

The

Special Issue

June 2001

No. 10

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# Internationalist



## Cincinnati, Charleston Blacks and Labor Under the Gun



Tony Dejak/AP

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Front page photo: Cincinnati police sharpshooter takes aim at mourners at funeral for Timothy Thomas, April 14.

Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925).

**Special Issue of *The Internationalist***

This special issue of *The Internationalist* centers on a number of crucial battles for the cause of labor and the fight against capitalist repression. The intersection of class exploitation and racial oppression, central to U.S. society from its inception, is highlighted in the explosion of black outrage against police terror in Cincinnati, crucial new developments in the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, the crisis of New York City public education, and the defense of five black longshoremen threatened with years in prison in Charleston, South Carolina. Along the Mexico-U.S. border, the longest between the semi-colonial "Third World" and an imperialist power, women workers are in the forefront of the battle for real unions against corporatist and company "labor" fronts. On the other side of the globe Korean workers carry on a bitter struggle against the Daewoo auto conglomerate, while villagers' struggle against a U.S. bomb range parallels the fight against colonial militarism in Vieques, Puerto Rico. Throughout, the fight for revolutionary-internationalist leadership is indispensable for bringing to fruition the struggles of the working people.

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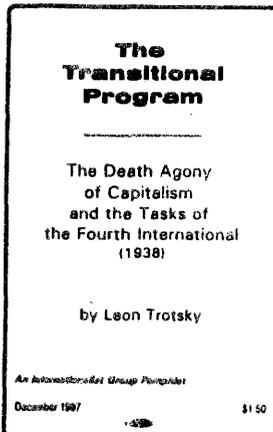
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No. 10



June 2001

# Defend the Charleston Five!

## Key Battle for Labor Rights and Black Freedom

### Only Hard Class Struggle Can Defeat the Racist Union-Busters!

The fight to defend the Charleston Five—black longshoremen in South Carolina threatened with years in prison for defending their union—is a key battle linking labor struggle with the cause of black freedom. Like the reign of racist police terror in Cincinnati and the fight to free death row journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, it focuses a searchlight on harsh realities in America, where capital's exploitation of labor rests on a bedrock of racist oppression.

International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 members Jason Edgerton, Elijah Ford Jr., Kenneth Jefferson, Ricky Simmons and Peter Washington Jr. are to be tried on federal charges of "felonious riot." They are targets of a racist anti-union assault aimed at the heart of labor, as the bosses seek to break a key outpost of unionism in the South: Charleston, the East Coast's second largest port. The struggle began when the Nordana shipping line ended a 23-year agreement with the ILA and contracted the scab WSI stevedore firm. When WSI began working the Nordana Skodberg, the scab operation was met on 20 January 2000 by picketers from the overwhelmingly black Local 1422 as well as the mainly white clerks' and checkers' Local 1771.

The response was a full-scale *police riot* by 600 riot-clad cops from a range of state and local agencies, together with prison guards, who used tear gas, rubber bullets, concussion grenades, as well as armored cars, helicopters, sniper details, police boats and attack dogs reminiscent of those unleashed against civil rights marchers in the '60s. In a blatant provocation, a cop lunged out of formation to club Local 1422 president Ken Riley as he tried to calm the situation. Seeking to defend themselves, longshore workers were savagely beaten to the ground. The union later discovered that local jails had been cleared in anticipation of mass arrests.

With the union hall surrounded by cops armed to the teeth, nine unionists were charged with civil trespass. Yet state business leaders howled for heavy penalties against "agitators." The head of the Chamber of Commerce ranted that South Carolina could "not afford to let the union bosses take over and dictate." The labor-hating *Post and Courier* intoned, "Labor violence on Charleston's waterfront must not be rewarded." Vowing "jail, jail and more jail" for the black unionists, Republican attorney general Charles Condon—a Bush advisor who



Mic Smith

**Charleston longshoremen defend themselves against attack by union-busting cop army, 20 January 2000.**

later hailed the appointment of Confederate apologist John Ashcroft as attorney general—filed federal charges.

When a judge dismissed these, Condon convened a grand jury to hit the Charleston Five with felony charges carrying up to five years in prison. In a mockery of the capitalist "justice" system's supposed principle of "innocent until proven guilty," the Five are subjected to a 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. curfew and forbidden to leave the state. The entire workers movement must mobilize its power demanding **Drop all charges now—Hands off the Charleston Five!**

### Rip Up the Flag of Slavery and Slave Labor "Right to Work" Laws!

Three days before the police riot of 20 January 2000, ILA Local 1422 participated in a march of tens of thousands in Columbia, the state capital, demanding that the Confederate flag be taken down from above the statehouse. The brutal attack in Charleston was in good part a "payback" from the racist state government. Yet the protest against the hated flag of slavery and KKK terror was exploited as a vehicle by the capitalist politicians of the Democratic Party—the same party of racism and exploitation that put the flag there in 1962 as a threatening show of hatred of the civil rights movement against Jim Crow segregation. In response to the protests, a "compromise solution" backed by Governor James Hodges and Charleston mayor Joseph Riley, Democrats elected with union backing, moved the racist banner from the top to the front of the building.

South Carolina labor does the legwork for the Democrats, and in return gets kicked in the teeth. After the longshoremen helped elect Hodges governor, he nominated Local 1422 president Ken Riley to the Port Authority, that is, to serve as a "labor statesman" helping the bosses administer port workers' exploitation. The maritime companies said no way – and the nomination was promptly withdrawn. The longshoremen, together with a range of "progressive" groups, responded by picketing the state Democratic Party in Columbia. Yet in Charleston, the Local 1422 union hall doubles as Democratic headquarters! Now the Republicans seek to ram through a bill, known as the "Riley Act," banning "card-carrying" unionists from serving on state boards so that, in the words of lieutenant governor Harvey Peeler, "the right-to-work foundation of our pro-business climate is never again compromised by union politics."

Today, the two Carolinas boast the lowest rate of unionization in the entire United States: just above 4 percent. South Carolina is one of two states that do not comply with the federal minimum wage law. Low-wage, non-union labor has been the attraction for "run-away shops" including from France (Michelin tires) and Germany (BMW and others). Seeing themselves as born-again plantation overseers, the capitalist authorities have a special hatred for black longshore unionists who are a nucleus of labor organization in this state, where attempts to drive workers into virtual slave-labor conditions are cynically called "right-to-work" laws.

Reformists respond with appeals for "pro-labor" legislation. Yet so long as the workers movement is chained to the mechanisms of class collaboration and the capitalist state, the bosses will be the winners; so long as labor buys the union bureaucrats' snake oil prescription of pressuring the bosses' government, failure will be the result. "Right-to-work" laws will not be eliminated by lobbying the Democrats, but only through hard class struggle. To defeat the exploiters, to win black freedom and the emancipation of all the oppressed, the fight must be for a *workers* government.

### For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize the South!

Under pressure from solidarity action by workers in Europe outraged by the attack on the Charleston dockers, Nordana eventually signed a new agreement with the union. Despite this, the WSI stevedore firm has continued to pursue a \$1.5 million civil suit against the ILA locals, their leaders and 27 individual members. The bosses view the case as central to their plans to break union power coastwise. Already, half of New Orleans longshore operations are reportedly non-union, while in Houston the figure is 80 percent. The response must be an *all-out mobilization of labor/black power, bringing in the unorganized and broad layers of the poor and oppressed, and pointing the way towards a class-struggle fight to unionize the South.*

This poses point-blank the urgent need for a new, *class-struggle leadership* of labor and all the oppressed. The old-line ILA tops under John Bowers have been openly hostile to the Charleston Five defense, not only because Local 1422 leaders

are part of a reformist "opposition" grouping in the union, but because the Charleston case rocks the boat of the ILA tops' cozy relation with the bosses. These are the "labor leaders" who let the Domino Sugar strike twist in the wind for 20 months until it went down in bitter defeat. Today they smile benevolently on ILA Local 1964's sweetheart deals with New York greengrocer stores aimed at spiking a UNITE Local 169 unionization campaign among horribly exploited immigrant workers.

Yet these sell-out artists are part of the AFL-CIO leadership under the liberal John Sweeney. Like his predecessors, Sweeney pours millions of dues dollars into campaigns for the bosses' Democratic Party. Eight years of the Democrats in the White House meant Wall Street gorging itself on a speculators' boom as millions of black mothers and kids were thrown into slave-labor "workfare." The "Effective Death Penalty Act" accelerated legal lynching while U.S. imperialism waged war on working people around the world. But today, as the Republican Bush administration revs up vicious attacks on labor and blacks, the labor bureaucracy will be working overtime to keep all protest subordinated to the Democrats, especially through the agency of black front men for this racist party like Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton.

It has been widely remarked that the attack on Charleston longshoremen "brings home" the class war against dockers that the bosses have waged from Liverpool, England to Santos, Brazil. The international nature of capitalism – and of its gravedigger, the working class – is the basis of the shipping and longshore industries. But under the watchword of "anti-globalization," labor bigwigs have pushed the poison of protectionism, pitting U.S. workers against their brothers and sisters overseas. Yet those who took *action* against the scab Nordana shipping operation were not the American labor bureaucrats – the ILA tops kept longshoremen working the *Skodberg* in several ports. Instead, Spanish dockers in Barcelona and Valencia "hot-cargoed" the *Skodberg* in solidarity with Charleston unionists. Only *international workers solidarity* – based on a program of class struggle – can defeat the bosses' game of divide and conquer.

Today efforts are underway to spark labor actions in various countries on the first day of the Charleston Five trial, and for West Coast ILWU longshoremen to shut ports on that day and call on the ILA to join such an action. The potential for mobilizing the power of labor in the fight against racist repression was indicated when the ILWU shut all West Coast ports for a ten-hour shift in April 1999 to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical black journalist on Pennsylvania's death row. This first step must be deepened and extended; work stoppages and strikes for Mumia's freedom – in which Pennsylvania ILAers should play a key role – are crucial, and in fighting a crucial battle for black freedom would strengthen all of labor.

In the face of the persecution of the Charleston Five and the escalating attack on union rights, what's called for is a solid *longshore strike against this racist anti-labor attack*. Shut down all three coasts. Stop the bosses cold before they do what they did in Liverpool! Hard-hitting strike action could

*continued on page 29*

# Police Out of the Ghettos! For Labor/Black Mobilization!

## Cincinnati Explodes Over Racist Killer Cops

**Timothy Thomas, Executed for "Walking While Black"**

*The following article was issued as a leaflet by the Internationalist Group on April 18.*

When a Cincinnati cop gunned down 19-year-old Timothy Thomas in the early morning hours of April 7, it ignited an explosion of outrage over racist police terror that has reverberated across the country. Television viewers around the world saw scenes of police state repression in George Bush's America as the mayor clamped a state of emergency on the Ohio River city. More than 850 people were arrested, overwhelmingly blacks, 620 of them for the "crime" of being on the street after 8 p.m. in minority neighborhoods. In a blatant provocation, roving police cars fired metal pellets point-blank into peaceful crowds attending Thomas' funeral. They hit a seven-year-old black girl and seriously injured a white teacher from Louisville.

Having gotten through the weekend, city authorities

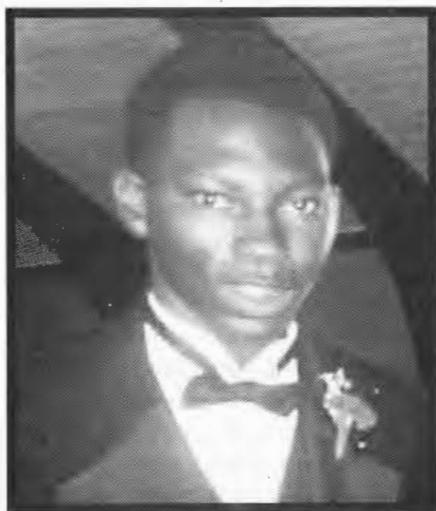
congratulated themselves and lifted the curfew, but **black Cincinnati is still under siege**. The next explosion is only a matter of time, whether in Ohio or Florida or New York City. The detonator is a system of racist injustice whose purpose is to "serve and protect" the interests of the masters of U.S.

capitalism. Where once plantation overseers whipped chattel slaves into line, today the police ride herd on the "wage slaves" who produce the fabulous wealth of the Fortune 500, while impoverished racial minorities are ground under the iron heel of the cops who occupy their communities. What the bourgeois media calls "riots" are outbursts of fury by the oppressed against the bloody terror of their oppressors.

This is not a matter of "racial harmony" as hand-wringing liberals portray it (while they "reluctantly" support martial law). Cincinnati is another front in a fight against *racist oppression*, and what's needed to successfully wage this fight is a mobilization of *labor/black power*. As police forces tried to lock up black youth and bottle up ghetto neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine and West End, the workers movement should have taken the lead to *break the siege* and bring downtown business to a grinding halt, demanding *cops out of the ghetto!* In the face of the wanton police repression in Cincinnati, the labor movement and all defenders of democratic rights, in Ohio and throughout the country, must demand that *all charges be dropped against all those arrested during the police siege of Cincinnati.*



**Army of Cincinnati cops takes aim at mourners on day of Timothy's funeral.**



**Timothy Thomas**

## Black Cincinnati Under Siege

The black population of Cincinnati has endured decades of unrelenting brutality by a police department that is infamous for its harassment of minorities. But recently there has been an escalation of wanton killings. Cincinnati cops have killed 15 black men since 1995 – four of them since last November – but not a single white person. Roger Owensby died of suffocation last November 7, caused according to the coroner's report either because of "a choke hold gone bad" or from the weight of the cops who pinned him on the ground. "They said they had wanted to question him because he fit the description of a suspect in an unspecified crime," said an AP dispatch. Two of the cops have been charged in the case, though not for murder, but no Cincinnati policeman has ever been found guilty for killing a civilian.

The uproar over the wave of cop killings led the American Civil Liberties Union together with the Black United Front to file a class action suit against the city this March, accusing the Cincinnati Police Division of systematically discriminating against blacks. In addition to the fact that every single person recently killed by the CPD is black, the suit points to the "30-year pattern of racial misconduct" by the Cincinnati police going back to the 1967 riots. The Kerner Commission found that the "civil disorder" was touched off by Cincy cops' use of anti-loitering laws to harass black people. It's no different today: in 1999-2000, according to the ACLU suit, 81 percent of all traffic citations by the CPD for driving without insurance, 72 percent of tickets for driving without a license, 70 percent for driving without a seat belt and 79 percent of citations for jaywalking were to blacks, who are 43 percent of the city population.

On April 7, the police charged after Timothy Thomas as he was walking down the street to get some cigarettes because cop Steven Roach recognized him as having 14 outstanding warrants. For what? *All* of the warrants were for misdemeanors or traffic violations, including five for not wearing a seat belt. As every black person knows (and the ACLU's general counsel Scott Greenwood repeated) this is the "charge of last resort when they can't get you for something else." Tim was another victim of what is euphemistically called "racial profiling," in which the police stop any black driver they feel like and then look for "evidence" to justify it. In fact, "profiling" is part of a police war against racial minorities, and particularly young black men, that has put *millions* of poor youths from the ghettos and barrios behind bars.

Repeating the story of "14 warrants," police officials tried



Crowd of protesters faces mounted police and riot cops outside Cincinnati police headquarters on April 10.

Steven Herppich/Cincinnati Enquirer

to portray Timothy Thomas as a criminal, presumably making him fair game for the badge-toting killers to shoot down. What those warrants add up to is that they couldn't pin anything on Tim, so he ended up on a pick-up list. Then they murdered him in cold blood. Killer cop Roach claimed he thought his victim was reaching for a gun, but no gun was ever found (the squad must have forgotten their "drop guns" to be left at the scene of a shooting to incriminate the dead "suspect"). Trying to deflect black anger the mayor admitted that "the initial findings don't back up" the cop's story, but city officials won't release the killer's statement and he has been put on "administrative leave" to keep the press from talking to him.

The fact is that Timothy Thomas had earned a general equivalency diploma, taught himself to read blueprints and was to start work the next Monday as a bricklayer at \$12 an hour. He was the father of a three-month-old son, Tywon, and he and his fiancée Monique Wilcox had planned a wedding in June. But "blame the victim" is Standard Operating Procedure for the cops and their bosses. Remember last year when New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani smeared Patrick Dorismond, quoting a sealed police record and saying the Haitian security guard gunned down by an undercover narc for refusing to buy drugs, was "no choir boy." Turns out that Dorismond actually had been a choir boy, but because he was black and an immigrant and crossed a cop, now he's dead.

As word about the cop murder of Timothy Thomas spread through the run-down neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine, once the home of German immigrants in the late 19th century when much of the housing was built, black residents were incensed. On Monday, April 9, a crowd of hundreds headed to the City Council chambers where they jammed into a hearing and held the council members for three hours demanding answers. "Stop killing us!" many chanted. Timothy's anguished mother Angela Leisure told the Council, "You took a part of my life from

me.... I demand to know why.”

Getting nothing but stonewalling from city officials, including Mayor Charles Luken and Police Chief Tom Streicher, a crowd of 1,000 headed for District 1 police headquarters. A line of riot cops and mounted police stood outside the front door. Someone pulled down the American flag and ran it back up the flagpole upside down. The next evening, a black pastor tried to organize a “peace walk.” The police would have none of it. A cop brandishing a shotgun charged a young black man. SWAT teams aggressively advanced on the demonstrators, banging their riot shields. So much for “peace.” Angry residents told the mayor to get the hell out when he tried to enter the battle zone. That night there were fires in dozens of locations in ghetto neighborhoods, as residents felt frustrated and blocked by overwhelming police power and the ominous threat of deadly force.

On Wednesday, the police chief tried to mobilize the black clergy. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* (16 April) reported later, “Almost immediately, the meeting spun out of control. A dozen ministers got up and left in frustration. Some decided they would urge peace, but not alongside the police.” “We do the work of God, not the Cincinnati Police Department,” the paper quoted one pastor saying. Actually, they were acting as auxiliary firemen, trying to put out the flames of discontent, whether openly alongside the cops or not. When they failed, the bourgeoisie appealed to national black political figures such as former Democratic Congressman Kweisi Mfume, now head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who arrived Thursday. The Rev. Al Sharpton from New York, who once spied on black militants for the NYPD and the feds and now acts as a Democratic Party power broker, showed up for the funeral on Saturday.

Simultaneously, the mayor decreed a state of emergency and imposed an 8 p.m. curfew, while word was leaked that the National Guard could be called in. This is no idle threat in Ohio, where everyone knows how National Guardsmen shot down four students at Kent State University in 1970 as they protested the U.S. bombing of Cambodia. The 1,000-man SWAT team was out in force, with police cars prowling and helicopters circling to spot any gatherings in black neighborhoods, and task forces of riot cops in battle gear ready to move in. It was the kind of urban counterinsurgency tactics that U.S. authorities have been practicing ever since the Los Angeles “riots” of 1992, following the acquittal of the cops whose videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King became the symbol of racist cop brutality in the U.S.

Saturday was Timothy’s funeral. The mayor and police chief grotesquely attended the services for the victim of their cop terror, then slipped out the back door. On the street outside, hundreds stood around and began to disperse. Suddenly out of nowhere, three Cincinnati police cruisers and one from the state police drove up and stopped at an intersection. Cops got out, carefully aimed and fired directly into a small crowd, climbed back into their cars and sped off. The press calls their



Cincinnati Enquirer

**Angela Leisure, mother of Timothy Thomas, speaking at community meeting, April 16.**

ammunition “bean bags,” to make it sound harmless. Actually it was buckshot, metal pellets in small bags stuffed into shotgun shell casings. Christine Jones, a 38-year-old teacher from Louisville who was carrying a banner reading “Citizens Against Police Abuse,” was hit by the shots and hospitalized for a cracked rib, bruised lung and bruised spleen.

The press called it a gangland-style “drive-by shooting.” A former Cincinnati cop (now head of the city Human Relations Commission) who witnessed the attack pointed out that the shooting had to be specifically approved by a police official. What they all understood and didn’t say is that this was a deliberate provocation, trying to goad the angry crowd into a “riot” that could then be bloodily suppressed. It was the sort of tactic that police death squads in Argentina routinely used in the run-up to the “dirty war” under the military dictatorship of the late 1970s. The next step is “disappearances” of well-known “agitators.” And don’t think “it can’t happen here.” Racist police death squads have been uncovered in Baltimore and New Orleans in years past. The FBI is “investigating” – that is, doing everything to cover it up.

### **Behind Police Brutality – Racist American Capitalism**

The explosion of black anger over the racist killer cops in Cincinnati is an episode in a larger story. By casting a sharp light on the nature of black oppression in the United States, this can illuminate how to fight it. Black Democrats like the NAACP’s Mfume and Al Sharpton called on the Justice Department to investigate the Cincinnati police. Appealing to the federal government is a knee-jerk reaction from black bourgeois misleaders. During the 1960s civil rights movement they appealed for intervention by the FBI, whose agents were riding with the Ku Klux Klan assassins and standing by as black students were beaten. Today this means appealing to Attorney General John Ashcroft, who says the Southern Confederate slavocracy has been maligne! Whether under the Democrats or Republicans, the government – federal, state or local –

is the instrument of the bosses.

Local leaders of the Black United Front have called for a variety of reforms: fire the police chief, a residency requirement for police, an independent review of CPD policies, put more teeth in a civilian review board, more community policing. All been done before. Cincin-



Steven Herppich/Cincinnati Enquirer

**Angry protesters marched to the site where Timothy Thomas was murdered by racist killer cop, April 10.**

nati has a substantially larger proportion of black cops compared to the population than does New York City. It's already had two black mayors (Dwight Tillery and Ken Blackwell). Under liberal Democrat Luken it even issued an ordinance banning racial profiling last summer. That didn't save Timothy Thomas' life, or Roger Owensby's or any other black man's from the racist killers in blue. These "reforms" are just cosmetic devices to cover up the fact that police brutality against minorities is a fundamental part of American capitalism, which was built on the bedrock of slave labor and fosters racial oppression day in and day out.

Various groups left over from the 1960s New Left engaged in mindless enthusing over the "Cincinnati Rebels," as if it was a baseball game where you cheer for the Reds. The Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party proclaimed "It Is Right to Rebel!" and gushed about the first protests: "The police couldn't touch, let alone stop, this march! The people had stood up and taken back their community!... There is a feeling of renewal!... Everybody has the sweet taste of feeling some justice through their actions!" (*Revolutionary Worker*, 22 April). But this rhetoric is just a sham to cover the RCP's thoroughly reformist pressure politics. Its article crowed, "now that the people have risen up, demanded justice and defied the authorities – now the whole power structure takes notice." But the point is not to get the attention of the "power structure" but to defeat the capitalist fulers.

Genuine communists stand solidly on the side of the oppressed as they fight against the oppressors. We denounce the bourgeois politicians, black and white, who wring their hands over broken glass while approving the police-state lockdown. But that is not enough – it is necessary to put forward a revolutionary program to lead the struggle to sweep away capitalism, which is the root cause of police brutality. Overturning hotdog stands and setting alight trash barrels express a sense of power-

lessness, reflecting the justified rage of those who have been blocked in their attempts to put a stop to the machinery of state murder. But black and working people have the power to defeat the racist enemy – what's needed is to mobilize the righteous anger of the ghettos with the organized strength of the multiracial proletariat, to

wage a militant *class* fight against racist oppression, led by a revolutionary workers party.

Veteran Birmingham civil rights leader Fred Shuttlesworth remarked that "Cincinnati is as far south as you can get in the North." A leading business journalist wrote an article a couple of years ago declaring "Cincinnati Exemplifies the Cities Driving the U.S. Economy" (*New York Times*, 5 January 1999), but added as an afterthought at the end: "The city's black population does not share equally in the prosperity. The black unemployment rate for the area is at least 8 percent, more than double the 3.4 percent rate for the work force as a whole." Unemployment in the inner city is actually far higher, probably over a quarter of the population. A black economic development specialist remarked, "Welcome to Johannesburg on the Ohio River," pointing out: "This place is a powder keg. Two-thirds of African Americans here are at or below the poverty level. The city schools are 90 percent African-American.... What's going on here is what's going to be going on in America in the 21st century" (*Washington Post*, 15 April).

Cincinnati has always had a smug ruling class. Even when it was known as "Porkopolis" in the 19th century because of the many slaughterhouses, the city fathers had pretensions. They bragged that the city was built on seven hills, like Rome. They built a plush music hall in Over-the-Rhine and established the second-oldest opera company in the U.S. Today they are building two riverfront stadiums for professional sports. Cincinnati is the headquarters of major U.S. corporations, including the soap-suds monopoly Procter & Gamble, Chiquita Brands (which got Washington to launch a banana war with Europe over tariffs on its Caribbean bananas) and Federated Department Stores, which runs Macy's and Bloomingdale's in New York. Across the river in Kentucky is Fidelity Investments.

All these corporations' operations have been lavishly financed by tens of millions of dollars in government subsidies,

while black neighborhoods languish in poverty. But in recent years the “young upwardly mobile professionals” (yuppies) have been moving back into the central city, to enjoy “quaint boutiques and upscale shopping areas” (in the words of a tourist brochure describing “trendy” Cincinnati). Black neighborhoods close to downtown could be prime real estate pickings. Thus the prosperity of Cincinnati’s bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, far from “raising all boats like a rising tide,” has actually *increased* official hostility toward black neighborhoods. When the police run roughshod in Over-the-Rhine they are reflecting the interests of their capitalist masters.

Complaining that Cincy cops were getting a bad press, the head of the Fraternal Order of Police said that the police were “not some band of rogue Nazis roaming Cincinnati hunting down and killing black men” (*Cincinnati Post*, 14 April). Rogues, no – they’re carrying out orders. But it would surprise no one to learn that the CPD is shot through with Klansmen (southern Ohio, northern Kentucky and southern Indiana are notorious as Klan country), and the police are certainly hunting down and killing black men. And not just in Cincinnati. A recent study by the Justice Department on “justified homicide” by the authorities (i.e., anyone killed by a cop) shows that U.S. police forces kill an average of 375 people a year, and that young black males are *14 times* more likely to be killed by police bullets than is the rest of the population.

“Racial profiling” is a national phenomenon. In New York City, a “street crime” unit of the NYPD pumped 41 bullets into African immigrant Amadou Diallo as he stood in the doorway of his home. The killer cops’ excuse: Amadou “fit the profile” of a criminal. When the New Jersey state police got caught out profiling, their defense was that they had received “how to” instructions from the Drug Enforcement Agency. And this was under Democrat Clinton, who also bragged about putting 100,000 more cops on the beat (where they can kill black youths) and vastly increasing the number of federal crimes subject to the death penalty. Just as Cincinnati blew up over the cop killing of Timothy Thomas, the state of Ohio is about to execute a black man, the first execution since 1981. And it’s not just blacks who are victimized. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee has filed a suit against the Ohio State Highway Patrol over the state cops’ systematic stopping of Hispanic motorists.

### **Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

Liberals and many reformist pseudo-socialists speak in terms of a “nation divided by race,” as a column by a Miami University professor (*Cincinnati Post*, 13 April) was headlined. This repeats the conclusions of the Kerner Commission on the 1967 riots, summed up in the phrase, “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal” (*Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1968). Increasingly separate and unequal, certainly – in spite of the civil rights movement, whose few gains are being systematically rolled back, and despite what is touted as “the longest peacetime expansion” in U.S. history. But the heart of the problem is not “racial relations” or learning to “get along” – it’s about racist oppression and repression. The Cincinnati cops

killing black youths and pumping lead into protesters is an accurate reflection of American capitalist society.

Today white racists in Mississippi are reaffirming the Confederate battle flag as the state’s emblem. Affirmative action programs are under attack everywhere. Earlier this year a federal court outlawed any racial criteria to achieve even limited diversity in the student body of the University of Michigan Law School. Where such programs were struck down earlier in California and Texas, the incoming classes suddenly became lily white. School desegregation in the North was killed in the 1970s by racist mobs in the streets of Boston (and Louisville) and the reactionary Supreme Court justices, while liberal Democrats went right along. Now Cincinnati schools are being starved of funds under a new law, which will slash almost \$4 million in state aid to the city while pouring tens of millions into wealthy suburbs such as Three Rivers, Wyoming, Mariemont, Madeira, Lakota and Mason.

What happened in Cincinnati is not an aberration, it’s part of a system – and the system is called capitalism. The social force that has the power and interest to overthrow that system is the working class, those who perform the labor from which the bosses suck their profits. But to unleash its power the working class must first overcome the internal barriers that hold it back, which requires above all a fight against racial oppression. The capitalists consciously foster racial divisions among their wage slaves. Erie Railroad boss Jay Gould, one of the notorious Robber Barons of the 19th century, famously bragged: “I can hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half.” As long as that is the case, the working people – black, white, Latino, Asian – will be held in thrall, chained to the system that exploits and humiliates them as it devours their sons and daughters.

Black nationalists such as Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam and Malik Shabazz, leader of the New Black Panther Party, are pushing a policy of defeat, preaching to “buy black” – which shows their own ambition to exploit the black market. The NOI supplies security guards to police black housing projects in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. Shabazz is a follower of the late Khallid Muhammad, who fantasized about pushing elderly Jews in wheelchairs off Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa, ran guns to the CIA-financed UNITA “rebels” in Angola and worked as an operative for Ugandan dictator Idi Amin as he victimized the Asian population and other blacks. Black nationalism is a dead end for black people. As communists we fight for a program of *revolutionary integrationism*, not the turn-the-other cheek integrationism of the liberal civil rights movement, but a struggle for labor/black power.

Workers in Cincinnati do not lack power. Thousands work in the Procter & Gamble plants, as did Angela Leisure, Timothy’s mother. While many of those workers are white, they are all threatened by the system of production for profit whose front-line enforcers are the police. Last month P&G announced 9,600 layoffs, one-tenth of its entire workforce, almost 2,000 of them in the Cincinnati area where it employs 15,000 workers. Those workers will get a pittance for giving years of their lives in grueling labor to producing Tide soap,

*continued on page 28*

# Drive Out War Criminal Bob Kerrey!

## He Should Be Brought to Justice by a Court of His Surviving Victims in Ho Chi Minh City!

*This May 1 Internationalist Group leaflet was extensively distributed at New York's New School University.*

The president of New School University is a war criminal. Covered up for 30 years, the war crime was the work of "Kerrey's Raiders," a U.S. Navy special forces (SEAL) unit commanded by Lt. Robert Kerrey. Trading on his reputation as a "war hero," Kerrey went on to become a U.S. senator, a leading liberal Democratic presidential hopeful, and this January was named president of the prestigious New School. Now the truth has been exposed that he is a mass murderer of women and children. Today, an orchestrated campaign from liberals and conservatives alike seeks to carry out damage control. But the facts clearly show: **Bob Kerrey is guilty as hell!**

On 25 February 1969, Kerrey ordered the massacre of at least 13 to 20 civilians, primarily women and children, at Thanh Phong, a tiny peasant hamlet in the Mekong Delta. "They ordered everybody out from the bunker and they lined them up and they shot them all from behind," testified a survivor, Pham Tri Lanh. The gung-ho lieutenant did what he was trained for and what was expected by his superior officers. Mass murder was no aberration; it was policy.

In their "rural pacification" program, U.S. forces sought to herd the peasants of Vietnam into "strategic hamlets," akin to massive concentration camps. Gigantic areas outside these camps were designated "free-fire zones." Officers were ordered to take their men out and kill anything that moved — men, women, children, old people and livestock. Meanwhile, the CIA-designed "Operation Phoenix" sent death squads to murder suspected Viet Cong members and "VC symps." As a SEAL commander Kerrey's mission was to lead assassination raids into the countryside, a key part of the U.S. government's dirty colonial war in Southeast Asia.

As noted in a *Newsday* column (April 29), "the Seals, save for the U.S. pilots bombing from chariots at 50,000 feet, were the most cold-blooded of the American assassins. Throat-slitting... was the way the Seals sought to rule the night." Kerrey's most expe-

rienced commando, Gerhard Klann, told television reporters for "60 Minutes II" how Kerrey himself personally took part in the murders at Thanh Phong. Kerrey joined in as his unit slit several victims' throats and then machine-gunned another group of unarmed women and children they had "captured," including a baby. "There were blood and guts spattering everywhere," Klann is quoted as saying. Klann's account was consistent with those of Pham Tri Lanh and two relatives of the victims, and on April 28 another Vietnamese witness, Bui Thi Luom, confirmed the massacre. In fact, Pentagon records show the massacre was reported back in February 1969 by an old man from Thanh Phong village.

*Kerrey has claimed it was the fog of war, his memory was clouded (until he got other members of his death squad to get*

*their stories together and back him up), the women and children somehow grouped together, all got shot from a distance of 100 yards... But the whole shifting mass of falsehoods is torn away by Kerrey's own words: "Standard operating procedure was to dispose of the people we made contact with.... Kill the people we made contact with, or we have to abort the mission.... We were instructed not to take prisoners." The New York Times Magazine article cites Kerrey on*



**"Standard operating procedure": civilian victims of U.S. imperialism's massacre at My Lai, some of whom were tortured and raped before being murdered.**

*how his commanding officer, a "classic body-count guy," made it "quite clear what he wanted.... He wanted hooches [huts] destroyed and people killed." Now that the backlash against the two-year-long Times/CBS investigation is in full swing, Kerrey states in self-justification that "this was a Viet Cong village," so "gender and age distinctions" didn't matter (*Newsday*, April 30).*

Like Captain Medina and Lieutenant Calley, leaders of the much bigger massacre at My Lai about a year earlier (where the victims — women, children, elders, babies — numbered between 400 and 600), Bob ("Kill-'Em-All") Kerrey is not only a mass murderer, but a liar as well. He got a medal for killing children — the Bronze Star — and never breathed a word about what really happened until two years ago, when the reporters from the *Times* and

60 Minutes had already pieced together most of the facts. Now Kerrey is lying in high gear, claiming that he was engaged in a full-blown firefight with his defenseless victims! A month after the Thanh Phong massacre Kerrey and his killers did encounter armed fighters of the National Liberation Front of Vietnam, and at that time Kerrey got part of his leg blown off by a hand grenade. Grotesquely, this cold-blooded murderer asserts in the *Times* story that his *restraint* in executing more unarmed peasants in that second incident is what led to his unit's defeat and his wounding!

Now that the story has hit the headlines as the result of a years-long investigation by the *Times* and CBS, an obscene and heavily-financed campaign is underway to deny what happened. This too is normal procedure every time the truth begins to seep out from one of the countless crimes that make up the bloody history of the American empire. A year and a half ago, when an extensive Associated Press investigation was published on the U.S. massacre of hundreds of civilians at No Gun Ri during the Korean War, Army brass moved heaven and earth to claim it never happened. Their whitewash campaign failed miserably.

As Kerrey lashes out with increasingly open viciousness against those who exposed his massacre, he is now, incredibly, baiting the establishment media as Commie collaborators, saying: "The Vietnam government likes to routinely say how terrible Americans were. The *Times* and CBS are now collaborating in that effort." This cynical attempt to take a page from Joe McCarthy's book – and deny the enormity of U.S. crimes in Vietnam – gives the lie once again to those who present Kerrey the executioner as "another victim." Make no mistake: he was not some poor guy drafted and sent to a place he didn't want to be. Bob Kerrey was commander of an elite unit trained precisely to carry out assassinations.

In response to the revelations, some point out that above Kerrey were bigger mass murderers who lived high on the hog ever after, such as Robert McNamara, and Henry Kissinger. (Kissinger attended a fancy dinner party for Kerrey at Le Cirque right before the Thanh Phong revelations broke.) In other words, like other war criminals before him, Kerrey was "just following orders." Liberals repeat the time-worn refrain that "Vietnam was a mistake." In fact, some of those same mass murderers retrospectively said the same thing, and Richard Nixon wrote a book titled *No More Vietnams*. They say this only *because they lost!*

Like his superiors, Kerrey was part of U.S. imperialism's failed effort to defeat the Vietnamese Revolution. The peasants and workers of Vietnam struggled for half a century to rid their country of Japanese, French and U.S. imperialism and the murderous puppet regimes that served these overlords. With immense courage and determination, they resisted and defeated the American imperialists – and this was a great and inspiring victory for the exploited and oppressed world over, from South America to South Africa, from Europe and Japan to here in "the belly of the beast." While liberals and reformists tried



War criminal Kerrey (third from left) receiving medal of honor from imperialist war criminal in chief Richard Nixon, May 1970.

to cut the losses to the imperialist order, revolutionaries called for victory to the Vietnam Revolution, saying "All Indochina Must Go Communist!" and "Two, three, many defeats for U.S. imperialism!"

Making direct war on the entire population of Vietnam and killing between two and three million people, the American ruling class, Democrat and Republican, starkly showed itself to be a depraved and barbaric barrier to human progress. Tens of thousands were tortured and executed by the "Operation Phoenix" assassination program, while horrifying numbers perished at the hands of U.S. Air Force pilots, such as Senator John McCain, who rained down hundreds of thousands of bombs containing TNT, napalm, phosphorus and poisons to kill people and animals, as well as chemical defoliants to kill crops. These butchers dropped more tons of explosives on Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in eight years (1965 through 1972) than had been expended in all the previous wars of human history *combined*.

As American bombers blew up hospitals and incinerated villages from the air, specialized kill squads like Kerrey's Raiders – the Vietnam War equivalent of the SS *Einsatzgruppen* in WWII – were "inserted" to terrorize, assassinate and massacre the population on the ground. The imperialists unleashed thousands of Kerreys in their war on communism – officers who drove their men to keep the body counts high. This meant systematically fostering a culture of death, inculcating deadly racism against the Vietnamese (and all Asians) with dehumanizing epithets like "gooks" and "dinks." Kill-crazy commandos collected strings of "VC" ears, and the military brass handed out rewards – citations, medals, weekend passes and even Stateside leave – in exchange for mass murder. Today, the orchestrators of the "pity the poor war criminal" campaign seek to reduce Kerrey's victims to non-persons once again, to blot out and "dispose of" their memory once and for all.

Many draftees, enlisted men and even some officers returned from Vietnam so horrified by the atrocities they witnessed or participated in that they turned against the U.S.



**Pham Tri Lanh survived Kerrey's massacre of 17 women and children. "They shot them all from behind."**

government and sought to publicize these crimes. At the National Veterans' Inquiry held in December 1970 in Washington, D.C., dozens of vets testified about U.S. war crimes, stressing that mass torture and murder were the official policies of the U.S. war machine in Vietnam. As Charles David Locke, who served in the same Army company that committed the My Lai massacre, put it, "what happened at My Lai is not a special thing; there's nothing special about it" (quoted in James Simon Kunen, *Standard Operating Procedure: Notes of a Draft-Age American*, 1971). The massacre at Thanh Phong proves it. Bob Kerrey was decorated for carrying out this slaughter, and for 30 years he let the lies in the citation stand. Meanwhile, like John McCain, he used his service as a decorated imperialist killer to become a successful imperialist politician.

For years after its humiliating defeat in the jungles of Southeast Asia, the U.S. government bemoaned the "Vietnam syndrome": massive suspicion at home regarding American military adventures abroad. The doctrine of "human rights" imperialist interventions pushed by liberal Democrats seeks to overcome this, as do disinformation campaigns that present as "wars against drugs" the massive counterinsurgency operations designed to shore up United States domination of its neo-colonial "backyard," such as Plan Colombia. Today, they talk of putting Slobodan Milosevic on trial in The Hague. But the people who would be trying him are the biggest terrorists and war criminals in the world today! When the Clintons and the Bushes talk about "democracy" and "human rights," it means they are seeking to extend by force the controlling power and privilege of the U.S. capitalist class worldwide.

We say Bob Kerrey should be brought to justice before a court of his surviving victims in Ho Chi Minh City. But to avenge the crimes of the Kerreys and their masters, from Democrat Johnson and Republican Nixon to the CIA chiefs and Pentagon carpet-bombers who have brought death and destruction from Baghdad to Belgrade, Seoul to San Salvador, will take a workers revolution. Only then will the wealth and resources of this country be used for the needs of the working people worldwide rather than the bloody and ruthless pursuit of profit.

The U.S. imperialists were defeated in battle by the courageous fighters of the National Liberation Front and Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). In hailing their

great victory, we of the Internationalist Group stress the debt of gratitude and solidarity that the workers and oppressed everywhere owe to the Vietnamese, who showed it was possible to defeat the most powerful and dangerous ruling class on earth. But today the imperialists are whipping themselves up into a new war frenzy. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and amidst increasing rivalries between competing trade blocs, they want to reclaim for capitalist super-exploitation all the countries where capitalism was kicked out: Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and above all China.

While apologists for capitalism call these countries "communist," Marxists understand that socialism and communism – a society based on plenty, not scarcity – can only be established on an international scale, after the working class in the most developed capitalist countries overturn their "own" ruling classes. The overturn of capitalist rule in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere dealt a huge blow to the imperialist order, but remained outside the central core of the world capitalist economy. After the victorious Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky in 1917, the imperialists went all out to crush communism and they haven't stopped to this day. The backwardness of Russia and the pressure of this unending war gave rise to Stalinism, whose anti-Marxist dogma of "socialism in one country" reflected the outlook of a privileged, nationalist bureaucracy seeking accommodation with the capitalist powers.

This bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state paved the way for its ultimate destruction spearheaded by George Bush senior's man in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin. Today, counterrevolution threatens Vietnam (together with China, Cuba and North Korea), as capitalist investors make increasing inroads symbolized by Nike sweatshops. Against protectionists who seek to turn U.S. workers against their brothers and sisters in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere, we fight to unite the workers of the world against their common capitalist enemy. The fight for a world free of exploitation and oppression is the fight for world workers revolution. This means defending Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea and China – target of the recent U.S. spy plane provocation – against imperialism and counterrevolution. To prevent their remaining gains from being destroyed and their countries from being turned once again into colonies of the West, the workers of these countries must throw out the Stalinist bureaucrats and establish governments of workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

Above all, the fight against imperialism requires building a revolutionary workers party here in the heart of the capitalist system. We Trotskyists, who carry forward the politics of Marx and Lenin, stress that until this system is destroyed there will be no end to war, no end to exploitation, no end to racist terror like the police murder of Amadou Diallo and siege against black Cincinnati. Enemy No. 1, with its thousands of Bob Kerreys, and trillions of dollars of advanced weapons of mass destruction, is U.S. imperialism. The force with the power to defeat it forever is the international working class led by an international party of socialist revolution. Only when this revolution is victorious will humanity be free of the terror and oppression represented by the likes of Robert Kerrey. ■



ests of the working class. The cops are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie, the exploiting class that uses its uniformed thugs to repress, jail, beat and kill workers, blacks, Hispanics and Asians, to break strikes and deport immigrants. The police, together with the armed forces, the courts and prisons, embody the capitalist state – the “special bodies of armed men” which in Friedrich Engels’ famous definition exist to defend the property and power of the ruling class, repressing us, the workers and oppressed. Repression is not a matter of a few “bad” cops: it is the *function and daily job* of the police as such.

Today, one of the central slogans for this repression is precisely the “war on drugs,” which is the pretext for police occupation of the ghettos and barrios, the imprisonment and deprivation of rights of millions of black and Latin youth, as well as the imperialist aggression of Plan Colombia and U.S. intervention throughout Latin America. In Ecuador – where the U.S. military base at Manta is a key part of Plan Colombia – the reformist leaders led Indians and workers into the trap of an “alliance” with a sector of the armed forces. This led directly to the installation of the current Made in U.S.A. government of Gustavo Noboa, which imposes starvation and dollarization while its repressive forces just killed three indigenous demonstrators and wounded many more in the recent protests. The claim that there are “good” repressors is a straight-out expression of class collaboration and reformist faith in the capitalist state, which lead to the worst defeats for the working people.

In Mexico, police repression is meted out daily by all the bourgeois governments, from the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) which ruled the country for seven decades to the PAN (National Action Party) of the new president, Vicente Fox, and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’ PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), which governs the Federal District (Mexico City). A year ago, the PRI governor of the state of Hidalgo, seeking to imitate the police invasion which had just broken the student strike at the National University (UNAM), ordered the arrest of 900 students and the storming of the Rural Teachers Training Institute of El Mexe. But the population rose up in a courageous rebellion, capturing dozens of the uniformed repressors, disarming them and holding them until they were able to exchange them for the arrested students (*The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000).

In the United States since the ’60s, black and Latino nationalists, together with many bourgeois Democratic Party politicians, have claimed that things are different when the one wearing the blue uniform is black or Hispanic. Not so. Anibal Carrasquillo Jr., the youth murdered by officer Marco Calderón in Brooklyn in January 1995; Librado Sánchez, the cook murdered by officer Richard Soto in February 1997 while he was working at the El Caribe restaurant in Queens – these are just two of the innumerable examples which give the lie to this claim. In Los Angeles, the Latin anti-drug cops of the Ramparts Division became notorious for leaving a His-



Internationalist Group contingent in February 18 Brooklyn march.

panic youth paralyzed in the course of their reign of terror in the barrios. Meanwhile, the new head of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus is Texas Democrat Silvestre Reyes, formerly a high-ranking Border Patrol officer and creator of the racist Operation Hold the Line against “illegal” immigrants.

In the government’s dirty war of extermination against leaders and activists of the Black Panther Party in the ’60s, one of the most notorious cases was the cold-blooded murder of 16-year-old Fred Hampton in Chicago, carried out by a shotgun-wielding black cop. Today, there are many Latins and blacks among the jailers who keep millions of black and Hispanic youth in captivity – together with class-war prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical black journalist on Pennsylvania’s death row, and Native American activist Leonard Peltier. As Mumia pointed out when our Brazilian comrades faced state repression in their campaign to expel cops from the municipal workers union in the city of Volta Redonda: “Throughout history, police have protected the *status quo*”; they are “agents of the wealthy and propertied classes” (“Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?” 31 March 1996). From Brazil to the U.S., we fight to throw cops of all kinds out of every workers organization. The Internationalist Group calls on those who protest exploitation and racist discrimination to adamantly demand: *Cops out!*

To defeat the *migra* and the bosses, what is urgently needed is the class-struggle mobilization of the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed. This requires a fight against the entire capitalist system of cop terror, exploitation, racism and war – a fight for socialist revolution. It requires building a multiracial, revolutionary and internationalist workers party, forged in struggle against every form of class collaboration, against every “alliance” with the exploiters and their agents of repression.

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*Under fire from the Internationalist Group for the announcement of police “support” at the February 18 rally, OCWR leaders tried desperately to squelch discussion of the issue. Yet at a planning meeting for a May Day immigrant rights march in New York City, a motion was finally passed that support from police groups would not be accepted at that or future rallies. NYC cops arrested six May Day demonstrators. Drop all charges now!*

# Victory to Daewoo Workers!

The following article is based on a March 21 report from Korea. In recent weeks, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) has announced it is resuming the struggle against Daewoo. A KCTU delegation is currently in the United States protesting the General Motors takeover of the Korean auto manufacturer.

SEOUL — In August 2000, the Daewoo empire went on receivership row. By November, the banks, which had been strong-armed into providing 200 million dollars for the auto division every month, cut off subsidies. In February, Daewoo executives announced the first steps in eliminating a third of the workforce, almost 1,800 workers. Management spokesmen added that a quarter of Daewoo workers in Poland would be axed as well. The closure of the Pupyong plant was initially presented as a “temporary shutdown” to thin the stocks of surplus autos. But to the workers about to be inducted into South Korea’s one-million-strong army of the unemployed, it looked about as temporary as a beheading.

Naturally, the government didn’t go after Kim Wu-chung, the founder of the Daewoo empire. After fiddling the books to convince the government that he was worth \$18 billion more than his actual value, he wangled billions of dollars in government-guaranteed loans, pocketed \$2.4 billion for himself, and absconded. Although this must count as one of the largest embezzlements in history, the Korean government was loath to pursue its former protégé. It was only after Daewoo workers and outraged citizenry formed a “Rob the Rich to Feed the Poor” brigade and followed him to Europe that the Korean government contacted Interpol.

Instead, the executors decided that other heads would roll at Pupyong. The entire non-union work force was “persuaded” to resign. On February 17, pink slips were readied for 1,785 unionists. The layoffs would produce 111 billion won (almost US\$100 million) toward the 999 billion estimated necessary to save Daewoo. The press declared that the struggle at Daewoo was tapering off and that any attempt to call out workers in Keunsan and Changwon was bound to fail, since they were being offered generous voluntary retirement plans.

The Pupyong workers were not putting their heads on the block, though. Three hundred fifty workers and their families occupied the Pupyong plant, putting a few of the surplus cars to very good use as barricades. On the morning of February 20, when other protesters tried to brave the 4,000-strong police lines and join the plant occupation, fighting broke out. Dozens were injured and 80 workers were arrested. Two police buses were burned. That was just the beginning. Hundreds of workers and students came to the defense of Pupyong and fighting has continued off and on ever since. The crowd outside Pupyong has swollen to several thousand. Contrary to press



Daewoo workers protest in the streets on March 6.

KMF



AP

## Riot cops and burning police bus outside Pupyong plant, February 20.

predictions that this would be a local affair, big street protests occurred in Pusan, Incheon and other major cities.

As the struggle intensified, slogans escalated from calls on the strikers’ red headbands for “job security” to chants of “Down with the Kim Dae-jung government, destroyer of jobs!” On his way back from meeting U.S. president Bush in Washington, Kim Dae-jung held a quick supper in Chicago with Jack Smith, president of General Motors, the would-be “savior” of Daewoo. But the sight of Korean cops doing the “molotov hotfoot” as their buses go up in flame has given GM cold feet, and the site of the negotiations with GM is being kept secret. Kim Dae-jung declared, “The government will not tolerate any illegal activities by radical unions.... We see reform as a matter of survival, not choice.”

But the Kim Dae-jung government, which was elected with the support of the KCTU, has chosen. In the continuing economic crisis unleashed by the imperialist bankers and their cartel,

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## Mass Protests and Arrests as U.S. Navy Resumes Bombing of Vieques, Air Force Bombs Koon-I, South Korea

# From Puerto Rico to Korea: U.S. Bombers Get Out!

### Anti-Communist Exclusion Undermines Protest

*The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on 30 June 2000.*

In a brazen display of imperial arrogance, the U.S. Navy resumed bombardment of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques on Sunday, 25 June 2000. A little over a year before, Navy bombs killed a civilian guard at the bombing range, sparking mass protests and a year-long occupation. On May 4, federal agents cleared the target area of protesters, arresting more than 220 for "trespassing." The Pentagon announced that ships and warplanes from the USS George Washington Battle Group would drop a total of 130,000 "dummy" bombs and shells on the island before embarking on a military tour of the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. The U.S. military arrested 36 Puerto Rican demonstrators on Sunday, June 25, holding nine at the huge Roosevelt Roads base at Ceiba. On Tuesday, Vieques fishing boats surrounded a Naval patrol boat while on the island 162 demonstrators were arrested trying to stop the bombing.

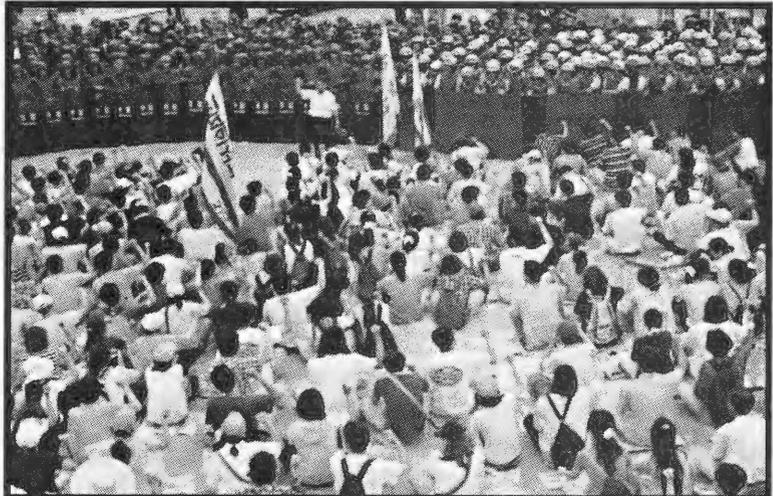
*As protests continue in Puerto Rico and on the U.S. mainland, Democratic president Clinton called a "summit meeting" with leaders of Puerto Rican political parties to discuss the "status" of the world's largest colony, which Yankee imperialism uses as a giant aircraft carrier to dominate the Caribbean and all Latin America. The U.S. military, president and Congress have no right to determine Puerto Rico's status, which is the right of the Puerto Rican people. Proletarian internationalists call for mobilizing the combative Puerto Rican working class to shut down all the U.S. bases. We demand that all charges against the more than 600 protesters arrested in recent weeks be dropped and all victims of U.S. colonial repression be freed. The U.S. armed forces and all their bombs and troops must get the hell out of Vieques and all Puerto Rico, now!*

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International fight to liberate the island from the imperialist yoke; we call for independence for Puerto Rico and a voluntary socialist federation of the Caribbean, closely linked to defense of Cuba against counterrevolution and the fight for socialist revolution in Puerto Rico, on the U.S. mainland and internationally.



AP

Some of those arrested on Vieques trying to block Navy bombing, here being shipped to Roosevelt Roads naval base.



David Guttenfelder/AP

Korean demonstrators face wall of riot police outside U.S. Air Force bombing range at Koon-I, 17 June 2000.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world from Vieques, a remarkably similar struggle is underway in South Korea, on a small island and nearby village 55 miles southwest of Seoul. Since U.S. imperialism's Korean War – which killed over two million Korean civilians in the early '50s – the U.S. Army has used the area for bombing and strafing practice at a range (Koon-I) provided free of charge by the South Korean government under the

"Status of Forces Agreement" (SOFA). On May 8 of this year, an Air Force A-10 (heavily used as a tank-killer in the war on Yugoslavia) experienced engine trouble and jettisoned six 500-pound bombs on the village of Maehyang-ri. Some 170 houses were damaged as the bombs exploded, injuring seven villagers. After a whitewash "inquiry" carried out with the Seoul authorities, in mid-June the U.S. military declared the Koon-I incident closed and that they would soon resume bombing.

But on June 17, villagers, students and trade unionists protested at Maehyang-ri in a militant demonstration of an estimated 3,000 people chanting "Close down Koon-I" and "This is our land! Let's drive out the U.S. troops!" They were joined by workers from the nearby Kia Motors plant, a bastion of the dissident Korean Confederation of Trade Unions. A brigade of a hundred workers took down police barricades, trading punches and rocks with the cops as they did so. The government mobilized 6,000 riot police who bloodied demonstrators, injuring at least 20. Three days later, a group of protesters sought to occupy the range, as Vieques demonstrators are again attempting in protest of the renewed bombings on the Puerto Rican island. The Korean student union, Hanchongnyon, has said it will keep sending members to Koon-I even if there is a fatality, as a sit-in of about 2,000 continues outside the range.

In another striking parallel to Vieques, the Korean villagers have demanded to know if the U.S. Air Force is using depleted uranium (DU) in its munitions. The U.S. denies using DU-coated bullets on the strafing range at Koon-I, although A-10 planes used such shells to penetrate the armor of Yugoslav tanks last year and against Iraq in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The Navy originally denied using DU weapons at Vieques as well until it was forced to admit "accidentally" firing 263 bullets tipped with depleted uranium there last year. The former head of the Pentagon's Depleted Uranium Program, Dr. Doug Rokke, recently spoke in Vieques denouncing the dangers posed by DU to people on the island.

On June 22, the Internationalist Group participated in a protest against the Vieques bombing in New York City's Times Square, carrying signs calling for "Solidarity with Korean Protesters at Koon-I U.S. Bombing Range, U.S. Imperialists Out of Korea, Out of Puerto Rico!" and "Mobilize the Working Class to Drive the Imperialists Out of Vieques and All Puerto Rico, Maehyang-ri and All of Korea! For International Socialist Revolution!" But although the need for international solidarity is obvious, our call for international workers struggle against imperialism was too much for the Puerto Rican nationalist organizers, who blatantly excluded the Internationalist Group from the demonstration. This anti-communist exclusion can only harm the struggle to drive out the U.S. militarists, and must be vigorously protested.

### War Criminals of Nogun-ri, Get Out of Korea!

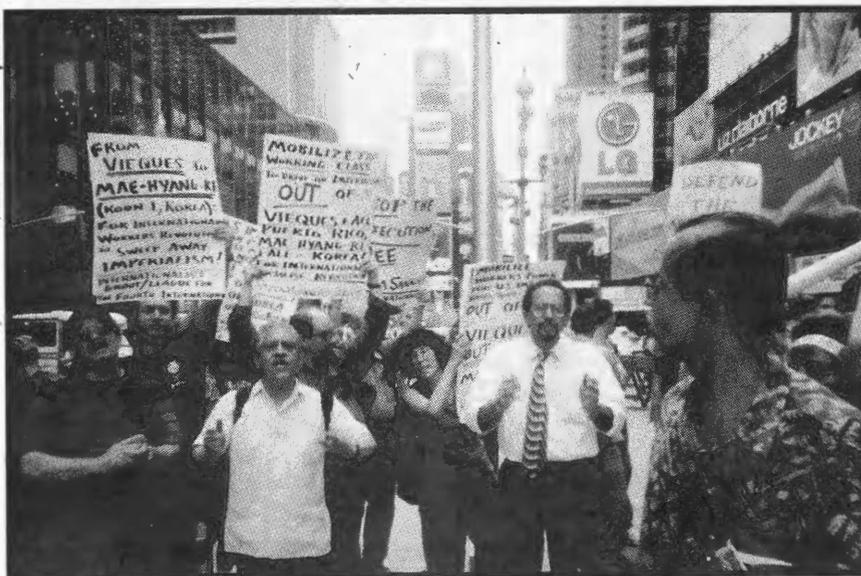
The campaign against the U.S. bombing range in Koon-I, South Korea has been going on for 15 years. In early 1998, villagers in Maehyang-ri filed a lawsuit to close down the range, which they say is responsible for 13 deaths over the years, including a pregnant woman killed by shrapnel in 1967. (The village is located barely 500 yards from the strafing range and three quarters of a mile from the target used in bombing runs.) The protests in Korea also occur in the context of the explosive international exposure of the massacre that occurred almost exactly fifty years ago at Nogun-ri. In September 1999, Associated Press published the results of an investigation that substantiated long-suppressed complaints by Korean villagers, that in the early weeks of the Korean War, the U.S. Seventh Cavalry massacred hundreds of civilians, mainly children, women and old people, who had sought shelter under a railway overpass in the township of Nogun-ri.

Even as media right-wingers and Pentagon hard-liners try to discredit the reports of this heinous U.S. war crime, the facts about the mass murder in Nogun-ri have been reconfirmed.

Moreover, the revelations have lifted the lid on other U.S. crimes during its genocidal 1950-53 war on North Korea, the first military battle of the anti-Soviet Cold War. Recent revelations include the bombing of hundreds of civilians taking cover in a cave and strafing of others at Tanyang in January 1951, as well as the large-scale massacre of political prisoners at Teagu. A rail workers' club has taken the lead in denouncing the U.S. bombing of a train station at Iksan in July 1950, in which 58 workers and passengers were killed (*Korea Herald*, 10 September 1999).

Today, 37,000 U.S. troops continue to occupy South Korea, with 100 military installations. The crimes continue, ranging from routine and flagrant violations of Korean law to cold-blooded murder. Attention has been drawn recently to the racist institution of "foreigners-only" bars catering to American GIs,

Internationalist photo



Line of demonstration organizers excludes Internationalist Group contingent from June 22 protest against Vieques bombing.

where four “bar girls” have been murdered in the past year. One of the victims was Kim Sung-hi, a battered wife who had left her husband and taken their three-year-old son. Trying to support herself and her child by teaching piano, her income wouldn’t cover childcare costs, so she started working at the “foreigners-only” Amazon Bar in Itaewon. Three months later she was murdered after refusing Christopher McCarthy, corporal, U.S. Army, “additional sexual services of an unusual nature” after having had paid sex with him. McCarthy was arrested after three days, but held by the U.S. military authorities, thanks to SOFA. Claiming remorse, he only got an eight-year sentence.

After the recent summit meeting between North and South Korea, president Kim Dae-jung of South Korea reported on June 24 that he had told North Korean leader Kim Jong Il that U.S. troops would be needed even in the event of reunification “to maintain the balance of power in Northeast Asia” – in other words, against China and to offset the influence of the U.S.’ imperialist rival Japan. Scandalously, according to Kim Dae-jung, “The North showed substantial understanding on my explanation on the need for the U.S. troops” (Reuters, 24 June). The previous day, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said U.S. troops will remain in South Korea indefinitely, stressing: “The United States is a Pacific power as well as an Atlantic power.” Meanwhile, Washington is using a mythical North Korean “threat”

to justify establishing a “Star Wars” missile “defense” system (which in fact would facilitate a U.S. nuclear first strike), even as it lifts some economic sanctions on Pyongyang (enabling Coca-Cola, for example, to sell in the North).

Albright’s proclamation that the sun shall never set on the American empire – seconded by the South Korean president and apparently “understood” by North Korea’s leader – underlines that a capitalist reunification of Korea would not only subjugate the entire peninsula to the U.S. imperialists but fortify these war criminals’ position throughout the region. This occurs amidst increasing inter-imperialist rivalries

## Korean Auto Workers Battle Cops at U.S. Bomb Range



**Above: Kia auto workers attack police barricades outside USAF Koon-I bombing range, June 17. Below: protester grabs cop’s riot shield. U.S. out of Korea!**



Photos: David Guttenfelder/AP

and protectionist pressures pointing to future inter-imperialist war if the international working class does not put an end to imperialism through socialist revolution. Raising the slogan “US Troops Out! For Revolutionary Reunification!” we noted in the first issue of *The Internationalist*:

“Trotskyists call for unconditional military defense of North Korea against imperialist attack and counterrevolution. At the same time, we tell the truth about the Stalinist regime of the late Kim Il Sung and his son [which has] driven North Korea into a dead end, its economy in shambles amid widespread hunger....

“The working-class upsurge in South Korea underlines the urgency of revolutionary reunification of Korea across the 38th Parallel. This means fighting for a social revolution against the capitalist magnates and militarists in the South combined with workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy of the Kim dynasty in the North. The repeated outbreaks of sharp class struggle by the combative South Korean working class show how real this possibility could be. This spectre stalks both the Southern *chaebols* and the Northern bureaucracy.”

–“Nationwide Strike Shakes South Korea,” *The Internationalist* No. 1 (January-February 1997)

A revolutionary upsurge in Korea could show the way for workers and peasants in the badly eroded deformed workers states of China and Vietnam, who face the growing danger of capitalist restoration and the neo-colonial slavery this would mean. Crucial for revolutionary struggle in the region is its extension to the industrial powerhouse of Japan, whose capitalist economy has gone through a drawn-out crisis, generating increasing political instability.

### Nationalist Exclusion Undermines Vieques Protest

The U.S. bombings and arrests of protesters at Vieques underscore the need for powerful mass protests, and in particular the need to *mobilize the power of the working class*, against the imperialists and their armed forces. As we protest the Vieques bombing and demand that all U.S. troops get out of Puerto Rico, it is vital to forge an internationalist link between this fight and struggles against imperialism around the world. Nowhere is the connection more striking than in the fight against U.S. bombers at Koon-I, Korea. At the same time, this struggle is intimately connected to the fight against capitalist exploitation, police terror and the racist death penalty in the United States.

On June 22, the Internationalist Group attended a demonstration in New York City initiated by the Vieques Support Campaign in response to reports that the bombing was about to resume. Yet our contingent, which made up close to a quarter of the picket, was *excluded* by the nationalist organizers for chanting “U.S. Navy out of Puerto Rico, U.S. Army out of Korea.” One of the nationalists ripped up a sign which stated: “U.S. Imperialism Out of Vieques, Puerto Rico and Out of Maehyang-ri (Koon-I Bomb Range), Korea! Mobilize Workers Power Against the Imperialist Military Bases!” A member of the nationalists’ “security” squad grotesquely told one of our comrades, “I don’t speak to white women” and demanded “do you speak Spanish?” This Third Worldist baiting did not prevent the nationalists from excluding the immigrant workers who made up most of the Internationalist Group contingent.

Revolutionary internationalists seek to mobilize the working class in the fight against imperialist oppression around the globe, to put into practice the call: “Workers of the world, unite!” Other IG signs at the June 22 picket called to “Defend Cuba Against Counterrevolution – Smash Imperialism through Socialist Revolution” and “Stop the Execution – Free Shaka Sankofa!” the black radical prisoner on Texas’ death row executed later that night in a

hideous legal lynching. In contrast, the organizers at Vieques protests seem intent on projecting a “respectable” image in line with the program of class collaboration. Earlier at the June 22 New York picket, nationalist spokesmen objected that we were stepping outside the “official” slogans by chanting “*Mobilizar la clase obrera, para echar a la Marina fuera*” (Mobilize the working class to throw the Navy out)!

The protest organizers are replicating the political censorship imposed by the Catholic bishops and Protestant church leaders on the huge February 22 San Juan march for Vieques when they banned “unauthorized” (in particular, *independentista*) banners and slogans. Whose interests does this serve? While praying for “peace for Vieques,” the spiritual guardians of colonial rule enlist the nationalists to help keep Puerto Rico “safe” for imperialist exploitation. Meanwhile, other left groups have reported attempts at censorship: the League for the Revolutionary Party was forbidden to distribute its literature at a February 21 Vieques demonstration in Philadelphia, while the Spartacist League had a sign ripped up at the large New York City Vieques march on May 5. The Internationalist Group protests all of these attempts to muzzle leftists.

One of the nationalist spokesmen on June 22 proclaimed this “our demonstration” and “a Puerto Rican protest” – an outlook that can only serve to isolate the struggle. Censorship and exclusion of opponents of U.S. imperialism gravely undercut and weaken a fight which faces very powerful enemies: the Washington overlords, the Pentagon military machine and their local sa-



Internationalist photo

**IG contingent calls for proletarian solidarity with Puerto Rican and Korean protesters at 22 June 2000 demo in NYC.**



Above: Thousands of Korean refugees in 1950 near town of Yongdong, close to village of Nogun-ri where hundreds were massacred by U.S. Army. Below: Troops of U.S. 1st Cavalry Division take village. Trotskyists called for defense of North Korea against U.S. imperialism in Korean War.

traps in the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie. Such an outlook is doubly divisive in New York, where the multiethnic character of the working people has been underlined by large-scale demonstrations against racist police terror and protests by everybody from the heavily integrated transit and hospital workers to construction workers, Latin American garment workers, South Asian cab drivers, Haitian mourners at the funeral of police victim Patrick Dorismond, and many others.

It is particularly outrageous to ban calls for solidarity in struggle between Puerto Ricans and Koreans, both targets of U.S. imperialism. Surely the residents of Vieques would be encouraged if the villagers of Maehyang-ri took up their cause, and vice versa! By their anti-communist exclusion, the nationalists play into the imperialists' game of *divide and conquer*. In fact, as we noted in our 5 May leaflet, "Navy Get the Hell Out of Vieques Now! Independence for Puerto Rico!" the attempt to appeal to U.S. patriotism has been a recurrent feature of many Vieques protests, particularly from Democratic Party capitalist politicians using Vieques as a platform for their electoral maneuvers. (NY Democrat Nydia Velázquez returned from her grandstanding arrest on the island to front for a bill to



Stanley Tretick/Acme

repeal the estate tax – a bonanza for the plutocrats!)

The main leaflet being passed out at the June 22 demonstration, calling on the U.S. government to "Respect these Americans and their island," even included an American flag. Yet the Stars and Stripes are stained with the blood of the targets of American imperialism, from the conquest of Puerto Rico in 1898 and the slaughter of Filipino independence fighters to the 1937 Ponce massacre and the suppression of the 1950 Jayuya uprising, the dirty colonial wars in Korea

and Vietnam, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Operation Desert Slaughter and last year's war against Yugoslavia. The colonialists will never "respect" those they oppress – they must be defeated and driven out through revolutionary struggle!

Puerto Ricans have been regularly used as colonial cannon fodder for U.S. imperialism's wars and, like black soldiers in the racist military, have faced rampant discrimination and been sent to die in disproportionate numbers. Indeed, the cynical sacrifice of Puerto Rican troops by the Army brass in the Korean War, where they were sent to man hopeless positions, is well known.

*continued on page 27*

## For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize the Maquiladoras

# Mexico: Women Workers Battle Gun Thugs



The following article is translated from *El Internacionalista/edición México No. 1, May 2001, published by the Grupo Internacionalista/México, section of the League for the Fourth International.*

The demise of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) regime, formally certified in the elections of 2 July 2000, has raised unwarranted hopes in various sectors, including layers of the working class. For more than half a century, the PRI's domination was based on iron-fisted control of the proletariat by its corporatist "union" apparatus, above all the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). At the end of the 1940s the PRI completed the incorporation of the CTM industrial unions into the machinery of the bonapartist (and later semi-bonapartist) regime through the imposition of *charro*<sup>1</sup> leaders. They were officially constituted as the "labor sector" of the PRI and subjugated to the discipline of this bourgeois party. Ever since the *charro* coup, Mexico has seen the flourishing of "protection contracts," armies of thugs and gunmen, forced attendance at government rallies and other techniques which were the trademark of the all-powerful state party. The central objective was to prevent at all costs the rise of an independent and combative workers movement that could threaten Mexican capitalism, both the domestic bosses and their imperialist masters.

During its long-drawn-out decline, the heavy-handed PRI

apparatus repeatedly provoked outbursts of rebellion among the workers. These outbreaks were quelled by a combination of ferocious repression and the creation of new *charro* labor federations in order to divert the workers' combativity into manageable channels. Recent PRI administrations have seen the appearance on a large scale of *maquiladora* factories, free trade zone plants exempted from tariffs which take imported components and raw material and turn them into products for export. Their main attraction for investors are the rock-bottom labor costs. The *maquiladora* workforce has grown to well over a million workers, mainly young women who have migrated from the countryside of the central and southern states. Working in modern industrial parks scattered along the border with the United States, from Matamoros in the east to Tijuana in the west, the workers live in indescribable poverty. And in every plant, almost without exception, there is a local of the CTM, whose task is to suppress any outbreak of dissent and to prevent the organization of genuine unions. *Contratos de protección* (protection contracts) are often signed even before the workforce is hired. In many cases the workers don't even know of the existence of the supposed "union."

Following last July's elections, many workers in the *maquiladoras* thought that the defeat of the PRI meant that — *finally!* — they could throw off the dead hand of the corporatist apparatus which condemned them to poverty wages. Yet this has not changed up to this point. The CTM pseudo-unions continue to be PRI organizations, albeit lacking the decisive backing of the federal treasury. As a result, as good "institutional" lead-

<sup>1</sup> Literally "cowboys." Following the bitter defeat of the 1948 railroad workers' struggle, the government imposed a flunkey who was known for dressing up in Mexican cowboy outfits.

ers (as the top boss of the CTM and the Congress of Labor [CT], Ricardo Rodríguez Alcaine, put it) they offered their services to the new president, right-wing businessman Vicente Fox. In those states where the PRI *dinosaurios*<sup>2</sup> still run the show, the disintegrating CTM has been replaced by another corporatist federation, the Revolutionary Federation of Workers and Peasants (CROC). In the PRI primary elections of 1999, the CROC supported Puebla governor Manuel Bartlett, notorious for his authoritarian methods and for engineering the "crash" of the electoral commission computers on election night in 1988, which produced the presidency of Carlos Salinas. Nevertheless, today the CTM, the CT and the CROC are all under fire.

Thus the stage has been set for an upsurge of fierce, and possibly bloody, struggles. The most recent case is the militant protest action by the women workers of the Covarra textile company in the central state of Morelos, just south of Mexico City, which produces fabrics for export. In April the bosses claimed they had to close the plant due to financial difficulties. The only way to avoid this would be firing part of the workers and slashing the wages of those who remained. The contract is held by the manufacturing industry "union" affiliated with the CTM. After meetings between the bosses and "union" leaders (who until then were unknown to the workers) an "agreement" was reached: 200 of the 600 workers would be fired and the wages of the rest (already barely above the state minimum wage, which is lower than in Mexico City) would be cut by 30 percent. After this episode, the women workers decided to form a union that would represent their interests instead of acting as an arm of the bosses to give a "legal" cover for attacks on the workers.

At 6 p.m. on April 2, the workers began blocking the highway between the state capital of Cuernavaca and the town of Cuautla. Their basic demands were: reinstate the fired *compañeras*, return to the wage rate in force before the sudden pay cut, and legal recognition of the new union organization they were setting up. That night, the interior minister of Morelos (a member of Fox's National Action Party [PAN]) threatened to bust up the sit-in blocking the highway. A little before midnight, state riot police together with judicial police began brutally attacking the women workers. First they surrounded them, then pushed them off the road. The women workers dug in on the other side of a retaining wall and tried to go back and occupy the highway lanes. At that point, the cops lobbed dozens of tear gas canisters at them. The few images that were broadcast on the evening news were like scenes out of Dante's *Inferno*. Dozens of women workers were beaten. In the face of superior force, they were compelled to return to work.

Another struggle currently under way is that of the workers at the Kuk Dong factory, located in Atlixco, in the state of Puebla. The sportswear company's main customer is Nike, and it also makes products for leading U.S. universities. The conflict began last December with the firing of five workers (while another 20 were forced to leave "voluntarily") for leading a protest against bad food in the cafeteria, poverty wages (\$30 a week) and the failure to pay the Christmas bonus. On January 9, more than 850

<sup>2</sup> "Dinosaurs," the nickname for old-style hard-line PRI party bosses, as opposed to the new generation of free-market "technocrats."

Kuk Dong workers stopped work, occupied the plant and set up guards at the gates. On January 11 they were attacked by a gang of thugs from the CROC, together with 300 *granaderos* (riot cops) who took orders directly from the head of the corporatist pseudo-union, René Sánchez Juárez. The workers were required to run a gauntlet of cops, who beat them savagely. Fifteen injured strikers had to go to the hospital. Although the company later signed an agreement with the Coalition of Kuk Dong Workers permitting the return of the workers, the most prominent activists have been denied entry to the plant.

Kuk Dong had already been targeted by United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), a university coalition organized to protest against the miserable working conditions in the sweatshops where Nike clothing is made, and of the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), which has drawn up a set of standards to regulate superexploitation. Under international pressure, at the end of February the Puebla company agreed again to take back all the workers, and to hold a (non-secret) vote on union representation. Nevertheless, up to this point only half the workforce has returned, many of whom have been illegally "rehired" in order to eliminate their seniority rights. At least 70 were kept out for refusing to sign a statement of support for the CROC. On March 18, the workers held an assembly in which they decided to form an independent union, the SITEKIM. Nevertheless, the CROC continues to use the resources of the company, harassing and intimidating the workers.

Imperialist spokesmen like the *New York Times* have cited the Kuk Dong plant as an example of a "victory" for the WRC, since Nike asked its subcontractor to rehire the workers. In Mexico, left groups like the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (League of Workers for Socialism) have played up the USAS action as solidarity with the workers. But despite the fact that a delegation of students and professors that visited the plant in Atlixco concluded that "the wages Kuk Dong pays are, by far, insufficient to support a family of three," the WRC's recommendations were limited to retracting the firings, without a word about wages. Moreover, in its "Model Code of Conduct," this consortium that claims to defend workers' rights only calls for a 48-hour workweek and a "dignified living wage" sufficient to "provide for the basic needs" of a family in the garment industry.

This is no accident, but part of a whole operation. A recent article about maquiladora plants in El Salvador (which a USAS delegation visited previously) reports that under pressure from university "monitors," the "pioneer" company in the industry, Gap, required that its subcontractor improve the cafeteria and ventilation, while it continues paying the same poverty wages (*New York Times*, 24 April). These bourgeois liberals don't seek to eliminate *superexploitation*, or even to substantially diminish it, but only to regulate it. At bottom they propose a trade-off: in exchange for some superficial improvements, so that the plants don't give the impression of being "sweatshops," students (many of whom sincerely want to help the workers) will be given the impression that they have done a good deed and the supposed defenders of labor rights will give their seal of approval, thus helping the imperialist companies clean up their image. In other words, they're *prettifying the maquiladoras*.

## Showdown in Río Bravo

Of all the current conflicts, the most dramatic is the struggle of the workers at the Duro Bag Manufacturing Company in Río Bravo, in the border state of Tamaulipas. The plant is located near the city of Reynosa, one of the centers of the maquiladora industry and the birthplace of workers resistance in the border region, which goes back to the Zenith strike of 1983. The Duro factory, owned by a U.S. company with headquarters in Kentucky, specializes in the manufacture of gift bags for top-of-the-line companies like Hallmark Cards and the luxury department store chain Neiman Marcus. Even before setting up the factory, Duro signed a contract with a CTM "union," which dutifully agreed to the terrible wages (currently \$30 a week). The workforce is overwhelmingly made up of women workers, many of them single mothers. In autumn 1999, they rebelled against the straitjacket of CTM control, voting to throw out the boss of the local and replace him with Eluid Almaguer. The company's response was immediate: they fired Almaguer, with the consent of the CTM, which struck him from its list of personnel under the provisions of the *cláusula de exclusión* (exclusion clause).

But even this was not enough to suppress the workers' rebellion. In mid-April of last year some 400 workers led a work stoppage against abusive treatment by the bosses, which was then joined by an additional 800 workers. On June 11, on the eve of the Mexican presidential elections, the national leadership of the corporatist federation agreed to an extension of the contract, ignoring the workers' demands for shoes, work clothes, company contributions to a savings plan, the presence of a doctor in the plant and a substantial wage increase. The angry response of the workers wasn't long in coming. One week later the strike broke out: on the night of June 18, workers put up the red-and-black flags (the traditional symbol for a strike in Mexico) and occupied the plant with the aim of setting up their own union. But in the early morning hours, 13 police cars pulled up to the factory. Brandishing weapons, they tried to intimidate the strikers. When the workers refused to leave, the beatings began. One woman who was eight months pregnant was hospitalized because of the blows she received. The workers immediately began a sit-in in the *zócalo* (central plaza) of Río Bravo, where they remain to this day.

This took place at the height of the election campaign, and to avoid problems at the voting booths, the PRI governor Thomas Yarrington assured the strikers that their independent union would be registered. But after July 2 (election day), the government started backpedaling, declaring the strike illegal while the company circulated a "blacklist" of strikers. However, when an international forum was held in Reynosa on "the right of association" – attended, among others, by the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, based in San Antonio, Texas, and leaders of the National Workers Union (UNT) who traveled from Mexico City –

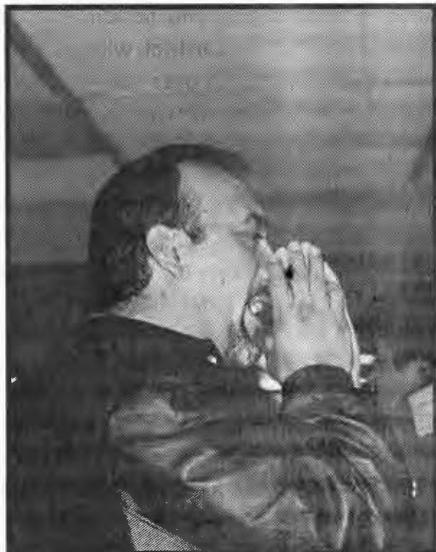


**Women workers at the Duro plant in struggle against the bosses and the corporatist apparatuses. Trotskyists fight for women's liberation through socialist revolution.**

and in the face of the general discrediting of the PRI after its electoral fiasco, Yarrington gave in and the independent union was registered. Nevertheless, this only led to the next in the labyrinth of obstacles to the formation of workers unions free from the direct control of the bourgeois state.

At the end of October 2000, the state authorities were presented with a list of more than 400 signatures of Duro workers in favor of an independent union. The response: on October 31, on the eve of the Day of the Dead, unknown persons burned Eluid Almaguer's home to the ground. CROC thugs were brought in from Mexico City to intimidate the strikers carrying out the sit-in at Río Bravo, while the head of the CTM "union" for this sector tried to bribe them with empty promises of better pay and conditions. When this got nowhere, the Federal Mediation and Arbitration Board (JFCyA) finally agreed to hold a vote count on union affiliation on March 2. But that only led to an intensification of the intimidation. The more than 150 Duro workers who had been fired from the plant for union activity were kept out. During the following days, more than 100 CROC goons hired by the company and brought in from outside prowled the area. A day before the voting, they brought high-caliber automatic weapons into the plant in full view of the union activists outside the front gate.

Having thus set the stage, they carried out their pseudo-democratic farce. The "vote" was carried out inside the plant, not on neutral ground. Each worker was given a blue ballot (for the CROC) and required to verbally state his or her affiliation in front of representatives of management and of the CROC (to which the CTM had by this time turned over the contract) seated at the table. The night shift was kept in the plant under lock and key to prevent them from talking with union activists outside. In the early morning you could hear shouts of "Let us out!" During the voting a car full of thugs drove out of the plant and hit one of the women strikers. The strikers stopped the car and when they opened the trunk they found leaflets and banners of the inde-



**CROC thugs at the Duro Bag Manufacturing Company plant in Río Bravo, Mexico. These goons were hired by the company in Mexico City to ensure a victory for the phantom “union” of the corporatist federation.**

pendent union that the CROC thugs had torn down. Finally, the federal mediation board announced the results of the vote count: 497 for the CROC, 4 for the independent union – just like the “good old days” of the PRI’s *carro completo* (clean sweep).

### **War on PRI Corporatism and PAN Company Unions! Throw the *Cardenista* Bureaucracy Out of the “Independent” Unions!**

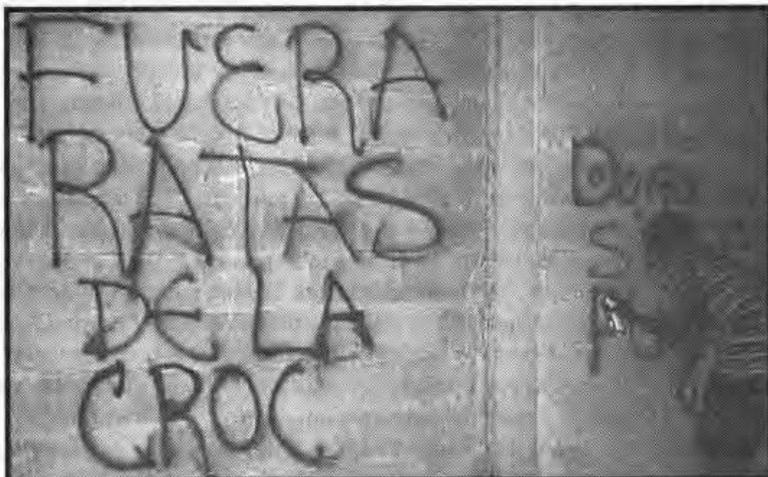
This farce highlights the key question of the nature of the corporatist CTM and CROC federations. For the workers of the Duro plant, it is very clear: these are “phantom unions” which only exist in the companies’ labor relations offices and their armies of strikebreaking thugs. They are instruments of the PRI (of which they are a part), the state party which ruled this country for over 70 years, for the purpose of preventing the rise of genuine workers unions. Like the “white” (company) unions sponsored by the PAN governments of the northern states, they are not workers organizations but a weapon of the bosses. We Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, have repeatedly insisted that *the struggle for union independence against the corporatist PRI federations and the PAN company unions is a class struggle against the bourgeoisie, its parties and its “labor” organizations.*

However, an organization which claims to be Trotskyist, the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), has put itself forward in recent years as a staunch supporter of the supposed working-class character of the CTM and the CROC. While the GEM occasionally uses the word *corporatist* regarding these federations, they have stripped it of any meaning by insisting that they do not recognize “any class distinction between some unions and others” (*Espartaco* No. 14, Fall-Winter 2000). Thus they seek to give a “working-class” cover to the PRI machinery whose purpose is precisely to *incorporate* the workers into this bourgeois party. We have on various occasions un-

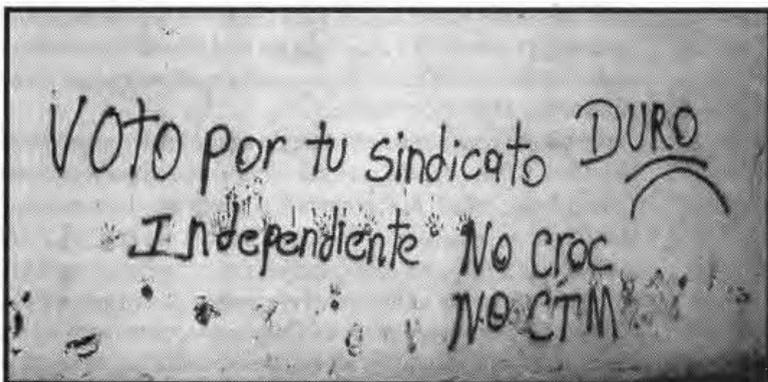
masked the capitulation by the GEM and the International Communist League, of which it is a part, to this bourgeois apparatus which chains and represses the workers. In a subsequent issue we will publish an extensive analysis on the question of corporatism. Here we only want to note that their apologies for the CTM consciously distort the positions of Trotsky.

Insisting on the need to struggle for influence among the workers in a whole range of organizations, including “semi-state organizations” and even “labor organizations created by fascism,” Trotsky never put an equal sign between such apparatuses and workers unions led by pro-capitalist bureaucrats. This is not a sterile terminological dispute, but rather a life-and-death question for maquiladora workers. Obviously one would struggle inside the CTM “unions” *precisely in order to break the corporatist stranglehold and to form genuine workers unions.* This task requires above all a struggle to *forge a revolutionary leadership.* Every serious struggle of Mexican workers in recent decades has been *against the CTM* and similar federations. Duro workers already went through their own experience attempting to defend themselves inside the framework of the CTM, and it was the *defeat* of this attempt that led them to found an independent union. But for the GEM, the struggle currently being waged in Río Bravo, along with the struggles in Cuernavaca and Puebla, would be a dispute between two unions which are qualitatively the same. *With their line they cannot defend the women workers in this struggle.*

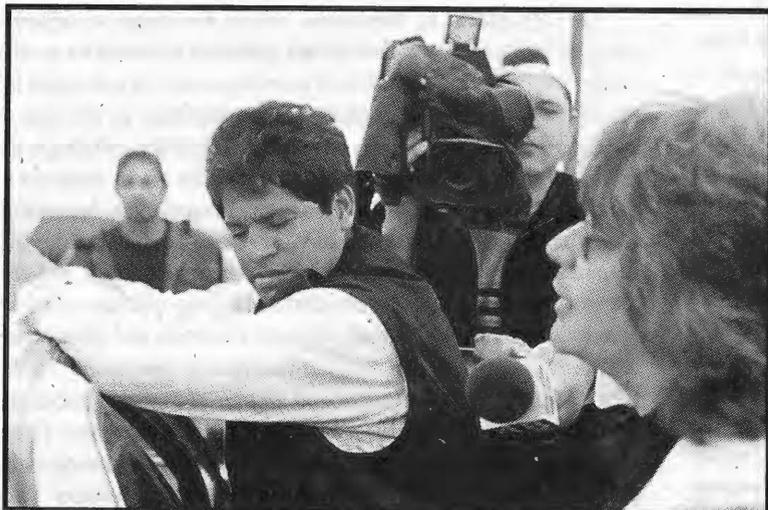
These “CTM socialists” cynically claim that “*there is no qualitative difference* between the PRI *charros* and their ‘democratic’ counterparts,” when *what they are actually saying is that there is no qualitative difference between the thugs of the corporatist federations and the women workers of the Duro, Kuk Dong and Covarra factories.* But there is. The fact that these professional goons defend the companies against the workers, that they set up squads of strikebreaking thugs, is known to everyone. Now there is additional proof. When one of these gangsters made a formal declaration after running



Workers at the Duro plant are quite clear on the class character of the corporatist federations, the CTM and the CROC. Slogans say "CROC Rats Get Out," "Vote for Your Independent Union, Not CROC, Not CTM."



They want to free themselves from the repressive yoke of the corporatist federations, but following the policies of their advisors linked to the Mexican PRD and the AFL-CIO, they showed illusions in the "democratic" pretensions of the capitalist state.



During vote ordered by the Federal Mediation and Arbitration Board, CROC thug drove out of the plant in a company car and struck woman worker on the picket line.

down the worker Consuelo Moreno, he admitted that he had come from the Federal District, where he was hired by the company to watch over the vote count to ensure that the CROC would win. Even the car which the CROC thugs drove into the workers' picket line belonged to the company.

The corporatist "unions" of the CTM, the CROC and other federations under the umbrella of the CT serve in reality as company labor organizations. Ultimately they represent the class enemy. This fact makes the role of the bureaucrats who betray the workers struggle from within, tying the workers to "democratic" bourgeois parties, above all Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), even more pernicious and dangerous. The Duro workers have no illusions about the role of the PRI, but the Authentic Labor Front (FAT), to which the independent union is affiliated, feeds dangerous illusions in the bourgeois "opposition" of the PRD. The FAT is part of the UNT, led by telephone union leader Francisco Hernández Juárez, a former PRI supporter of ex-president Carlos Salinas, who sabotaged the struggle against privatization of the Telmex telephone monopoly in exchange for millions of dollars' worth of shares in the company now controlled by Carlos Slim. On January 25, Hernández on behalf of the UNT signed an agreement with Amalia García of the PRD for common action with this bourgeois nationalist party.

There are innumerable ties between the leaders of the "independent" unions and Cárdenas' party. UNT vice president Alejandra Barrales, head of the airline flight attendants union, was elected a PRD deputy to the national congress last July. Berta Luján quit her post as a leader of the FAT to become the comptroller of the PRD government of the Federal District under Andrés Manuel López Obrador. UNT co-president Agustín Rodríguez, leader of the National University workers union (STUNAM), is also a prominent PRDer. Since July 2, these "independent" unionists compete with the PRI "institutionals" in offering their services to the new government of Vicente Fox. UNT vice president Roberto Borja participated in Fox's "transition team." These ties to the bourgeois "opposition" directly harm the struggle of the oppressed. The PRD government of the Federal District under Cárdenas and then Rosario Robles, former secretary of STUNAM, sent club-wielding Mexico City riot police to repress UNAM student strikers during 1999-2000. Pointing to these examples, the Grupo Internacionalista has repeatedly called to break with the Cárdenas popular front!

In the case of Duro, the pro-capitalist bureaucrats of the UNT and FAT have led the workers' struggle into going through the channels of the Federal Labor Law, the cornerstone of the system of state labor control which has condemned innumerable workers'

struggles to defeat. Hernández Juárez himself traveled to Río Bravo in August with this message. The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), which is advising the strikers, described as a "victory" the announcement by the JFCyA of a date for the rigged vote count, which then produced the "triumph" of the CROC. The CJM is tied to the AFL-CIO labor federation in the U.S., as is the UNT, and following the path of submission to capitalist legality they have appealed several cases of discrimination against independent unions in Mexico to a body established under the North American Free Trade Agreement. This amounts to calling for intervention by the United States against Mexico. Every class-conscious worker must reject NAFTA as an instrument of imperialist domination, and refuse to use its mechanisms against a neo-colonial country.

Labor journalist David Bacon has pointed out that "No remedies have ever been imposed which would have required rehiring a single fired worker, nor has a single independent union been able to negotiate a contract, as a result of any ruling in a case under the [NAFTA] treaty" (*Mexican Labor News*, March 2001). Marta Ojeda of the CJM commented that the Duro election "strips away any idea that the NAFTA process can protect workers' rights." Robin Alexander, director of international affairs for the United Electrical Workers (UE), declares, "Institutions like NAFTA and the WTO [World Trade Organization] will never operate in workers' interests." But it is the leaders of the UNT, the CJM and UE themselves who are the architects of the "strategy" which seeks salvation in the institutions and laws of the bourgeoisie. At times, particularly after another defeat, they seek to give themselves a "radical" image, such as during the meeting between the Zapatista delegation and unionists of the UNT in Mexico City on March 15, where they attacked corporatism and "neo-liberalism." But at the same time they make use of the good offices of imperialism, circulating a letter from Democratic Congressman David Bonior, known for his protectionist positions, in favor of the Duro Bag workers.

### Forge a Revolutionary Leadership!

The Grupo Internacionalista insists, with Trotsky, that the only way to achieve union democracy is by fighting for "*complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state.*" As the founder of the Fourth International noted in a text written during his Mexican exile and which was in part a response to the effort by President Lázaro Cárdenas to subordinate the CTM to the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM, predecessor of the PRI), "The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of the workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat." This requires a hard-fought struggle to forge a revolutionary workers party against all the bourgeois parties and their lieutenants in the workers movement. As Trotsky observed, "without the political leadership of the Fourth International the independence of the trade unions is impossible."

The struggle to unionize the new layers of the Mexican industrial proletariat goes far beyond a mythical "pure" trade unionism and must confront every form of capitalist oppres-

sion. As we emphasized in our article, "Mexican Maquiladora Workers Fight for Their Rights" (*Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997), it "poses the need for a revolutionary leadership that champions the cause of oppressed women workers." The increasing participation of women in social production has been an important aspect of the economic crisis which has shaken the working class for more than two decades. The percentage of women in the economically active population went from 17 percent in 1976 to 24 percent in 1980, and during the last decade it increased from 32 percent to 37 percent, so that today there are 15 million women workers. To defend and mobilize them as working-class fighters it is necessary to put forward a revolutionary program which directly addresses the various aspects of women's oppression.

We fight for equal pay for equal work, and to overcome the miserable wages which condemn maquiladora workers to a life of poverty. A class-struggle leadership would also demand free day care centers, paid for by the companies, open 24 hours a day. It must put a stop to the companies' humiliating demands for proof that women workers are not pregnant, and mobilize union action to win back the job of any woman fired for being pregnant. We also fight for free abortion on demand, in the framework of a free, high-quality medical system accessible to the entire population.

This requires a head-on struggle against reactionary forces like the Catholic church and the clerical-reactionary National Action Party, which in the states it governs has declared abortion illegal under any circumstances. But it's not only the PAN: the PRI and PRD have also opposed the unrestricted right of a woman to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Shortly after Fox's election, the state legislature of Guanajuato, dominated by the PAN, proposed outlawing all abortions, including in cases of rape. In response, the head of the PRD government of the Federal District, Rosario Robles, reduced the punishment for certain kinds of abortion. But she emphasized that it would continue to be a crime: "The proposal, Robles specified, is not to legalize abortion" (*La Jornada*, 15 August 2000).

In opposition to feminism, which envisages a separate struggle by women, we Trotskyists underline the need for a *class* struggle for the emancipation of women, as part of a struggle for the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed. In the face of massive unemployment, it is necessary to fight for a sliding scale of wages and work hours, demanding jobs for all. In response to attacks by CTM and CROC goons, a revolutionary leadership would sponsor the formation of workers self-defense groups to defend strike pickets against these strikebreaking thugs. We call for working-class mobilization demanding the withdrawal of the Mexican army from Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero and other states where it is carrying out counterinsurgency operations. In the face of the swindle of supposed Indian autonomy under the military boot, and in contrast with the Zapatista program of simply rolling back Salinas' agrarian counter-reform (returning to the poverty-stricken *ejido*<sup>3</sup>), we must inscribe on the workers' ban-

<sup>3</sup> Communally held lands, previously guaranteed by the Mexican Constitution. While belonging to Indian communities, they are generally farmed by individual families working on tiny plots of poor land.

ners the demand for agrarian revolution and voluntary collectivization of the land.

In the face of the government's current plans to impose a sales tax on food and medicines, a blatant attack against working and poor people, the workers movement should take the initiative in forming neighborhood committees, with strong participation by housewives, to watch over prices and prevent attempts to charge this vicious tax. Faced by Fox's threats to privatize energy production (oil, electricity), while many leftists yearn for a return to the previous PRI "model" of a highly stratified *capitalist* economy, the GI fights for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by a workers and peasants government.

An article by David Bacon in the liberal magazine *The Nation* (22 January) on the struggle of the Duro Bag workers was titled "Unions Without Borders." But the reality is that under the pro-capitalist bureaucracies, the unions *cannot* overcome national boundaries due to their subordination to "their own" bourgeoisies. Behind their empty phrases of "solidarity" one finds, barely disguised, the imperialist protectionism of the AFL-CIO or bourgeois Cárdenas nationalism in the case of the UNT, the FAT and allied unions. Trotsky's program of *permanent revolution* is the only one capable of overcoming the capitalist borders, by fighting for workers revolution that extends to the U.S. proletariat, key to achieving socialism on a world scale. Thus the struggle for unionizing the maquiladoras must be placed in the framework of the struggle to reforge a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International. This is the goal the Grupo Internacionalista fights for. ■

## Puerto Rico to Korea...

*continued from page 20*

The real interests of the workers and oppressed lay with the victory of the "other side" in Washington's counterrevolutionary wars, and in the defeat of the U.S. war machine.

From Vieques to Koon-I, from the Caribbean to the Pacific, the struggle against imperialism and its local junior partners can defeat these powerful enemies only if it is waged on a mass scale as an internationalist *class* struggle, joining the fight against the entire capitalist system of war, racism, colonial slavery and exploitation. As the 1938 founding congress of the Fourth International stated in its "Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism":

"The revolutionists in the United States are obliged to arouse the American workers against the sending of any armed forces against the peoples of Latin America and the Pacific and for the withdrawal of any such forces.... The parties of the Fourth International, throughout the Western Hemisphere, stand for the immediate and unconditional independence of Puerto Rico...and all other direct colonies, dependencies and protectorates of American imperialism....

"At the same time, the Fourth Internationalists point out that none of the countries of Latin America or the Pacific which are now under the domination of American imperialism to one degree or another, is able either to obtain complete freedom from foreign oppression or to retain such freedom for any length of time if it confines its struggle

to the efforts of its own self."

The resolution stated that only a united fight for socialist revolution, "allied in the struggle with the revolutionary proletariat of the United States, would present a force strong enough to contend successfully with North American imperialism."

To join together these struggles and win victory for the exploited and oppressed, what's urgently needed is revolutionary leadership. From Puerto Rico and the United States to Korea, revolutionary workers parties must be built on the genuine communism of Lenin and Trotsky, in the fight to reforge the world party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International.

*U.S. out of Vieques and all Puerto Rico! U.S. out of Koon-I and all Korea! Sweep away imperialism through international socialist revolution!*

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## Cincinnati Explodes...

*continued from page 9*

Crest toothpaste and Pantene shampoo. Meanwhile, last year the P&G board handed its former CEO Durk Jager a "modest" severance pay package of \$9.5 million for spending 17 months at the helm, during which time he presided over a 50 percent drop of the company's stock market, losing some \$73 billion!

AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney took the news of the Procter & Gamble cutbacks philosophically, remarking that "there are going to be more layoffs." So what is he going to do about it? Historically, the chauvinist labor bureaucracy has sought to direct American workers' anger against their class brothers and sisters in other countries, repeating the refrain that "Mexican workers are stealing our jobs." This protectionist poison is now repackaged by the Sweeney-style labor fakers as calls for "fair trade," for example in the anti-FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) protests in Quebec against "globalization." Yet these layoffs hit workers at P&G plants in Mexico as well, where the former head of the company's Mexican operations is part of the cabinet of President Vicente Fox, and former president Ernesto Zedillo joined the Procter & Gamble board right after leaving office last December.

Mexican and U.S. workers are exploited by the same bosses, and instead of letting themselves be divided to the benefit of the bosses' profits they must join their forces in a powerful fist of class struggle. As the communist chant goes, "Asian, Latin, black and white, workers of the world unite!" A class-conscious workers movement would mobilize the power of labor to defend Cincinnati blacks against the thin blue line of the CPD. Even against the National Guard and armed forces, the proletariat has the power to bring capitalist industry and finance to a standstill. To do so it must first of all defend the most oppressed and most directly targeted by the class enemy. That means bringing out relatively better paid workers at the GE jet engine plants to demand cops out of Over-the-Rhine. It means bringing out Cincinnati teachers together with their students as they face the cop batons.

By the same token, a class-struggle leadership would call on black poor and working people to join their forces in labor battles such as the strike against Overnight Trucking (one of whose main terminals is in Cincinnati), which the Teamster leadership ran into the ground. There should be strike action against the P&G layoffs, which would be immeasurably strengthened by urgently needed *union action now* to demand charges be dropped against those who protested the cop killing of Timothy Thomas.

The key question is leadership. A class-struggle leadership can only be built in struggle against the present misleaders



**Demonstrator facing Cincinnati cop at April 14 funeral with sign saying, "We salute our youth, thank you for the revolution."**

of labor and blacks, ousting the sellout union bureaucracy and forging a *revolutionary workers party*. Such a party would fight for *black liberation through socialist revolution*, for the emancipation of women in a socialist society where collective production for use, not for profit, can make possible liberation from household drudgery, not to mention the worry of not knowing where the children's next meal is coming from — for a future of abundance rather than endless grinding poverty and cops' bullets. Such a party must be multiracial in character and international in scope, just as capitalism is a world system, and it can only be built as part of the fight to reforge the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with Lenin of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Writing in the 1950s, James P. Cannon, the first leader of the American Trotskyists, observed:

"The policy of gradualism, of promising to free the Negro within the framework of the social system that subordinates and degrades him is not working out. It does not go to the root of the problem. The aspirations of the Negro people are great and so are the energies and emotions expended in their struggle. But the concrete gains of their struggle up to date are pitifully meager. They have gained a few inches, but the goal of real equality is miles and miles away.

"The right to occupy a vacant seat on a bus; the token integration of a handful of Negro children in a few public schools; a few places open for individual Negroes in public office and some professions; fair employment rights on the books, but not in practice; the formally and legally recognized right to equality which is denied in practice at every turn — that's the way it is today, 96 years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

"There has been a big change in the outlook and demands of the Negroes' movement since the days of Booker T. Washington, but no fundamental change in their actual situation. This contradiction is building up to another explosion and another change of policy and leadership. In

the next stage of its development, the American Negro movement will be compelled to turn to a more militant policy than gradualism, and to look for more reliable allies than capitalist politicians in the North who are themselves allied with the Dixiecrats of the South. The Negroes, more than any others in this country, have reason and right to be revolutionary.

"An honest workers' party of the new generation will recognize the revolutionary potential of the Negro struggle, and call for a fighting alliance of the Negro people and the labor movement in a common revolutionary struggle against the present social system."

—James P. Cannon, "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement" (1959), available as an Internationalist Group pamphlet

Terminology may change, but these words are as true today as they were two generations ago. We urge militant youth, workers, women — black, white, Latin, Asian — and all those who would fight to eliminate the scourge of racism to honor the memory of Timothy Thomas and avenge his death by fighting for a workers revolution that will sweep away the heritage of slavery forever. ■

## Defend the Charleston 5...

*continued from page 4*

go a long way towards forging class-struggle unity between West and East Coast longshoremen and show the way for a massive unionization drive. Yet these urgently needed steps require a head-on struggle against the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy which chains the working class to the racist exploiters and their hired politicians.

The need to oust the labor bureaucracy and forge a class-struggle, revolutionary leadership is posed in the clearest terms by the urgent task of organizing the unorganized and *unionizing the South*. This will not be won by half-measures, and reliance on the Democrats would mean death to such a struggle. A real, massive unionization drive would come straight up against the guard dogs of capitalist property and privilege, from the cops to their cohorts in white sheets. It would pose an all-out fight to root out racist oppression. That is why the "business unionists" leading the American labor movement have let the South remain an open-shop hell, allowing the bosses to get away with murder in every sense of the word and — as in the case of the ILA — maintaining separate black and white locals in some areas.

### Labor Must Champion the Fight for Black Freedom

Charleston vividly shows the intimate connection between the fight for black liberation and the working-class struggle against the capitalist owners who rule this country. Underlining the need for the entire working class to fight for black freedom, Karl Marx wrote of chattel slavery in America that "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded" (*Capital*). Like every ruling class in history, the Southern slave owners were unmoved by "moral suasion": slavery was abolished only through the "second American revolution," the Civil War, whose first shots were fired at

Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. Armed and enrolled in the Union army, former slaves played a key role in turning the tide to defeat the Confederacy:

"In Charleston, proud Charleston, where the slaveholders had begun their war...the famous Fifty-Fourth, the Negro regiment from Massachusetts, marched past the stately mansions singing *John Brown's Body*, while in their wake came thousands of Negroes, terrible in their joy and strength at being free. They surged into the mansions and slave pens shouting 'Liberty!' They burned the auction blocks, destroyed whips and branding irons, wrecked the stocks which had held them, shattered the many specialized tools of torture with which they had been cut, maimed, twisted, and flogged for more than two hundred and fifty years."

—Boyer and Morais, *Labor's Untold Story* (1955)

After the war, South Carolina was home to a Radical Reconstruction government known as the "Black Parliament," and in 1867 Charleston dockers founded the Longshoremen's Protective Union Association, the first union of black workers. Yet the promise of Reconstruction was sold down the river by the Northern capitalists with their infamous Compromise of 1877 with the Southern Democratic heirs to the slavocracy after the stalemate of the 1876 presidential election (see "1876," *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001). Waving the Confederate rag of the slaveholders' rebellion, Ku Klux Klan night-riders were called out to terrorize and disenfranchise the former slaves and their descendants — and to keep the deep South "free" of unions.

Labor cannot unionize the South unless it sets its sights on rooting out the bloody legacy of the Confederacy, and that is a revolutionary struggle in the most literal sense. At the same time the need for workers *internationalism* is highlighted by the growing presence of immigrant workers, many of them "undocumented," in Southern industries and businesses. The Kluxers' brand of nativist fascism has always fed off "America-firstism" and xenophobia; the same lynch-rope terrorists who target black people and unionists go after immigrant workers with a vengeance. Labor must fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, who from one coast to the other have played a dynamic role in recent union drives among the most exploited sections of the U.S. proletariat, many of them women workers.

What all these tasks demand is to *break from the Democrats* and wage a class struggle against all capitalist parties (including Nader's red-white-and-blue Greens), forging a *revolutionary workers party that fights for black liberation through socialist revolution*. Against those who preached the pipe dream of overcoming slavery through conciliation with the master class, the great Frederick Douglass insisted: "Without struggle there is no progress." Today the road to freedom for capitalism's wage slaves in racist America is that of intransigent revolutionary struggle, together with workers the world over, to take society's wealth and resources out of the hands of the exploiting few and put them in the service of the working people. This fight for workers revolution is the cause and purpose of the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International. ■

# For a Class-Struggle Fight Against the Racist Union-Busters!

# Defeat the Capitalist Onslaught

# Against Public Education!

The public school system is the focal point of an assault by key sectors of the U.S. ruling class. "Education reform" was a top issue for both Democrats and Republicans in last year's presidential election, as it is in the New York City mayoral election this coming fall. Masked by phony pro-children rhetoric and squabbling over vouchers, there is a "bipartisan" consensus to "reinvent" public education to reflect the demands of the capitalist market.

As usual, teachers are portrayed as the obstacle to high standards and improving schools. The fact that education budgets have been systematically cut back for decades, spending less and less money per pupil, goes unmentioned. Not a word about how American schools are being resegregated (insofar as they were even minimally desegregated), with minority students warehoused in run-down inner-city facilities.

The privatization offensive includes free marketeers who push "vouchers" to subsidize private schools, conservatives and liberals who want to gut union gains with "charter schools," and corporate execs taking over school administration to impose "accountability." Republican right-wingers go after teachers unions as a whipping boy, while liberal Democrats want to lengthen the school day and the school year in exchange for a paltry raise.

This is the line-up facing NYC teachers today and teachers around the country. It's not just about the need for a massive wage increase but a broader fight against a ruling-class onslaught targeting teachers and their minority, immigrant, poor and working-class students. The response of the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association leaders is to embrace the treacherous "standards" rhetoric and try to cut a deal over "merit pay." That is, they go along with the racist union bashers while pleading for a few dollars because of the huge teacher shortage. This is a recipe for disaster.

A few voices are raised in opposition to "market-driven reforms" and in defense of public education as a building block for classless "democracy." Such appeals to liberal/social-democratic programs of the past will go nowhere in the face of the holy alliance of New Democrats, neo-conservatives, labor bureaucrats and corporate chiefs. The AFT/NEA tops are not merely sellouts, they are consciously serving the interests of American capitalism — as they always have. They are a road-

## Teachers, Minorities, Immigrants Targeted



AP/Tina Fineberg

Parents protest plans to privatize Bronx school, March 29.

block to struggle in defense of teachers and students.

The capitalist politicians cynically pose as if they are concerned with children's welfare. Republican George W. Bush vows to "leave no child behind," lifting a slogan from the Children's Defense Fund, the cheerleaders for Democrat Hillary Clinton. This has about the same relationship to reality as the U.S. Army's jingle "Be All You Can Be" or Dow Chemical's talk of "Living Improved Daily" (through Agent Orange!) — namely it is the opposite of the truth.

While appealing to the desires of teachers and parents to improve the quality of education, the capitalist politicians' calls for "standards-based reform" are code words for a program to force out hundreds of thousands of students from the schools. This is the hypocritical frothing of the people who have kept schools from the South Bronx to South Texas (the two poorest Congressional districts in the country) in a state of deadening decay for decades.

Simply decreeing "standards" will not improve the schools. A New York Court of Appeals decision last January confirmed what everyone knows, that NYC schools are systematically short-changed compared to wealthy suburbs in the distribution of state aid. But this is also true within the city schools.

Ten years ago, Jonathan Kozol noted in his passionate exposé of public education in New York City that the poorest NYC districts get roughly 90 cents per pupil from legislative grants, while the richest districts get \$14 per pupil. He con-

cludes that the present situation is “less a field of education options than a battlefield on which a class and racial war is being acted out” (*Savage Inequality* [HarperCollins, 1991]).

Kozol also writes: “To the extent that school reforms such as ‘restructuring’ are advocated for the inner cities, few of these reforms have reached the schools that I have seen.... Even in those schools where some ‘restructuring’ has taken place, the fact of racial segregation has been, and continues to be, largely uncontested.”

Today the talk is of “reinventing” the public schools. But the real meaning of this rhetoric is even worse. New York state education commissioner Richard Mills and the others (like former regent, now NYC schools chancellor Harold Levy) who decreed that all students must pass five Regents exams in order to graduate from high school knew what they were doing. The effect of this and similar reforms around the country will be to dramatically increase the tendency to a two-tier education system, with more rigorous schools for those considered “college bound” and barracks-like “academies” for those tracked to be low-wage unskilled labor.

*And it’s already happening*, as every New York City teacher knows. In the high schools, the dropout rate has shot up by 25 percent in just two years with the introduction of compulsory Regents tests. Already more than a third of Latino and black students never graduate high school. At the current pass rate, the chancellor says that, “optimistically,” at most 40 percent of the students will graduate with their class.

This could set off a social explosion, in a city where 85 percent of public school students are non-white. Denied a diploma, thousands of youths in the barrios and ghettos are thrown onto the streets with little prospect of getting a job. There they are prey to marauding cops who profile them, beat them, arrest them and shoot them down outside their homes.

A fundamental fight is posed. Like the NYPD, Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his gang of racist reactionaries

think they can beat up on anyone and get away with it. Already they have gotten AFSCME District 37, headed by a court-imposed leadership, to swallow “merit pay” supposedly in exchange for avoiding layoffs. Now they’re gearing up to strong-arm New York City teachers. Working in tandem with the mayor, the Democrats figure they can play “soft cop” and get the union to give up hard-won gains.

The United Federation of Teachers leaders under Randi Weingarten pretend that by smart bargaining they will “get the money.” In fact they are preparing to cut a deal on Giuliani’s demands for “performance pay” (going along with the racist “standards” fraud) in exchange for a raise far less than what hard-pressed teachers need. Yet with a clear and present teacher shortage, the union is in a strong position. *Now is the time to let the union-busters have it.*

This fight cannot and must not be waged by the teachers alone. They will face the strikebreaking Taylor Law, which prescribes jail for leaders of public employees unions who go on strike, huge fines on striking unions and on individual strikers. This union-busting law was used to jail UFT leaders in 1975 and against transit strikers in 1980. Weingarten is calling for lobbying in Albany to “reform” the Taylor Law. Fat chance.

The response of labor to the scab law must be to turn it into a dead letter. To do that requires the militant mobilization of the 110,000 active duty members of the UFT (not just the 78,000 teachers but also more than 30,000 terribly underpaid staff and paraprofessionals), the largest union in New York City, along with hundreds of thousands of workers in other key unions, over a million students and millions of minority, immigrant, poor and working people in NYC.

*Together, we have the power to crush the racist labor haters from City Hall to the State House and the White House and defeat their escalating drive for the privatization of “public” education. But to do so what’s needed first and foremost is a class-struggle leadership.*

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## Educational "Reform" to Serve Capital

When capitalist politicians talk of educational reform, the name of the blame game is always "pin the tail on the teacher." Bush, a board-certified racist, sneers about "the soft bigotry of low expectations" and bandies about scores from phony Texas tests. Publishers churn out books like *The Teacher Unions: How the NEA and AFT Sabotage Reform and Hold Students, Parents, Teachers and Taxpayers Hostage to Bureaucracy* (Free Press, 1997) and *Power Grab: How the National Education Association Is Betraying Our Children* (Regnery, 1999).

Mayor Giuliani, of course, is basher-in-chief. While unleashing the ghoulish Board of Ed "investigator" Stancik to frame up teachers for falsifying test scores or any other trumped-up charge, the core of Giuliani's education "program" is to tie teachers' pay to student test scores. Yet Hillary Clinton, the darling of the UFT tops, also "calls for national education standards and for linking teachers' pay with students' performance" (AP, 25 March 2000).

The fundamental fact is that the push for national "standards," "merit pay," "school choice" and the rest of the "market-driven" education "reforms" is the *common* program of the partner parties of American capitalism. Indeed, although the drive was begun by the Reagan regime in the early '80s, it was the Clintonite "New Democrats" who enacted the program under the name "Goals 2000."

The actual plan for national testing came from the Democratic Leadership Conference (DLC), the lobby led by then Arkansas governor Clinton which sought to ditch any vestige of liberalism in order to recapture the "Reagan Democrat" vote. It was embodied in President Clinton's 1997 "Voluntary National Education Standards Initiative."

"Charter schools" exempted from union contracts – another Clinton program. In 1999 the DLC's Progressive Policy Institute devised a plan for "performance-based federal education funding," to dole out funds according to student scores on standardized tests. "Merit" pay for teachers is the logical extension of this program, so it's no fluke that was embraced by "New Democrat" policy wonk Hillary Clinton.

During the mid-'90s, Congressional Republicans under the sway of the right-wing Christian Coalition railed against any national standards and called for abolition of the federal Department of Education. What was decisive in bringing Republicans "on board" was the persuasive power of big capital.

Clinton's 1996 "education summit" of 49 corporate bosses and 40 governors was held at IBM's conference center at Palisades, New York and called for "standards." Leading corporations formed the Business Coalition for Excellence in Education to push these "reforms." Prominent among these "reformers" were IBM chief Lou Gerstner and former Xerox CEO David Kearns. The Education Excellence Partnership spawned by the Business Roundtable and including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Governors Association, U.S. Department of Education *as well as the NEA and AFT*, has placed dozens of ads promoting national standards. This "unique coalition of public officials, business and teacher organizations" is the embodiment of class collaboration on education.

## School Reform or Reform Schools

So what are the aims of the present education "reforms" being pushed by the White House, Congress and the Fortune 500? The purpose of all the rulers' talk of "standards" is not to improve the chances for poor inner-city children – they don't give a damn about that – but to *make the labor force more "competitive" globally with its imperialist rivals, to "Americanize" the new wave of immigrants, and ultimately to prepare the population for war.*

The business interest is explicit. A 1990 *New York Times* article stated: "When it comes to reforming the nation's schools, these days the leading radicals are likely to be wearing pin-striped suits and come from oak-paneled boardrooms rather than the ivy-covered walls of academia." The article concluded: "The impetus behind the corporate embrace of education reform is concern about the quality of the American labor pool."

In 1989, a joint statement by President Bush and the National Governors' Association declared: "As a nation we must have an educated work force, second to none, in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive world economy." Although Wall Street fears of being overtaken by Japan, Inc. have given way to post-Cold War *Amerika über alles* triumphalism, the "education crisis" persists.

Under Clinton, the emphasis shifted to the needs of the "new economy" of the "Internet age." Combined with this was the bipartisan drive to axe welfare as a drain on profits. Thus the 1994 welfare "reform," promising to throw millions of moms and kids into dire poverty, was accompanied by the School-to-Work Act to gear education to (low-wage) job expectations.

The neo-conservatives and New Democrats who together have designed the current reforms talk as if the U.S. economy will soon consist of "symbolic analysts" and "knowledge workers," while manufacturing is shipped off-shore to low-wage Third World (semi-colonial) countries. In this view high school graduates with vocational training will simply be out of luck, so what's prescribed is massive retraining and regearing the schools.

The number of skilled, unionized jobs in this country has indeed been sharply slashed in recent years, and U.S. businesses are trying to turn Mexico into a giant *maquiladora* of free-trade zone plants. But the idea that the United States is going to become a giant Silicon Valley is an Internaut fantasy that will go up in smoke just as sure as wildly overpriced Nasdaq technology stocks did. No imperialist "superpower" is going to subcontract its fundamental industries. Meanwhile, along with herds of computer nerds they need unskilled pizza delivery boys and cashiers.

The masters of American capitalism are intent on creating a far more sharply polarized economy, in which there will be a relatively highly paid technologically proficient petty bourgeois layer and a mass of low-paid service workers, while industrial wages will continue to be slashed in a "race to the bottom" in the name of "competitiveness." It is notorious that under Reagan, Bush and Clinton, the yawning abyss between the pay of top executives and workers has dramatically widened. This is not accidental but intended.

Clintonites like former Labor Department chief Robert Reich pretend that increasing inequality will be overcome by

solving the “mismatch” of skills through increased education, but in fact *the real pay even of college graduates declined* through the recent “boom” (now gone bust). The fact is that in a frenzy to push up profits, U.S. rulers are producing a more “Latin American” type of social structure, with the famous “middle class” being hollowed out. Police are becoming more paramilitary forces, with heavy weaponry (tanks, attack helicopters) and occupation tactics (patrolling in convoys, hit squads) to match. And along with this shift, a more sharply bifurcated, public-private educational system is being created.

### “Standards” and Standardization

The first element of this program is *standardization* through national and state “high-stakes testing.” In New York, education authorities plan to hold back large numbers of students who fail tests after fourth and eighth grade, and to deny high school graduation to those who don’t pass a battery of Regents exams in English, math, science, U.S. history and global history. These education managers know full well that students separated from their age group and held back are far more likely to drop out of school altogether. Vituperating against “social promotion,” they are consciously creating a situation in which many students will flunk out and then drop out.

Whole batteries of education professionals are being employed to dream up the tests. The Iowa Basic Skills test was deemed inappropriate – too many questions about farming. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test touted by Bush turns out to measure far lower levels of competency than claimed, passing off a sixth grade math level as tenth grade. The Bush tests did solve the problem of the lack of textbooks that bedevils many New York City schools, however. For weeks before the big day, Texas teachers gather up all the books and shamelessly “teach to the test.”

As for the college entry Scholastic Aptitude Tests, John Katzman, head of the Princeton Review test coaching company which trains kids to pass the SATs, says they are an “unmitigated disaster” which “measure nothing important and are biased in favor of affluent white males,” as the *New York Times* (19 April) summed up his views.

Recently parents in affluent white Scarsdale boycotted the state eighth-grade test because they claim it leads to “dumbing down” the curriculum. But while rich suburbs may get away with gestures of protest, alternative “portfolio schools” in the New York City system are being forced to abandon their curriculum in order to teach the Regents. There should be no doubt what’s going on here: the whole movement to impose standardized tests is blatantly racist and discriminatory.

For example, this year’s English Regents exam called for students to write an essay based on the idea that “as a frequent Internet user” they think agency grant money should be used to provide computer networking outside schools. While national statistics show that 95 percent of all schools now have Internet access, in many schools the antediluvian computers are frequently broken down or locked up; the few Internet connections are seldom (if ever) available to students; and if they do manage to log on, what students can actually see is rigidly controlled by a censorship program designed by a Christian fundamentalist in

North Carolina which bans words like “breast.”

The idea that students with little or no access to computers or the Internet should be required to write such an essay (in which they must integrate information from a table of URLs!) is grotesque. But then, the year before, students were supposed to write an essay about the “power of nature” based on a story about a snowstorm. In one class in the Bronx, students from the Caribbean had never seen snow (the first snowfall occurred two days after the test). In another case they were asked to describe their feelings at seeing a Colorado desert storm. (Is that like watching smoke belching from the asthma-producing Mott Haven toxic waste incinerator?)

*The purpose of such standardized tests is not to measure achievement but to enforce exclusion*, from four-year college, from high school and now even from junior high. After all, there’s no point in having the tests unless someone fails, and guess who that will be. Unionized teachers should ally with parents to *denounce the racist discrimination of high-stakes standardized testing*. Instead, beginning with their long-time leader Al Shanker, the UFT and AFT have supported the fraud of “standards-based” educational reform as they march in lock-step with the Department of Education and the “business community.”

### Forced “Americanization”

A second element of current “reform” plans is *forced “Americanization”* of immigrant students. U.S. capitalism has attracted millions of immigrants, both legal and “illegal,” from Latin America, Asia and Africa to provide low-wage labor. This immigration boom has meant that in New York City, a majority of students are foreign-born or come from first-generation immigrant families, where in most cases English is not spoken at home. While the bosses are eager to gouge workers by paying minimum and sub-minimum wages, they are worried about their ability to control millions of oppressed and exploited immigrants. Hence the “crisis” over bilingual education.

This is a totally manufactured issue. Immigrant adults and children are eager to learn English – the real problem is lack of space in courses. Only 16 percent of NYC students are enrolled in ESL (English as a second language) or bilingual classes. Those who do go through the program score *better* on standardized tests than non-native speakers who are dumped into general classes without preparation. The enthusiasm of Giuliani and other racists for sink-or-swim “total immersion” programs is purely political. In addition to denying essential social services to “illegal” immigrants, they want to break any “foreign” cultural ties. Instead of bowing to this xenophobia, the union should *defend bilingual education against racist attacks* and demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*.

### Militarization

Along with the criminalization of minority youth goes an increasing *militarization of the schools*, particularly ghetto schools. Already police infest New York City schools, and Giuliani is pushing for the cops to take over discipline so they can carry out arrests inside the school buildings. Around the country, schools are doling out behavioral pills like Ritalin to drug undisciplined kids into submission, based on dubious

diagnoses of "attention deficit disorder." Pseudo-psychological categorizations are used to classify hundreds of thousands of troublesome youth, overwhelmingly racial minorities, as "special education" cases to be removed from the classroom.

And long before the current "security" frenzy, following the 1992 Los Angeles upheaval, General Colin Powell, then head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, now U.S. secretary of state and a multimillionaire who sat on the boards of several leading defense contractors, set in motion a massive expansion of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps in urban high schools. The purpose of the JROTC program is to put inner-city youth into uniform and get them used to barracks discipline. They are being trained to be cannon fodder in a future war. Any union worth its salt would demand *cops and military out of the schools*.

### Privatization

The centerpiece of the current reforms is *privatization of school operation and corporate control of the public schools*. Bush's "voucher" plan may play well with the Christian Coalition, but the vast majority of students would remain in the public schools. The corporation chiefs understand this, so their thrust is to take more direct control of the "public" school system. This is symbolized by the naming of Harold Levy, an executive of the Citigroup investment firm with no educational experience, as chancellor of the New York City school system, the largest in the country. (Board of Education member Terri Thomson also works for Citigroup.)

Meanwhile, the new superintendent of the second-largest public school system, the Los Angeles Unified School District, is former Colorado governor Roy Romer. The head of the San Diego schools is the former U.S. attorney for the area. The Chicago school schools "chief executive officer" is the former budget director in Mayor Richard Daley's administration. In all cases, these businessmen, politicians and prosecutor were backed by business interests, and in all cases they have gone after the teachers unions.

Then there is the Edison Corporation headed by Benno Schmidt, the conservative former Yale president, Giuliani pal and executor of the racist purge of CUNY (see *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999). Edison and similar outfits see the public education system as a promising new "profit platform," just like health care was a few years ago. (They refer to themselves as "education management organizations," or EMOs analogous to HMOs.)

Edison proposes to make millions by milking federal, state and local education budgets, just like defense contractors do with the Pentagon budget. But while it may promise more bang for the educational buck, its delivery vehicles have never lifted off. In New York, the Edison operation blew up on the launching pad. While Levy went through the motions, opponents actively organized. Parents in Harlem, Crotona Park, Flatbush, Crown Heights and Bushwick understood that their children were going to get short-changed to fill Edison's coffers. When the Board of Ed finally revealed the results, more than 80 percent of those who voted said no to privatization.

***Public school privatization under any guise is a racist,***

***union-busting plot.*** The "charter schools" favored by the Clintonites are at best "privatization lite." Like Edison they rip up union contracts, pay teachers miserable wages (resulting in high turnover), have high-handed administrations, select their students to jack up test scores, and frequently foster a boot-camp atmosphere.

### Union-Busting

While there are many variations, the common thread to these schemes is the idea of "contracting out" public education. And just like "out-sourcing" by manufacturers, the central target is the union. This is made crystal clear by a RAND Corporation monograph by Paul Hill titled *Reinventing Public Education* (1995) produced in conjunction with the Chicago school "reform" plan. Hill writes:

"Teachers will become independent professionals selling their services to schools. Unions will become brokers who help match teachers and schools...."

"Crippling teacher strikes are possible, but not inevitable. Properly introduced, contracting can gain widespread teacher support and isolate intransigent local union leaders and senior teachers who cannot or will not produce excellent work to justify high pay."

Charter schools, EMOs, merit pay (see back page) are all thinly disguised schemes to break the power of teachers unions and run the schools according to the latest "market standards." A century ago, Lancasterian schools reproduced the life of a factory. Today staffing agencies lobby in Albany for the Workforce Investment Act to expand adult education to train...*temps*.

The RAND study was supported by the Lilly Foundation, which is part of a web of conservative and far-right outfits including the Bechtel Foundation, Adolph Coors Foundation, Pew Freedom Trust, Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, Olin Foundation, Manhattan Institute and Hudson Institute who are funding and planning to privatize and corporatize the "public" schools. Together with IBM, Xerox et al. they have drawn up designs for "break-the-mold" schools, "New American Schools" and the like.

### "Right Thinking" and Racism

In these schools they will indoctrinate students with right-thinking lessons. Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education in the Bush Sr. administration and one of the most prominent "theoreticians" of the anti-"progressive education" movement, was asked at a 1996 Toronto meeting on the history of education how standards would be set for history teaching. Her response: "I want the right attitudes developed by history instruction" (from Joel Spring, *Political Agendas for Education* [1997]). You can bet your bottom dollar that "right attitudes" does not include a teacher presenting a rigorous and sympathetic analysis of Marxism.

Or of any other movement of the exploited and oppressed for that matter. For these would-be reinventers of the public schools are racist to the core. This is the same crowd that has opposed affirmative action to diversify the student body of law schools or medical schools, and pushed through the elimination

of open admissions at New York's City University. These are the forces that sank the "Rainbow Curriculum" in the NYC public schools for being "soft on homosexuality."

The reactionary "reformers" and their right-wing financiers are also the backers and colleagues of Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, whose book *The Bell Curve* (1994) purports to provide statistical proof of inherited intelligence and the alleged inferiority of the lower orders. Herrnstein's "research" was supported by the Pioneer Fund, set up in 1937 by an admirer of Hitler's "eugenics" (racial "cleansing"). *The Bell Curve* was also financed by the Manhattan Institute, which acts as a Giuliani think tank, with Ravitch and Schmidt among its senior fellows.

This right-wing coterie has managed to drive out tens of thousands of black, Latino and immigrant students from colleges and universities in the name of enforcing "standards." Now they are trying to do the same in the high schools. They are trying to whip up an anti-immigrant backlash, they want to regiment secondary education and their immediate target is the teachers union.

Again, the same themes of the Reagan/Bush "neo-conservatives" are repeated by the Clinton/Gore "New Democrats," who also talk of "reinventing public education," who pushed through a bipartisan welfare "reform" bill, as well as the 1994 "Effective Death Penalty and Terrorism Act," the 1996 immigration "reform" and countless other reactionary measures. Reflecting their ties to the Democratic Party and their unbreakable loyalty to capitalism, the UFT/AFT leaders go along with the privatizing onslaught, at most dragging their heels.

So long as teachers fight only for the most limited aims in the framework of pro-capitalist "business unionism," so long as each sector of the oppressed fights only for narrowly defined sectoral interests, they will fail in the face of a bourgeois front stretching from Levy and Giuliani to Clinton and Bush and backed by leading corporations. But a struggle that takes up the cause of all workers, oppressed racial and ethnic groups, immigrants and the poor has vastly greater power than the capitalists, their politicians and their state.

### UFT/AFT Tops in the Service of Imperialism

The UFT in New York and the AFT nationally are run by a deeply entrenched bureaucracy irrevocably wedded to American capitalism. So much so, in fact, that when it comes to a direct conflict between the interests of capital and labor, the Shankerite bureaucrats of the AFT/UFT invariably defend the bosses. That is, after all, the role of the labor aristocracy that socialist Daniel De Leon described at the turn of the last century as the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.

The RAND Corporation, champion of "market-driven educational reform," cites as an example of "national union leaders [who] have anticipated such changes" a 1990 article by Al Shanker, "A Proposal for Using Incentives to Restructure Our Public Schools." Who can be surprised, then, when Shankerites Sandy Feldman and Randi Weingarten come out for "school-based" merit pay?

Many thousands of dedicated, anti-racist teachers desire to aid their students in gaining access to the accumulated knowledge of bourgeois society. By and large they seek "edu-

ational reform," but of a "progressive" sort counterposed to the blatantly *regressive* policies now being pushed from Washington and Wall Street. Yet they fight the capitalist offensive piecemeal, denouncing the "prison-industrial complex," "zero tolerance policies," "Eurocentric curriculum" and the like when these are only aspects of the overall capitalist society in this period of imperialist decay.

It has been widely reported that in the decade from 1988 to 1998, New York State spent \$761 million on prisons while its spending on public universities declined by \$615 million (and tuition doubled). This is presented as a matter of legislative spending priorities in Albany. The implicit program is the reformist "butter or guns," as German Social Democrats put it before World War I. But jails instead of schools is not a matter of budget "reallocation," it reflects the class interests of the bourgeoisie.

The AFT/UFT leadership proclaims itself a "partner" with its business and government "allies" in formulating the program of the bourgeoisie. In exchange for a "place at the table," they are more than willing to do the dirty work for their imperialist masters. A pamphlet by George Schmidt, *The American Federation of Teachers and the CIA* (1978) details how Al Shanker and his fellow Cold Warriors of Social Democrats U.S.A. (SDUSA) were deeply involved in union-busting operations by the U.S. spy agency even before taking the helm of the AFT.

Schmidt notes in particular the work of former AFT International Affairs secretary Denise Thiery, which "included cooperation with the U.S. government in the coup d'etat that overthrew the Allende government in Chile in 1973." The staff of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department and the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), which acted as an arm of the Central Intelligence Agency in Latin America, was shot through with SDUSAers.

The Shanker regime was braintrusted by Max Shachtman, a renegade from Trotskyism who broke from the Fourth International in refusing to defend the Soviet Union in World War II. Shachtman subsequently went over to open support to U.S. imperialism, in the Korean War, the Bay of Pigs and the Vietnam War. Shanker hired Shachtman's wife, Yetta Barsh, as his administrative assistant in the early 1960s, and she in turn promoted SDUSAer Sandra Feldman, who eventually took over the New York operation.

Providing "socialist" cover for the dirtiest U.S. government operations, the SDUSA's paper *New America*, edited by Feldman's then-husband Paul, featured Jonas Savimbi, Angolan front man for the CIA and apartheid South Africa.

The high point of the AFT's counterrevolutionary services to American imperialism came in 1981, when the anti-Soviet Polish "union" Solidarnosc set up a U.S. office in UFT headquarters on Park Avenue South. Lech Walesa's outfit was bankrolled by the CIA via the AFL-CIO to the tune of millions of dollars. When Trotskyists picketed the Solidarnosc press conference in September 1981, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an editorial on "Communists and the AFL-CIO" threatening: "They should not be allowed to do so easily."

That the Shanker bureaucracy aggressively defended U.S. imperialism abroad was fully in keeping with its role at home.

This directly and grievously damaged the interests of teachers, notably in the 1968 teachers strike. That walkout was provoked by liberal Republican mayor John Lindsay, who embraced a "community control" scheme pushed by McGeorge Bundy, the Democratic Vietnam War architect who had gone on to head the Ford Foundation. Shanker's railing against "mob rule" and "extremism" fed into the provocation, as did his appeal to Governor Rockefeller, who was behind the "community control" scheme, and his calls for protection by the racist cops.

The immediate cause of the '68 strike was the firing of a number of local union officials by the black superintendent of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district. When 250 teachers walked out in protest, they were transferred and non-union scabs hired. While virtually the entire left (including the Communist Party, Progressive Labor Party and International Socialists) opposed the strike and actively supported scabbing, Trotskyists defended the UFT strike against this blatant union-busting attack. But Shanker's propaganda catering to conservative and racist fears grievously inflamed the division between the union and black working people, to the delight of the ruling class.

### Fight for Socialist Revolution to Emancipate All the Oppressed!

The Shankerite brand of business unionism, "professionalism," virulent anti-communism and aggressive insensitivity to the concerns and interests of black people and other oppressed groups is based on identification with imperialism. Today, *the AFT/UFT bureaucracy is the biggest obstacle* to waging the sharp fight needed to defeat the capitalist onslaught against teachers and working-class, minority and immigrant students.

New York City teachers have been working for six months without a contract. Weingarten's "Unity" team refuses to go up against Giuliani, who cultivates a mad dog image the way Nixon used to, and they didn't want to cause problems for Democrats Clinton and Gore in the 2000 elections. Now the 2001 municipal elections are under way, and the UFT tops parade Democratic candidates through the delegates assembly while short-circuiting discussion on merit pay.

As they gear up to get a contract from Giuliani by the end of the school year, they pass out armbands saying "No contract, No respect." What is that supposed to mean? We say, *"No contract, no work!" To defeat Giuliani & Co. it will take a strike.* And it can't be a walk-through, but an all-out knock-down, drag-out class battle. To win such a battle requires a class-struggle leadership that has the program and determination to mobilize the power of all labor and the oppressed to fight a ruthless enemy. Instead, various phony leftists in mildly "opposition" caucuses raise only limited contract demands.

Following in the footsteps of her predecessors Feldman and Shanker, Weingarten's program of business (as usual) unionism and virulent anti-communism has meant that the UFT has gone along with anti-labor "reforms" from charter schools to high-stakes testing and now the introductory form of "merit pay." Last time around, Weingarten rammed through a Giuliani

two-year wage freeze by ordering a revote when the UFT membership voted it down the first time around. (Many of her cohorts in the Municipal Labor Council were even cruder, simply falsifying the ballots to secure their sellout deals.)

To prepare for the kind of powerful strike action that is needed, the UFT needs an *elected union-wide mass strike committee*, with strike organizing committees elected by the teachers in every facility. Beyond organizational preparations for a solid strike, teachers must wage this fight by allying with doubly oppressed black, Latino and immigrant working people against the common enemy. You can't defeat the wage gougers in City Hall and fight for quality education without dealing with the racist cop terror that minority students and youth face on the streets.

The teachers union should be in the forefront of *mobilizing workers power against the killer cops who murdered Amadou Diallo* and scores of other young people. Instead, as head of the Municipal Labor Coalition (which includes the cops' PBA), Weingarten hobnobs with detectives association chief Tom Scotto. We say: *cops out – the bosses' gunmen are the enemies of labor, minorities and all working people!*

Every day teachers confront the all-sided oppression of this capitalist society. No real struggle can be waged without taking this on. Teachers and all labor must *fight the racist "workfare" system, organizing WEP workers into the unions with full pay and benefits.* The fight against women's oppression must include demanding free, 24-hour child care at school sites, which would benefit both teachers and parents.

Above all it is necessary to forge a *multiracial revolutionary workers party* by breaking the chains that bind labor and the oppressed to the capitalist parties, principally the Democrats who falsely pose as "friends of labor." That means raising a class program that goes well beyond simple trade-union demands to fight for a *workers government* and *international socialist revolution.*

Just as the bankruptcy of "business unionism" becomes manifest in a period when the bosses are ripping up union gains, a century of movements for "education reform" have repeatedly run up against the limits of capitalism. Virtually every reform has been tried – progressive schools, free schools, whole schools, no schools – to no avail. After decades of decrying "chalk and talk" – teachers standing before a blackboard and lecturing – the new "reforms" amount to "grill and drill" for standardized tests.

As Jonathan Kozol noted in *Savage Inequalities*: "Liberal critics of the Reagan era sometimes note that social policy in the United States, to the extent that it concerns black children and poor children, has been turned back several decades.... In public schooling, social policy has been turned back almost one hundred years." To put it another way, capitalism is in decay.

The fundamental reality was pointed out by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels over a century and a half ago:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The

class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production....”

—*The German Ideology* (1847)

To fundamentally remake education in the interests of the working people and oppressed requires the overthrow of the capitalist system it presently serves and a socialist reconstruction of society on an international scale. Only in that way will the institutions and ideas of the present ruling class, which serve to justify exploitation and misery, be replaced by a truly liberating education that is not confined to the classroom but permeates social life and productive labor.

This is the program of the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International. ■

## Daewoo Workers...

*continued from page 15*

the International Monetary Fund, it has chosen to give the “sacrifices” to the working class while allowing the *chaebol* monopolists like Kim Wu-chung to continue enjoying the banks’ largesse. It has “chosen” to give Korean workers the highest accident rate, the longest hours and the lowest minimum wage among industrialized countries, and it is extending these “choices” to workers in the public sector through a huge privatization program. Kim Dae-jung figures he can get away with this, confident that workers will still consider him a “lesser evil” compared to the opposition, with its ties to the former dictatorship. But for workers at Pupyong — and at Daewoo plants in Poland and Uzbekistan — these layoffs are a death sentence.

This working class, which brought South Korean military dictatorships to their knees twice in half a century, will not lie down and die. But labor militancy, even when carried out with molotov cocktails, is not enough. Hard lessons need to be learned. It is not just the government that is the destroyer of jobs and livelihoods; every bourgeois political party in the country is responsible, from the “Greens” with their protectionist calls, to the “People’s Campaign for Participatory Democracy” with its “blacklist” of opposition candidates (backhanded support to Kim Dae-jung). The KCTU front “party,” the Democratic Labor Party, has entered a coalition with these bourgeois groups, binding the workers to their class enemy.

But the struggle against layoffs poses in the sharpest manner the need to break with all the bourgeois parties and coalitions and to forge a revolutionary workers party. South Korea has been the scene of some of the sharpest labor battles in recent years, with an almost unbroken series of struggles since the January 1997 general strike (see “Nationwide Strike Shakes South Korea,” *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997). Yet despite this economic militancy, a reflection of the severity of the capitalist crisis, the South Korean working class has yet to achieve political independence from the bourgeoisie. Following the collapse of the Stalinist-ruled, bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states in the Soviet Union and East Europe, reformist leftists are abandoning even the forms of a workers party. Militant unionism has become the new “minimum program” of these erstwhile “socialists.”

And that program in no way challenges the capitalist order. For example, there is the widespread denunciation of “the regime’s neoliberal ‘reforms,’” and calls to “nationalize Daewoo Motors.” This comes from a group called Power of the Working Class (Preparatory Committee), but it could have been any number of left groups. But the economic crisis is not a result of a “neoliberal” recipe in Seoul which could be replaced by another policy, but of the dictates of international finance capital. And nationalizing one debt-ridden monopoly is not a step toward socialism but can be a means for the bourgeoisie to socialize its losses, thus preventing a major bankruptcy from bringing down the interconnected *chaebols* like a house of cards. In fact, nationalization of Daewoo is only an incremental step from the government’s previous policy of subsidizing it (and other conglomerates) through massive bank loans.

This call is similar to the appeals to nationalize Chrysler in 1979 when the No. 3 U.S. auto company was on the brink of collapse, which would have been a way of keeping the American auto industry afloat as it faced the oil price shock and heavy Japanese competition. A good example of how nationalization can be a *pro-capitalist* measure was the 1982 state takeover of Mexico’s banks, which prevented a wholesale collapse of the financial industry in the wake of the “debt bomb.” Rather than the social-democratic “ashcan socialism” of nationalizing bankrupt firms, revolutionary Trotskyists insist that what is needed is the *expropriation, without compensation, of all the chaebols*, and point out that this can only be carried out by a revolutionary workers government.

At the same time, class-struggle unionists should seize the books of the conglomerates to open them to workers inspection. Facing mounting unemployment, they should fight for a sliding scale of wages and hours, to provide jobs for all. They must also take up directly political issues. With almost 40,000 U.S. troops in the southern half of the Korean peninsula, revolutionary workers must demand the removal of all U.S. bases and troops, troops which the North Korean Stalinists now say they accept. Korean workers do not accept them! They will not have the likes of Corporal Christopher McCarthy, who murdered a Korean “bar girl” a year ago and whose outrageously lenient six-year sentence was confirmed by the Korean Supreme Court on the day the Daewoo struggle erupted.

A key question facing the Korean working class today is that of unification of the country. But not a reunification that leads to South Korean exploitation of cheap North Korean labor and drives down living and working conditions throughout the peninsula. What is needed is *revolutionary reunification*, through a social revolution against capitalism in the South and a political revolution to throw out the peculiarly dynastic Stalinist bureaucracy in the north which is now opening the door to capitalist restoration. But that requires the leadership of a genuinely communist party, a Trotskyist party forged on the program of international socialist revolution and in struggle against all varieties of nationalism.

For workers across the Korean peninsula, from the hunger-stricken North to the layoff-riddled factories of the South, building that party is the central task. ■

## Free Mumia Abu-Jamal...

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down an entire city block of 61 homes. (Perhaps Williams and other liberals don't find that believable either, or dismiss it as "collateral damage" like U.S. bombing of civilian targets from Baghdad to Belgrade.) Through all this time, Mumia has been a prime target of the cops' vendetta.

Mumia was convicted in a rigged trial presided over by Hanging Judge Sabo, an honorary member of the Fraternal Order of Police, who sent more men to death than any other sitting judge in the country. Philadelphia's rulers are determined to silence the "voice of the voiceless," isolating him in solitary confinement, spying on his confidential correspondence with his attorneys, even preventing his voice from being heard on national "public" radio. There is no justice for the oppressed in the capitalist courts, and certainly not for an avowed black revolutionary. With the force of the capitalist state geared up to murder Mumia, it is necessary to mobilize an even more powerful force to stop it!

That force is the organized workers movement, whose industrial strength gives it the power to shut down this country. Allied with the black ghettos and Latino barrios, workers' power must be brought to bear to bring the state murder machine to a grinding halt. Going back to the fight against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927 and the struggle which saved black youth in Scottsboro from the executioner in the early 1930s, communists have fought to organize *workers mobilizations against the death penalty*. This is what is necessary today as well.

Mumia's cause has been endorsed by organizations representing millions of workers worldwide, from South Africa to France and Brazil. The workers movement in the United States has a special duty to take up the fight for Mumia's freedom and translate this into powerful labor action. Dock workers, municipal workers, transit workers, teachers – the integrated labor movement as a whole must use the strike weapon and other forms of workers action to free this courageous fighter against capitalist exploitation and oppression.

The April 1999 work stoppages by West Coast longshoremen and by Brazilian teachers in the state of Rio de Janeiro point the way toward the kind of massive workers action necessary. But they are only a first step. The fight for Mumia's freedom must infuse every struggle today, from defense of the Charleston Five longshoremen, targeted for resisting union-busting, to defense of the embattled black population in Cincinnati. The fight to free Mumia must be at the forefront of the fight for labor rights and against black oppression in America.

### **Beverly: "I Shot Faulkner"**

Arnold Beverly says in his affidavit, dated 8 June 1999, that he had "personal knowledge that Mumia Abu-Jamal did not shoot police officer Faulkner," because "I [Beverly] shot Faulkner in the face at close range." Beverly says he was "hired, along with another guy, and paid to shoot and kill Faulkner," who was "a problem for the mob and corrupt policemen because he interfered with the graft and payoffs...." Beverly said he was shown a photo of Faulkner before the shooting, that two had been hired so that either could "make the hit," that they waited at 13th and Locust for Faulkner to show up aware that there were undercover cops on the scene, and that he escaped through the

speedline (subway) system and was met by a cop by pre-arrangement three blocks away where a getaway car was waiting.

Beverly's testimony buttresses that of eye-witnesses such as William Singletary, who saw the whole incident and has testified that Jamal was not the shooter, as well as Veronica Jones, who had been forced by police threats in 1982 to retract on the stand her original statement that she saw two people running from the scene. In 1996, Jones bravely came forward to testify on Jamal's behalf. But when she came into Sabo's court, after two hours of browbeating by the prosecutor, Veronica was dragged from the stand and arrested on an old out-of-state warrant.

Beverly's confession that he killed Daniel Faulkner has been available since June 1999. It was squelched by Mumia's lawyers Weinglass and Williams, and led to the resignation of Rachel Wolkenstein of the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) and her associate Jon Piper from Mumia's legal team. Now Williams has published a vile, dishonest and transparently self-serving account trying to further his career at the expense of his own client. Williams writes of his efforts to quash Singletary's and then Beverly's testimony, using language that is now being echoed by the D.A.

Williams writes in *Executing Justice* that Mumia's lead counsel, Weinglass, "ultimately agreed with my preeminent concern – namely that our *credibility* as lawyers would suffer." Credibility with whom? The judge? The prosecutors? The FOP? Williams says that he and Weinglass "adhered to the view that Mumia was innocent," but they "understood that they couldn't expect a judge to share that view, or even be sympathetic with it."

Williams made his choice. He recounts that at the 1995 appeal, prosecutor "Joey" Grant and "some of the detectives pulled me aside in the hallway during one of the breaks in the proceedings and chided me that I was still young enough to salvage my otherwise promising career as a trial lawyer if only I would cross over that great divide and fight on the side of the angels."

In the acknowledgments to the book, Williams also says "I owe thanks to Gerald Nicosia, a San Francisco writer with whom I have spent many hours reflecting upon this case." When Williams was removed as attorney for his blatantly unethical behavior, Nicosia called a press conference featuring Joseph McGill, the Philadelphia prosecutor during the original frame-up trial, along with prosecutors Hugh Burns and "Joey" Grant!

### **Mumia Is Innocent – Free Him Now!**

At the beginning of *Executing Justice*, Williams says that, "Because I am a lawyer for the defendant, it would be expected that I would proclaim my client's innocence." But in his book, he claims that "assertions by others that Mumia is innocent" reflect "an ideological stance," and he systematically tries to undercut the evidence. As a card-carrying pusillanimous liberal, Williams' theme is *ambiguity*, from the introduction ("The Problem of Ambiguity") to the final chapter ("Ambiguity Revisited"). He pontificates, "definitive answers to social problems and dilemmas do not exist." But his studied "ambiguity" is in the service of the bourgeoisie.

Williams writes "I marvel at just how much the hard-line anti-Mumia forces and the hard-line pro-Mumia forces have in common," as both "continue to pursue story lines of good versus evil that are profoundly ideologically driven." Cops and prosecutors might "jump to a conclusion about Mumia's guilt," he

allows, or even "fabricate evidence to help in the effort to convict a man they believed to be guilty." But to argue that "law enforcement" had engaged in a "knowing frame up of an innocent man," he opines, could only be the product of "ideological zeal"! So according to Mr. End-of-Ideology, J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO war on the Black Panther Party, which continues in the persecution of Jamal, was a figment of the imagination.

*This is a classic, and sinister, case of liberal anti-communism. Williams is eager to feather his nest by demonstrating his "faith" in capitalist justice and sacrificing his client.* He particularly goes after Rachel Wolkenstein and the Partisan Defense Committee, the defense organization associated with the Spartacist League. Their "ardent advocacy" for Mumia reminded him of "the Communists in the United States who trumpeted the Scottsboro Boys case" in the 1930s. The Communist Party, even under Stalinist degeneration, played an important road in helping to save the framed-up black youth from legal lynching. This led to a split with the anti-communist NAACP, which waged a vicious red-baiting attack on the CP. But Williams goes a step further and is actively undercutting his former client's legal case!

While vituperating against the "anachronistic rhetoric" of the PDC, he says that "other political groups, recognizing the need to broaden the base of support," were opposed to the "hard-line pro-Mumia perspective" and willing to "take an agnostic view of the guilt-innocence question," by calling for a new trial. Now Williams' attack on "hard-liners" is being used by the lynchers. The prosecutors are using Williams' and Weinglass' rejection of the Beverly evidence to claim that "even his defense team thought it was crazy" (*Philadelphia Daily*

*News*, 8 May)! Here we see Williams praising the "reasonable" reformists, while their "agnostic" position is being used to drive the nails into Mumia's living body.

### No Justice for the Oppressed in the Capitalist Courts

The Internationalist Group calls to "Mobilize Workers' Power to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!" We have sought to carry out this program by fighting for workers strike action for freeing Mumia; our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil sparked work stoppages in 1999 for Jamal's freedom. We have repeatedly warned that the "new trial" slogan is based on faith in the capitalist system, serving the opportunist left as a vehicle for joining with Democratic Party liberals. Yet it was Democratic president Clinton who vastly expanded the death penalty in federal courts, practically eliminated the right to *habeas corpus* appeals, and put 150,000 more killer cops on the streets to terrorize America's inner cities.

While the clock is ticking on Mumia's life, the "new trial" crowd is continuing with their popular-front antics, appealing to liberal consciousness with their lowest-common-denominator politics. Workers World holds a "Camp Mumia," appealing to every "constituency" but the working class, and barely mentioning the new evidence. The International Socialist Organization campaigns for a "moratorium" on executions (not abolition of the death penalty). *Socialist Action* (April 2001) goes so far as to grotesquely repeat Williams' arguments dismissing "mobsters" (i.e., Beverly's affidavit), saying "the defense team and Mumia rejected it." Socialist Action leader Jeff Mackler also revealed that he, too, had been talking with the pro-cop apologist Gerald Nicosia, supplying him with a complete set of the trial and appeal transcripts.

For revolutionaries the crucial battle is not in the capitalist courts but in the streets. At the same time, it is crucial to use the new evidence showing that someone else was the shooter. The Beverly confession points to the rampant police corruption, fraud and double-dealing in Philadelphia under cop chief and later mayor Frank Rizzo and his successors. Wholesale frame-ups, fabrication of evidence and racist jury-rigging have long been their stock in trade. Philly cops are so notorious that two different federal investigations, first in the late 1970s and again in the '90s, led to the overturning of *thousands* of convictions. Today reports of cop corruption continue to spill out in the press, with new scandals almost daily. The liberals and reformists find the evidence of a frame-up and Mumia's innocence "incredible" because at bottom they support the capitalist system, only trying to "clean it up."

It is more urgent than ever to mobilize the power of the working class to free Mumia and abolish the death penalty. But the death penalty in the U.S. is rooted in the racist heritage of slavery and black oppression that is the bedrock of American capitalism. It is not just a "prison-industrial complex" or a "military-industrial complex": the rule of a tiny bourgeois class over the mass of working people and poor whose toil produces their riches requires the machinery of state murder, just as surely as it produces economic crises and imperialist war. The fight against the death penalty must be part of a struggle to forge a revolutionary workers party that can sweep away the barbaric death penalty and hellish prisons by abolishing the capitalist system they defend, through international socialist revolution. ■

### SL Zigzags on Port Shutdown for Mumia's Freedom

More than a few readers of the Spartacist League's *Workers Vanguard* (25 May) did a double-take on reading a front-page article on important developments in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The article states, "The April 1999 stopwork by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) did point to the sort of powerful labor action needed to strike a giant blow against the capitalist frame-up system." Quite true, but quite a change of tune for the paper that spent the last two years deriding the ILWU action that shut down all West Coast ports for ten hours explicitly demanding freedom for Jamal. Before the action *WV* claimed it was nothing more than a "two-hour" union meeting; later it pretended the stoppage was merely "regular monthly union meetings" and denounced those who "tout[ed] these as 'work stoppages'."

While the SL has been all over the map on the longshoremen's action, they have never said a word about the work stoppages for Mumia's freedom by the Brazilian teachers union in the state of Rio de Janeiro the day before the ILWU port shutdown. Six months later the Rio CUT labor federation, bank workers and teachers made freedom for Jamal an official demand in demonstrations, work actions and a state-wide strike. This is still a taboo topic in *WV*, since it was sparked by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. Whether talking out of both sides of its mouth or clammung up, in the course of its recent centrist zigzags the SL has done next to nothing to organize labor action for Mumia, including where they have supporters in the unions. *WV* can talk the talk of workers mobilization, but for them this is just words. Such unserious posturing is an obstacle to a struggle to bring out the power of the working class to free this heroic class war prisoner on death row.

**Dramatic New Evidence of Jamal's Innocence**

# Mobilize Workers' Power Now to Free Mumia!

We are at a crucial moment in the fight to save the life and win the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The most prominent political prisoner on Death Row, Jamal has become the central focus of the struggle against the racist death penalty around the globe. A former Black Panther in Philadelphia and internationally renowned radical journalist, Mumia was framed for the murder of a Philly cop in December 1981. In jail for the past 20 years, Mumia is now living under a precarious second stay of execution, awaiting the decision of a federal judge on his appeal.



Mumia Abu-Jamal

© Lou Jones

Judge William Yohn has been considering

Jamal's appeal for more than a year and a half, since October 1999. Now George Bush is in the White House – the man known as “Governor Death,” who carried out more than 150 executions during his tenure in the Texas state house. But as both Republican conservatives and Democratic liberals continue to back *legalized state murder*, public support for the death penalty has been dropping as more and more cases are uncovered of innocent prisoners condemned to die.

As a showdown battle looms over legal lynching, there are dramatic new developments in Jamal's case. On March 1, Mumia fired his attorneys, Leonard Weinglass and Daniel Williams, because of a flagrant conflict of interest and breach of client loyalty. Williams recently published a so-called “insider account” of the case (*Executing Justice*) in which he stabs Mumia in the back and tries to smear those who demand Jamal be freed (rather than just call for a “new trial”). Williams wants to build his reputation as a “credible” death penalty lawyer, and the consequences for Mumia be damned.

Two months later Mumia's new legal team, including lead attorney Marlene Kamish and Eliot Grossman, released three blockbuster affidavits that blow the lid off the state's frame-up case. In the first, Mumia emphatically declares his innocence, explains in detail what happened to him on the night of 9 December 1981, repeats that he was denied the right to testify on

his own behalf in the 1982 trial, and states that Weinglass told him not to testify in his 1995 appeal. A second affidavit by Mumia's brother Billy Cook provides additional information of what happened on the fateful night. *The third affidavit was submitted by one Arnold Beverly, who says he killed cop Daniel Faulkner.*

Beverly says he was hired as a hit man by the mob, who along with some Philly cops wanted to get rid of Faulkner in order to protect their prostitution, gambling and drug rackets in Philadelphia's Center City. Now that his confession is public, the Philadelphia district attorney's office has

been scrambling to keep Arnold Beverly from being deposed, including leaking anonymous reports that he had failed two lie detector tests. Yet Mumia's new lawyers have now released the expert report showing that Beverly passed a polygraph test in 1999 when he first came forward with his confession.

As the clock is ticking on his life, it is urgent to redouble efforts to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. The frame-up and railroading of Mumia was no aberration but standard operating procedure in this system of racist capitalist injustice. Mumia was sentenced to death because of his revolutionary convictions. He was on the Philly cops' hit list ever since being a spokesman for the Black Panther Party as a teenager. The photos of Philly cops besieging Panther headquarters in 1970, forcing them to strip and displaying these naked black men in the streets of the city, exposed the reality of racist American capitalism from its origins in the slave auctions to the lynch mobs of the Jim Crow South and the cop executions in the Northern ghettos.

From his days as a Panther, Mumia's crusading voice spoke out against the corruption and brutality of Philadelphia justice, culminating in his defense of MOVE, the black commune whose members were jailed after the murderous Powelton Village cop siege of 1978 and which was obliterated in the Mothers Day 1985 police fire-bombing of the MOVE house, burning

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