penalty is embraced by a slew of black Democrats and nationalists. Last year, Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry authored legislation calling for the death penalty for those convicted of killing policemen, firefighters and paramedics. And during his 1997 mayoral bid, New York's Al Sharpton, a former FBI fink whose demagoguery is sometimes mistaken for radicalism, demanded the death penalty for a white man accused of kill-

can only be realized through the full integration of blacks into an egalitarian socialist society. This requires a third American Revolution, a proletarian revolution which breaks the chains of wage slavery and finishes the tasks of the Civil War. As a strategic component of the American proletariat, black workers will play a key role in this socialist revolution and in the Trotskyist party needed to lead it to victory.

## Leninist Party: Tribune of the People

Following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the imperialist rulers act like they can get away with anything. In the calculations of the American bourgeoisie, the ghetto masses who used to provide a reservoir of unskilled labor for the auto plants and steel mills—a "reserve army" of the unemployed to be tapped when the economy needed them—are now deemed to be a "surplus" population. The cold-blooded policy of starving black welfare mothers and their kids is augmented by a racist "war on crime" which snatches young men and women from the streets and throws them into prison hellholes. The "war on drugs" has subjected the ghettos and barrios to a virtual state of siege by the racist cops. And the ever more pervasive use of random drug-testing is designed to regiment and discipline the proletariat—a latter-day version of the blacklist aimed at victimizing labor militants.

Jails replace (non-existent) jobs, billy clubs are substituted for the blackboard. A couple of statistics sum it up. Over a million manufacturing jobs were lost in the U.S. in the 1980s, on top of the destruction of whole swaths of Midwest industry the decade before. Meanwhile, the prison population has tripled to more than 1.7 million. *For every place lost on the assembly lines, one has been added in the prisons.*

The parties of capital, Democrats and Republicans, join in intensifying capitalist repression as they aim to contain the explosive pressures generated by the growing gap between a handful of filthy rich and those at the bottom. Politicians vie over who can be "tougher on crime," eliminating educational and recreational programs in the prisons and bringing back Jim Crow horrors like the chain gang. The spectre of Jim Crow is also evident in the burgeoning, majority black prison population: one in seven black men are today disenfranchised because of felony convictions, effectively stripped of citizenship rights guaranteed under the 14th Amendment.

As spending on prisons has skyrocketed to \$30 billion a year—an almost eightfold increase over the past 20 years—and with it prison employment, this has created a powerful political lobby in its own right. Among the proliferation of firms specializing in private prisons is the Corrections Corporation of America, whose growth in stock value from \$50 million in 1986 to \$3.5 billion last year has placed it among the top five performers on the New York Stock Exchange. This has been accompanied by an enormous increase in "private security" strikebreaking outfits.

Simultaneously, the prisons have become repositories for slave labor rivaling the union-busting "workfare" schemes—and with the same purpose. Lockhart Technologies, Inc., a manufacturer of circuit boards, laid off 150 workers and replaced them with prisoners at its Texas "Renaissance and Work Facility." Speaking of his "captive work force," Lockhart executive Leonard Hill gloats: "They're here every day. Their cars don't break down, they're rarely ill, and they don't have family problems" (*In These Times*, 17 March 1997). And TWA used prison labor to break a 1986 flight attendants strike, putting its reservation clerks on the planes and using inmates to take calls. The airline is still using inmates at a juvenile facility in Ventura, California, paying \$5 an hour instead of the \$18 an hour unionized reservation clerks get.



Library of Congress  
Black Union troops liberate North Carolina slaves during Civil War, 1865. Spartacist-initiated labor/black mobilization stopped the Klan from marching in Washington, D.C., November 1982.



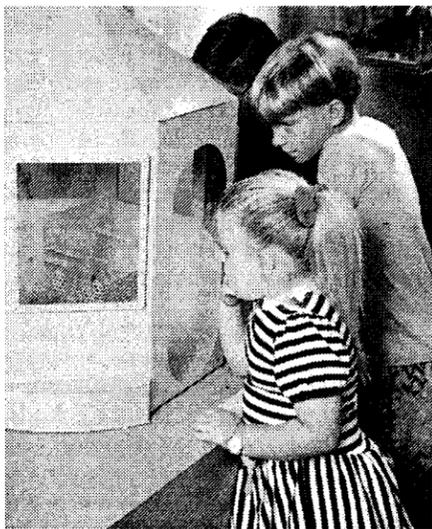
Washington Post

Such facts alone underline the direct interest and need for the integrated labor movement to mobilize its social power against capitalist state repression and on behalf of all the oppressed and exploited. Instead, the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats devote the bulk of their "organizing" efforts to bringing the armed guardians of capital—the cops and prison guards—into the labor movement, while increasingly acting as labor contractors for slave-labor "workfare" programs. Trampling on labor's hard-won gains, the AFL-CIO tops chain the trade unions to the capitalist Democrats and Republicans.

The mobilization of the proletariat in pursuit of its own class interests requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist labor tops. The bourgeois state, with its cops and courts, is not some "neutral" agency which serves society as a whole but rather—as Friedrich Engels put it over a century ago—"an organization for the protection of the possessing class against the non-possessing class."

We aim to win workers to this Marxist understanding as part of our effort to bring the social power of the labor movement into the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the racist death penalty.

Karl Marx captured a fundamental truth of American society when he wrote at the time of the Civil War: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." The color bar remains a fundamental dividing line in American society, key to obscuring the irreconcilable class conflict between capital and labor. The Spartacist League fights to forge a multiracial revolutionary workers party, a Leninist tribune of the people. That is the key to sweeping away this system based on exploitation and oppression and putting a final halt to the grisly workings of capitalism's machinery of death—be they the guardians of death row or the cops who operate as "judge, jury and executioner" in gunning down minority youth on the streets. ■



Wilson/Newsweek

Museum of death at San Quentin puts model of gas chamber on display.

ing a Hispanic cop. As for the anti-woman, anti-gay and anti-Semitic bigot Louis Farrakhan, his 1993 tract, *A Torchlight for America*, likewise demands the death penalty for those who "transgress the law."

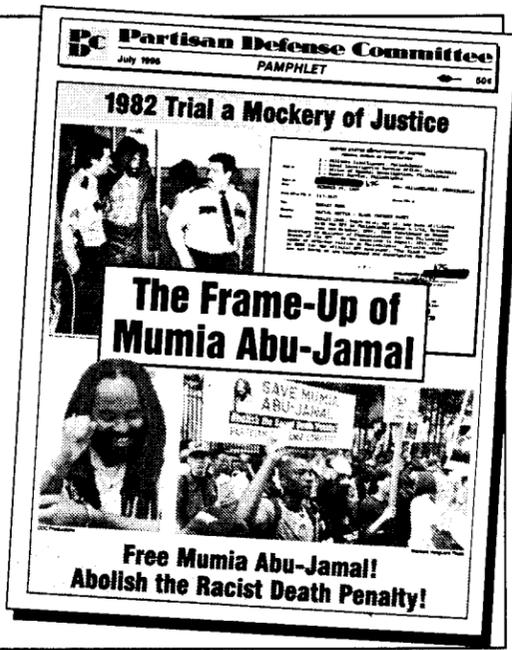
What unites these black bourgeois politicians is that they bow to the "authority" of the capitalist state. Thus, they are an obstacle to the fight for black freedom. Black oppression is intrinsic to American capitalism. Black people constitute a race-color caste, integrated into the economy while forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society. Against both the separatists who abet the bourgeoisie in fomenting divisions among the multiracial proletariat and the liberals who preach reliance on the racist Democrats, the Spartacist League fights for the perspective of *revolutionary integrationism*. The historic struggle for black equality

Partisan Defense Committee pamphlet exposes in detail the prosecution's case of lies, the coercion of witnesses and the FBI's COINTELPRO terror campaign against Mumia and the Black Panther Party.

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# Construction...

(continued from page 16)

of building trades, is that the construction boom has provided full employment in the industry, emboldening workers. As early as 6 a.m., thousands of workers began to assemble at a construction site where the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)—which runs the NYC transit system—was using a non-union contractor.

By 10 a.m., the police were calling for a "Level 4" mobilization—the highest—adding some one thousand riot cops to the 500 already deployed. A WV salesman captured the scene as the workers, after being dispersed from the early rally site, marched over to the MTA construction site.

"Chants along the march route were: 'Here comes the union!' and 'Whose city? Our city!' They occupied the intersection at 54th and 9th. As riot-equipped cops moved in, debris, cans and plastic bottles started flying."

The cops never gained control over the protest. While three trade unionists were injured, so were 18 cops—many by macing each other. One worker was hospitalized after being brutally trampled by a police horse, while 38 demonstrators were arrested. The unions must demand: **Drop all the charges now!**

NYC mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who is used to having his way against his more powerless victims, like hot dog vendors and protesting taxi drivers, was clearly stung by the protest. Following the rally, Giuliani blustered, "Had the construction workers given the same advance warning that the taxi drivers gave, they'd have been dealt with in the same manner." Fat chance! The June 30 action was dramatic evidence of the capacity of the city's labor movement to wield its social power. Had the construction unions linked up with their brothers and sisters in the Transport Workers Union, who face their own attacks from the MTA, the whole city could have been shut down. This would be a powerful example of the kind of class-struggle fight needed to combat the devastating layoffs and cutbacks in all city services, from hospital and sanitation to schools and parks. But such a struggle is the last thing the pro-capitalist union tops want to see. In fact, the construction union leaders—surprised and frightened by the strength of their own unions' action—abjectly apologized to Giuliani and canceled plans for another rally.

## Organize the Unorganized!

The July 21 Times Square scaffolding collapse shows that even at union construction sites the labor tops have allowed safety and working conditions to be sacrificed to the capitalists' incessant drive to increase profits. The fight for union control over working conditions can only be effectively waged in combination with an aggressive, class-struggle campaign to organize the non-union sites, where brutally exploited workers, often desperate immigrants, slave for a fraction of union scale. While in New York City construction is still heavily unionized, nationally the unionized portion of the construction industry has plummeted from 87 percent right after World War II to 18 percent now. But the fight to organize the un-

**Collapsed elevator scaffolding at Times Square construction site. Workers saved dozens of lives by clearing pedestrians and cars as structure fell.**



ganized goes right up against the racist, anti-immigrant consciousness promoted by the capitalists and echoed by the job-trusting craft union tops.

Any serious labor struggle will also quickly run up against the capitalist state—the cops, courts, prisons—and its anti-labor laws. It is precisely because the proletariat has enormous social power that the ruling class tries to strait-jacket the unions through a welter of legal restrictions—like the Taft-Hartley Act banning secondary strikes and other crucial labor weapons—and Justice Department takeovers. Today several large NYC construction unions are being run by government-imposed trustees, just as the Teamsters are. We say: **Government out of the unions!**

The construction workers gave a real show of union power on June 30. But while they certainly had no compunction in defending themselves against police attacks, they also revealed dangerous illusions in the very same cops, viewing cops as their "brothers in blue." This was seen when workers chanted, "Give the cops a raise!"—in between police charges!

Such illusions are fostered by the labor bureaucracy, which subordinates workers to the exploiters through support to the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties and preaches reliance on the racist, union-busting cops and courts. Key to successfully mobilizing workers against the racist exploiters is forging a new labor leadership, one imbued not with narrow *craft* consciousness, but with *class* consciousness. Such a leadership would be based on the understanding that the cops, courts and capitalist politicians are the enemies of the unions, and that labor's cause can only go forward by championing the rights of blacks, immigrants and all the oppressed.

## The Times Square Disaster: A Worker's View

Injuries, maimings and deaths on the job are a direct product of the bosses' thirst for profit. As we wrote in "Industrial Murder in the North Sea" (WV No. 416, 21 November 1986) concerning a horrible accident on a British oil rig:

"'Accidents will happen,' the bosses are saying in chorus. But *why* do they happen? The drive for profit that is intrinsic to capitalism involves systematic negligence and 'outright, wanton murder.'" Today, with trade unions under attack the world over in the context of heightened inter-imperialist competition, attacks on jobs and working conditions are intensifying. For example, as a result of the degradation of working conditions in Italy, official statistics show that three people *every day* are now dying there in construction accidents.

In the U.S. as well, workers are increasingly stuck in life-threatening situations with little or no protection, particularly with the proliferation of non-union outfits. On July 10, at one such site in Manhattan's trendy Tribeca neighborhood, 32-year-old Ecuadoran immigrant Luis Gomez was buried alive when a backhoe pushed concrete and construction debris into a six-foot hole where he was working. His disappearance was not even noticed for hours; his body was excavated seven hours later. A government safety official reported that in the ten days after Gomez' death, three more workers were killed on the job in New York City.

After the horrendous Times Square accident, Giuliani remarked: "There's no question this could have been much worse if it were not [for] the grace of God." But it wasn't "god" that saved lives. As a construction worker at that site described to WV:

"I had just gotten to my work location on the 38th floor when we heard a strange rumbling noise. We ran toward the edge of the building thinking someone was in trouble. We already had a tragic death on the material elevator several weeks ago. Suddenly everything started falling like dominoes. When I finally started going down, I found out everyone was able to get off the elevator in time. One worker was able to radio the elevator operators, and they rescued the guy running the elevator by pulling him off.

"Workers on the street saved the day by stopping both pedestrian and car traffic. They pulled out truck drivers waiting to

deliver material from their rigs. We heard that the media was calling it the 'miracle on 43rd Street.' It wasn't a miracle, it was working people putting their lives on the line."

The death this worker witnessed last month happened when a materials elevator crashed down on a carpenter. And in January, at the same spot, an arm of a crane six stories above the ground crashed into a glass building across the street.

Safety at work sites must be overseen and organized by the unions themselves, with the right to immediately shut down unsafe sites. We fight for the principle of industrial unionism instead of a myriad of craft unions, often so divided that they scab on each other's strikes. The notorious "two-gate system," in which workers in one craft work behind the picket lines of a different craft, must be smashed. All workers in the construction industry—skilled and unskilled alike—should be in one industrial union. We also call for an industry-wide hiring hall and union control of training, with special recruitment drives to bring minorities, women and others who have been historically discriminated against into the unions.

The bureaucracy of the skilled trades unions is notoriously racist and corrupt. In the 1930s, AFL construction union bureaucrats were among those most strongly opposed to the formation of industrial unions. And in the 1960s and '70s, the craft unions bureaucracy wholeheartedly supported the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam. No better are the supposedly more "progressive" types like NYC 1199 hospital union chief Dennis Rivera and AFL-CIO head John Sweeney, who are every bit as beholden to the capitalist Democrats and the racist, anti-labor government. A class-struggle leadership for labor must be forged through a political struggle to oust the cravenly pro-capitalist union tops and build a multiracial revolutionary workers party fighting for a socialist world. Those who labor must rule! ■

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# Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 16)

U.S. imperialism, and because only through breaking out of colonial subjugation will it be possible to move beyond the perennial question of Puerto Rico's 'status' to focus on the international class struggle. We also favor a socialist federation of the Caribbean, for the tiny island countries are so fragmented that they are economically unviable. But the question of independence and a regional federation are democratic questions, whose basic proposition is that the Puerto Rican population and the ethnically and linguistically diverse peoples of the region must decide their own fate. We are not in favor of forcing annexation, federation or even independence on anyone, least of all by racist U.S. imperialism."

The struggle for the liberation of Puerto Rico must be waged along the axis of *proletarian internationalism*, in which Puerto Rican workers, along with Dominicans, Haitians and others from the region, can be a living bridge to the class struggle of the proletariat on the American mainland. Not only do Puerto Ricans toil in branch plants of U.S. corporations on the island, but there are also 2.7 million Puerto Ricans on the mainland, particularly concentrated in the New York metropolitan area where they are represented in hospital, transit and other powerful unions. At the same time, the 1994 killing of Anthony Baez, a 29-year-old Puerto Rican, by NYC cop Francis X. Livoti highlights the intensified racist repression faced by blacks, Hispanics and immigrants in the U.S. What is needed above all is the forging of Trotskyist parties in Puerto Rico and the U.S. as part of a reformed Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.

The International Communist League sent a bilingual team of comrades from the U.S. and Mexico to Puerto Rico for the general strike in order to introduce workers and students to our revolutionary program through the Leninist press of the SL/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM). We reprint below excerpts from comrade Miguel Acevedo's July 21 report on this work.

## Reporter's Notebook

America's biggest colony is a distinct country. Only a small minority of the population speaks English, and certainly most of the proletariat doesn't. I got a sense, particularly from leftist professionals, that many of those who spoke English denied it. Once, when I tried to give someone our supplement on the UPS strike, "Unchain Labor's Power!" (printed in WV No. 673, 5 September 1997) after he had bought the GEM's *Espartaco*, he told me that he could read English but avoided it. One t-shirt I saw a lot of youth wearing had a Puerto Rican flag and read in Spanish: "I'm Puerto Rican and I speak Spanish. I know how to speak English, too." The first letters of the second sentence (*sé hablar inglés también*) were enlarged and highlighted to read "SHIT." The most interesting people we talked to were the ones who *wanted* WV and thirsted for news from off the island, from the big strike against General Motors in Flint, Michigan to the labor and student struggles in Indonesia.

The impression I got after intervening



Teachers march in San Juan in protest against privatization of telephone company. WV Photo

in different sectors of society for a week is that despite low votes for independence in referendums, the bulk of the population, particularly the working class, has strong nationalist sympathies and hardly thinks of itself as "American." However, they don't want to lose what rights U.S. citizenship gives them. There is much travel back and forth between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. A high proportion of the population is on welfare, but the Puerto Rican proletariat has social weight and crucial links to its multiracial class brothers and sisters in the big cities of the United States.

You might think that the flag is sort of a rendition of the U.S. flag and that the flag-waving has a tinge of U.S. patriotism. This isn't so in most cases. The Puerto Rican flag was fashioned after the Cuban flag, to symbolize the unity of their struggles. The blue field was originally much lighter, like the stripes in the Cuban flag. There were a few of these earlier flags at demonstrations. I saw a lot of t-shirts with the slogan: "My star doesn't fit in the American flag."

### Background to the Strike

There has been much labor dissent against pro-statehood PNP Governor Rosselló's privatizations. There was a 24-hour general strike last October. The recent 48-hour general strike was organized by CAOS (truncated acronym for "Umbrella Committee of Labor, Civic, Cultural, Political and Religious Organizations") in opposition to the privatization and sale of the state-owned PRTC. CAOS includes some 60 unions representing about 300,000 workers. It also includes the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP), the National Hostosian Congress (CNH—Hostos was a Puerto Rican independence leader from the turn of the century) and various "anti-privatization" committees. Even some legislators from the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), which tried to privatize the PRTC while in power in 1990, have joined CAOS.

Union activity was focused on the PRTC's central offices at 1500 Ave. Roosevelt in the neighborhood of San Patricio on the west side of San Juan. There

were pickets at the five entrances to the two-building complex. There were several clashes with cops herding scab managers in and out through the back entrance. Upper management was flown in and out in a helicopter. The unions found out where they boarded the helicopter and organized a picket there. The

June 18: Cops attack picketers outside San Juan headquarters of Puerto Rico Telephone Company.



AP

second biggest site was at Plaza Celulares in the barrio of Hato Rey, a few blocks from the University of Puerto Rico (UP). This is where the left and students mostly gathered. Clashes also occurred here at the back entrance when cops herded scabs in and out.

The pickets were well organized. Each site was led by a "delegado" who communicated with others at the site with a radio and cell phone. Several unions—UTIER (Union of Industrial Workers in Electricity and Irrigation), UIA (sewer and aqueduct workers) and others—had solidarity 24- and 48-hour strikes in the two weeks leading up to the general strike. Different services were shut down each day; they were announced at 4:00 a.m. each morning at 1500 Roosevelt.

Workers organized by the Teamsters are also on strike against RIMCO, the sole distributor of Caterpillar parts in the Caribbean. A strike captain we talked to who had worked there for 30 years was making \$8.90 an hour and was about to get a \$240 per month pension. We

passed out our UPS supplement, and the strike captain told us repeatedly, "You've walked a long way to give us an important message."

### Strike Derailed into "Peaceful Work Stoppage"

Looking at each individual action, you got the sense that the unions really could have shut down the island and won their demands. But the *telefonistas* continue on strike and have reduced their demands to "no reprisals." They also insist on being able to fine about 150 union members who scabbed. From the beginning, there was disagreement among CAOS leaders as to the scope and length of the general strike. Some wanted an unlimited general strike until the sale was rescinded or there was a referendum on the sale. Others wanted unions to voluntarily decide whether or not and how long to participate in the strike.

The strike was called a *huelga*, but toward the end it was being called a *paro*. *Huelga* means: strike, picket lines, unlimited in duration until agreement is reached. A *paro* is more like a work stoppage with the duration set beforehand. The front page of *El Nuevo Día* on the second day of the strike summed up the shift to *paro*. It ran a full-page picture of a striker shaking hands with a cop under the headline "Peaceful *Paro*" with a caption reading, "Dialogue between police and strikers avoids major confrontations and ensures basic services."

Many workers justified the limited nature of the strike, saying they feared losing public support.

From the outset, the union bureaucrats had no intention of mobilizing the proletariat in its class interests, but rather sacrificed class independence on the altar of bourgeois nationalism, and this crippled the strike. The working class is being prepared to take imperialist-dictated austerity through the agency of the domestic bourgeoisie and its allies. This is peddled as being better than direct imperialist exploitation. Workers' anxieties over the layoffs to come with privatization have been channeled into defense of a supposedly classless nation. This is the bourgeois-nationalist lie of *el pueblo unido*, which disappears the centrality of *los obreros* and the conflict between labor and capital the better to chain the exploited to their exploiters. This is done with the assistance of the Puerto Rican left and the union leadership. One of the most common slogans chanted was "Puerto Rico is not to be sold, Puerto Rico is to be defended!" I was often asked where I was from. I'd answer that I agreed with Marx that the workers don't have a country.

### The Strike

The strike commenced with a concert organized by UP students at Plaza Celulares and a prayer at 1500 Roosevelt at midnight. Carrying a big wooden cross, dozens of members of the "Ecumenical Dialogue for National Reconciliation" marched from UP to Plaza Celulares. We left Plaza Celulares before the religious contingent arrived and went back to strike headquarters at 4:00 a.m. and sold several subscriptions to workers from all over the island.

Luis Muñoz Marín airport was a key

## Spartacist Forums

### America's Racist Empire: A Century of U.S. Imperialist Plunder

Also: Eyewitness Report  
from Puerto Rico General Strike

Thursday, August 13, 7 p.m.

New York University—Bronfman Center, First Floor Lounge  
7 East 10th Street (between 5th Ave. and University Place)

NEW YORK CITY For more information: (212) 267-1025

### Flint Strikers Cripple GM— General Strike Shakes Puerto Rico Class Struggle in the American Empire

Also: Eyewitness Report  
from Puerto Rico Phone Workers Strike

Thursday, August 27, 7 p.m.

University of Illinois at Chicago—Circle Center, Room 334  
750 S. Halsted Street

CHICAGO For more information: (312) 454-4930

site for the strike. Unions organized caravans that met at different sites at 5:00 a.m., drove to the airport, then slowed down and parked in the three lanes approaching it. Each caravan then set up a circling picket in every lane into the airport. A lot of UIA strikers carried heavy sticks and bats throughout the general strike. They were later joined by a contingent of Teamsters. Chants were led by a group including two trumpet players and percussionists. One chant made a play on a traditional song, calling on Santa María to save us from Governor Rosselló. Another called for no violence on the picket lines. Cops showed up with tow trucks, the *Fuerzas de Choque* (Shock Forces) and mounted units to disperse the pickets and caravans by brute force. At one point, the FBI said it would take over the airport.

But after meeting with top cop Pedro Toledo, the union leaders took the pickets down. The same scene was played out at Puerto Rico's huge industrial park in Carolina, just east of San Juan. Here, too, the pickets were demobilized after talks with the cops. According to accounts in the *El Nuevo Día* (9 July), ten ships carrying 5,000 containers had to wait out the general strike off the coast of San Juan because of the participation of the longshoremen (Union Internacional de Estibadores). These dock workers can play a key role in class battles: an island economy, Puerto Rico imports 95 percent of what it consumes.

Each day of activity culminated in rallies at 1500 Roosevelt. Several unions were present, but there were always twice or three times as many Puerto Rican flags as there were union banners or symbols. PIP president Berrios addressed one rally. Lolita Lebrón, an *independentista* who gained fame for the 1954 machine gun attack on the U.S. Congress and whom we defended against the American government, also spoke. The crowd was silent during her speech and broke into applause when she finished. After a version of the "Star Spangled Banner" cleverly mocking U.S. cultural encroachments on Puerto Rico, the crowd sang to the tune of "Happy Birthday": "Let them leave here, let them leave here, when they turn 100 years old." (This refers to the 100th anniversary this year of the U.S. colonization of Puerto Rico.) Our sales and discussions were notably better at the strike pickets where proletarian centrality was palpable than at these rallies, where the working class was politically subsumed into just one more constituency of the nationalist movement.

The public transportation unions went out, so the buses didn't run. Other than all of this, you wouldn't have known there was a general strike going on in San Juan because mass pickets were demobilized and some essential services were kept running. The big shopping malls were closed, but smaller stores and cafes were open. For the most part, the lights stayed on and the water kept running. Other parts of Puerto Rico were affected more than San Juan.

The mayor of Ponce, Rafael Cordero Santiago, was on the picket lines during the two days and authorized municipal employees to take the days off so they could participate in the protests. At one point, he led pickets on a six-mile march to a rally at City Hall. His speech was followed by chants from the crowd supporting his candidacy for governor. The rally was also addressed by PPD president Anibal Acevedo Vila and two PPD legislators. There were big rallies in Mayagüez and Arecibo. The mayor of Mayagüez also gave municipal employees the two days off. While the left and union tops helped channel workers' outrage into parliamentary politics, in Mayagüez the Shock Forces stormed a picket at 2:30 a.m. to run scabs through. Governor Rosselló ignored the strike and spent the two days at the beach.

### Our Intervention

We introduced ourselves to strikers as representatives of the ICL. We explained that we're fighting to build revolutionary parties all over the world that can lead



San Juan Star

**U.S. soldiers occupy Mayagüez in 1898 Spanish-American War, initiating a century of U.S. colonial subjugation of Puerto Rico.**

working-class struggles to smash capitalism and take the wealth the workers have created to be put to good use for society through a socialist planned economy. We stressed that only the working class can lead the struggle for national liberation and that we want to build such a party here, one that would fight for the political independence of the working class.

Most workers responded enthusiastically. In contrast, almost every "leftist" I'd explain this to would look dismayed and arrogantly respond that people aren't ready for these ideas, they're not open to things from outside, "it's different here." We found contradictions to expose the dangers of bourgeois nationalism. For example, one prominent slogan was "What do we want 3 percent for if 100 percent is ours?" This referred to Rosselló's offer to sell the workers 3 percent in the privatization deal. I used this slogan to point out that indeed PRTC is "ours"—belonging to the working class that

problem, but the regular cops were OK. We explained that the cops aren't workers, they don't produce anything, they are the attack dogs of the capitalist class to protect bourgeois property and bourgeois law and order.

Governor Rosselló was portrayed as a fascist, a traitor, even Satan. His name was often written using a swastika instead of the two "s"s. Posters of his picture and the words "Judas Iscariote" were everywhere. (This also points to the heavy influence of the church in Puerto Rico.) We pointed out that he was no traitor to the proletariat but a loyal servant of the capitalist class. A few sites had a poster with the words "Rosselló Dictador" and three pictures of him with a hammer and sickle, a swastika and the five-pointed star of the *estadistas* (pro-statehooders). We pointed out that the hammer and sickle is a communist symbol and that there has been a dangerous right-wing campaign in Europe equating fascism with commu-

**Spartacist contingent at 1994 NYC demonstration calls for defense of Cuba against internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack.**



WV Photo

created it, not the category of Puerto Rican "people" which includes their would-be Puerto Rican exploiters.

A crucial point of our discussions with workers and students was stressing that the police are the armed thugs of the capitalist state—they are not "neutral" and they do not belong in the workers movement. Entrances to all the PRTC and some Banco Popular buildings were guarded by cops with bullet-proof vests. The Shock Forces violently attacked pickets to move scabs in and out and often went into action without badges to prevent strikers from identifying them. **Fourteen thousand cops** were mobilized against the strikers. There were rumors that the cops were taking pictures of people not in the union and had orders to arrest "outside agitators." Students tried to prevent the state-owned TV station from doing interviews at a picket at the university because the managers are known for giving their videotapes to state authorities.

Despite all this objective evidence of the role of the police, there were massive illusions in "good cops" vs. "bad cops" which we argued against every day on the picket lines. A prominent sign at Plaza Celulares read, "Policeman, don't be a clubber, you're also a worker." A lot of people we pointed this out to agreed this was crap. Yet there was a lot of sentiment that the Shock Forces were the

nism. We used the article "Black Book: Anti-Communist Big Lie" (WV No. 692, 5 June) to explain the point. We were told that the *Populares* were producing and distributing this disgusting poster.

### Racial Oppression and Dominicans in Puerto Rico

We wanted to do a sale in a working-class neighborhood, so we went to an area labeled "Barrio Obrero"—workers' neighborhood—on our map. This happened to be where a lot of Dominicans live. I sold an *Espartaco* to a black Dominican contractor who at first wouldn't buy it because we criticize Castro. But he heard us out and had probably never heard Trotskyist left-wing critics of Stalinism who fight to defend Cuba through international proletarian socialist revolution and workers political revolution against the Castroite bureaucracy. One older man who argued with the contractor against belief in god chimed in that *perestroika* in the Soviet Union was the worst thing that happened to humanity, that Gorbachev should have been shot, that we were all screwed after the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Many Puerto Ricans have a stunning disdain for Dominicans, most of whom are black. One professor we sold a subscription to couldn't tell us what minorities there were in Puerto Rico. A dock worker union official I talked to didn't

know about a dock workers strike going on in Santo Domingo. One self-described Communist used a disgusting slur against Dominicans, and we cut off the conversation. The assassination of a student leader in Santo Domingo during the strike should have had some resonance.

### The Fake Left

The only place we saw most of the left sell their papers was at a demo called by the petty-bourgeois nationalist National Hostosian Congress protesting the transfer of the U.S. military Southern Command from Panama to Puerto Rico and the continued U.S. bombing tests on the small inhabited Puerto Rican island of Vieques. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) had its U.S. paper and a Spanish-language offprint. In the offprint they remark how impressive Marx and Engels' analysis of the class struggle is considering they didn't live to see the Russian Revolution in 1917, Spain '36, Hungary '56, "the struggles of '68," "the fall of the Iranian shah in 1979, or of Stalinism in 1989.... All these revolutions show the same characteristics; the gradual accumulation of anger, for a thousand different reasons, that at an unpredictable moment explodes like a wave that devastates everything in its path." It's not surprising that a group that can't tell the difference between proletarian revolution and Islamic reaction or capitalist counter-revolution and *tails* the most backward consciousness denies the role of a Leninist *vanguard*. Fortunately for the Puerto Rican workers, the ISO was not very forthcoming about distributing the Spanish offprint. I had to specifically ask for one when I saw it sticking out of an ISOer's pocket.

We also ran across the "Internationalist Group" (IG) in the form of its *lider máximo*, Jan Norden. We spotted him at Plaza Celulares reading *Claridad*, obsessively underlining. Eventually the IG appeared with an eight-page "leaflet" which Norden sold for 25 cents. It was peppered with out-of-context quotes from Trotsky's writings on France, where he argued for a general strike in a pre-revolutionary situation. The IG describes the strike in Puerto Rico as being organized by student, leftist, women's and community groups, leaving out the influence of the very visible bourgeois and religious organizations, which must be combatted. The crucial factor of a revolutionary party to bring *revolutionary consciousness* to the proletariat is reduced to rah-rah militancy over strike tactics, calls for strike committees, etc. The IG is a walking example of the regression in political consciousness since counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. In denying that there has been any significant regression in consciousness, in "lending the economic struggle a political character" like the Economists Lenin polemicized against in *What Is To Be Done?*, Norden's IG capitulates to this lower level of consciousness, rendering the need for a genuine Leninist party to fight for proletarian power superfluous.

It is precisely to further the task of building a Leninist-Trotskyist international party that we intervened in the general strike, bringing a revolutionary program to the most advanced workers and students. We have real opportunities to build the party in Puerto Rico. Although this trip barely scratched the surface, we have acquired a hearing and a readership among workers in key unions and students. Furthering our presence in Puerto Rico is intrinsically linked to work in the industries in North America where Puerto Ricans are integrated into the proletariat. ■

**NOTICE**  
**Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August.**  
**Our next issue will be dated August 28.**

# WORKERS VANGUARD

For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico!

## General Strike Rocks Puerto Rico

On July 7 and 8, hundreds of thousands of Puerto Rican workers walked off the job in one of the biggest labor protests in that island nation's history. The two-day general strike was the culmination of a growing protest movement against the decision by the colonial regime of Governor Pedro Rosselló to sell the state-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Company (PRTC) to the U.S. telecommunications giant GTE. A strike since June 18 by the 6,400 PRTC workers against the privatization plan and threatened layoffs had already generated widespread support throughout the population and an outpouring of national indignation. Telephone workers are about to begin voting on whether to accept a settlement pushed by leaders of the Independent Telephone Workers Union (UIET).

The Rosselló administration hopes that its union-busting privatization drive will win favor in Washington for Puerto Rican statehood. The U.S. Senate is presently considering a bill, passed by the House of Representatives by one vote earlier this year, calling for a binding referendum on Puerto Rico's status: independence, statehood or the present thinly disguised colonial status deceptively termed "free associated state" in Spanish and "commonwealth" in English. The *New York Times* (24 July) noted how the Puerto Rican governor emphasizes his "conservative bent" as he campaigns in favor of statehood: "Imagine a place, Gov. Pedro J. Rosselló and his lobbyists say, that opposes abortion, hands out vouchers so children can attend parochial schools, has sliced capital gains



July 8: Thousands march in Ponce in support of striking telephone workers during two-day general strike.

taxes, allows school pupils five minutes for prayer, and is busy privatizing many of its major industries." The referendum bill is opposed in Washington by a coalition of "English-only" yahoos and Republicans who fear that statehood would favor the Democrats.

In fact, none of the "solutions" being mooted by the American bourgeoisie would represent a gain for the Puerto Rican people. Under the present commonwealth arrangement, Puerto Ricans are oppressed second-class citizens who cannot vote in presidential elections and are not represented in Congress, but who have been drafted in disproportionate numbers in every imperialist war since World War I. Statehood—direct annexation

to the U.S.—would serve to aggravate racist nativist hostility toward Puerto Ricans and accelerate the tendency of English to replace Spanish on the island, ultimately threatening to submerge the national identity of the Puerto Rican people. And any formal "independence" achieved through a U.S.-sponsored referendum or Congressional proclamation—as opposed to a revolutionary struggle against U.S. imperialism—could only be a cover for neocolonial U.S. domination.

The pro-statehood campaign of Rosselló's New Progressive Party (PNP) includes support for the *expansion* of the U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico, already Washington's main military installation in the Caribbean. Military

bases, including the massive Roosevelt Roads naval base (37,000 acres), occupy fully 12 percent of the island's territory. In the past, Puerto Rico has served as the launching pad for U.S. imperialist attacks against Cuba (1961), the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983) and Central America. We say: *U.S. military out of the Caribbean! For unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialism and internal counterrevolution!*

While there is deep resentment among Puerto Ricans over their colonial oppression, most are contradicted and loath to relinquish the benefits of U.S. citizenship—such as the right to work on the mainland—and fear that independence would mean falling into the crushing immiseration typical of capitalist Caribbean states such as the Dominican Republic. Certainly, an independent *capitalist*

Puerto Rico would no doubt mean exactly that, as it would continue to suffer under the boot of American imperialism. The only road to breaking imperialist subjugation and eliminating poverty is through proletarian revolution, not only in Puerto Rico but throughout the Caribbean and above all in North America.

As we wrote in *WV* No. 588 (19 November 1993) following a referendum in Puerto Rico where the vast majority voted for either maintaining commonwealth status or for statehood:

"As revolutionary internationalists, we defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and support struggles for independence. We advocate independence in order to strike a blow against

*continued on page 14*

## As Greedy Bosses Push Deadly Speedup and Union Busting

### Construction Workers Rally Shuts Down Midtown

#### New York City

On June 30, some 40,000 construction workers charged from a protest rally and surged through the streets of Midtown Manhattan, chanting "Union! Union!" and locking up traffic for hours. Furious over the increasing use of non-union contractors at building sites, the workers closed over 200 unionized job sites—in effect, a one-day city-wide construction strike. This impressive show of labor power provoked fear and alarm among yuppies and the city's bourgeois rulers, expressed in raving tabloid headlines like "Mob Rule in Midtown" (*New York Post*, 2 July).

Three weeks later, Midtown was again paralyzed—this time with "the

strange quiet of Belfast or Beirut after a bombing" (*New York Times*, 22 July)—after a 20-story chunk of steel scaffolding along with beams, glass and debris rained down from a 48-story Times Square building project, toppling a giant crane. Eighty-five-year-old Thereza Feliconio was killed when a steel section crashed through the roof of her twelfth-floor apartment across the street.

The link between these events is the massive building boom in New York City, with construction and engineering firms in a frenzy to increase their already bloated profits through expanding the use of non-union labor and ramming through deadly speedup even at unionized sites. One reason for the massive turnout at the June 30 protest, which encompassed the whole gamut

*continued on page 13*



June 30: Construction workers mass outside Metropolitan Authority headquarters protesting use of non-union labor.

Sotomayor/NY Times