

## Clinton, Pope Bless Popular Front Election Victory

# Left Face of Capitalist Austerity in Italy

### Forge a Trotskyist Party!

The April 21 Italian parliamentary elections were won by a coalition dominated by the social-democratic Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), one of the successors to the Communist Party (PCI). This marks the end of 50 years of exclusion of the "left" from national government, a Cold War prohibition engineered by Washington and the Vatican, and sustained by an elaborate system of organized corruption. The center-left Olive Tree (Ulivo) alliance defeated the right-wing "Pole of Freedom" coalition, winning control of the Senate and a strong plurality in the Chamber of Deputies. In addition, the reformist Rifondazione Comunista, another remnant of the PCI, while not formally part of the Ulivo coalition, ran in tandem with it and won enough seats to secure a center-left parliamentary majority. We print below an adapted version of an article published by our comrades of the Lega Trotskista d'Italia (Spartaco No. 48, May 1996).

MILANO—With the victory of the Olive Tree alliance in the April 21 elections, the heirs of the Italian Communist Party are participating in an Italian government for the first time since 1947. Financial markets around the world celebrated the election results, for good reason. The day after the Ulivo victory, the Italian lira rose against all other currencies and the stock market gained almost 5 percent. The London *Financial Times*, as well as many other papers of the world of high finance, expressed their satisfaction at the prospects opened up by the electoral results.

The world capitalist markets are jubilant because they are confident that the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), with its organic links to the combative Italian trade unions, can shove austerity measures down the workers' throats. The massive strike wave last year showed that the right-wing government of then prime minister Silvio Berlusconi was in no position to impose cuts in the workers' standard of living. But the capitalist bosses, West European bankers and Washington hope that the workers will take it from the PDS, with the Rifondazione Comunista "loyal opposition" sugarcoating the bitter pill the workers are supposed to swallow.



Baldelli/Contrasto



La Repubblica

"Olive Tree" center-left alliance celebrates election victory (top). Reformist left has supported racist repression against immigrants.

What is shaping up is a betrayal of the class interests of the workers by their reformist leaders, camouflaged by the flying of red flags, recalling what happened at the end of the (World War II

anti-fascist) *Resistenza*, when the PCI persuaded its base, which had power in its grasp in many parts of the country, to turn in their arms. That led to the consolidation of bourgeois rule, the ejec-

tion of the PCI from the government, and the anti-working-class repression of the 1950s.

The new government is coming to power on the basis of its promises to attack the living standards of the population. The working people and the oppressed were the designated victims of both electoral coalitions' programs. "Privatization," "liberalization," "presidentialism"—these were the code words of both the right-wing "Pole of Freedom" and the center-left Olive Tree alliance. They mean boosting profits by increasing the exploitation of the workers and strengthening the power of the state in order to guarantee that the inevitable resistance will be smashed with an iron fist.

The alliance headed by the PDS will now try to implement this program. The Ulivo program, which was distributed throughout Italy as a leaflet, proclaims: "The state must withdraw from the economic sectors in which it is present today. It must give them back to the private banks and the factories.... Competition is valuable." In order to realize this, Ulivo leader Romano Prodi proposes "strengthening the powers of the head of state and the prime minister."

The Olive Tree of Prodi and PDS leader Massimo D'Alema fully adopted as its own the campaign for "morality" demanded by the bourgeoisie and orchestrated by the Vatican. Prodi supported the initiative by the Movement for Life, which not only "condemns" abortion but insists that "Full rights must be recognized for every human from its conception." This is a totally reactionary proposal which, if implemented, would eliminate any possibility of abortion and open the door for the repressive forces of the state to intervene in practically all aspects of the lives of pregnant women under the pretext of "protecting the fetus."

The personal composition of the "left" coalition is unequivocal. There are the recycled ruins of the Christian Democracy, ex-Republican Party corpses, prominent bosses. Prodi, a longtime Christian Democrat, was chosen to lead Ulivo in

*continued on page 8*

Bay Area  
Unions Demand  
Freedom Now  
for Geronimo!  
AFSCME local  
444



## Court Dumps Habeas Corpus Case of Former Black Panther Leader

# Mobilize Labor/Black Power to Free Geronimo!

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Our comrade Jean-Luc Gaillard died on April 27. He was 38 years old. For years he fought Kaposi's sarcoma, a disease linked to the AIDS virus which finally took his life.

The death of this remarkable comrade and friend is a tragic loss. We extend our sympathies to his family and to his companion. Our thoughts are with them as we share in their immense sorrow.

Jean-Luc was a revolutionary cadre, one who was especially loved and respected in the International Communist League and in its French section, the Ligue Trotskyste de France. He joined in 1979; for a number of years he was in charge of the circulation department. Several years ago, he was elected to the Central Committee of the LTF.

Jean-Luc made a point of visiting other sections of the ICL, including attending a national conference of the Spartacist League/U.S. in 1994. Despite his frailty and the dreadful suffering that his disease inflicted on him, he participated in the work and internal debates of our international party with all his will, intelligence and experience up until the end.

Condolences from members of another left group in France spoke of his eagerness to listen to them, understand the scope of their differences and to discuss politics in a professional manner.

On May 1st, the comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste organized a ceremony in Jean-Luc's memory at the Wall of the Communards in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. A memorial will be held in Paris in June and an obituary in the next issue of the LTF's newspaper, *Le Bolchévik*, will review his life and his fight for the liberating ideals of communism.

There is no finer homage that we can render to Jean-



Luc than to carry on with the struggle to which he devoted his life, the construction of the internationalist revolutionary workers party.

The following letter was sent by comrades of the

Prometheus Research Library, the archival facility of the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee, who had worked closely with Jean-Luc over the years.



PROMETHEUS RESEARCH LIBRARY

29 April 1996  
Paris

Dear Comrades and Friends of Jean-Luc,

We send our deepest regards to you as you gather together in loving memory of Comrade Jean-Luc. It is fitting that you stand together on May Day in Père Lachaise to honor our comrade.

Comrade Jean-Luc became an associate of the party library in recognition of the fine work he had done over the years to assist the library's archival work, in particular in obtaining new books. It was also apparent to us, during a visit to Paris, that he cared about the library in the office and concerned himself with its upkeep. Such assistance and concern were indicative of Jean-Luc's appreciation of the importance of history to the communist movement. It is not a dry abstraction, but rather a vital tool for us in our goal to change society. He will be sorely missed.

We salute Jean-Luc, who never wavered from the path to building a better world for the proletariat and oppressed of the world. We stand with you comrades in carrying forward the banner of Communism.

Warm Comradely Greetings  
From All of Us at the Library



TROTSKY

### Trotsky Against the Popular Front

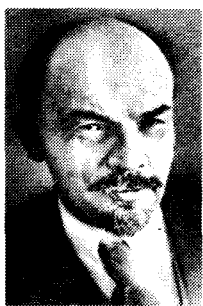
The recent election of a "center-left" coalition government in Italy, linking the offshoots of the former Communist Party (PDS and Rifondazione Comunista) with ex-Christian Democrats, underlines the strategic importance of the popular front in politically subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. Writing at the outset of the Spanish Civil War, in which the People's Front government served to strangle a workers' revolution, Leon Trotsky pointed out that

only by sharp struggle against the popular front of bourgeois Cadets, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries were the Russian Bolsheviks able to take power in October 1917. Today, as various centrists tail after the class-collaborationist alliance in Italy, the International Communist League is unique in our uncompromising fight to build a Trotskyist party in struggle against all parties of the bourgeois popular front.

The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to peddle their wares in the shadow of the People's Front. In reality, the People's Front is the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism. For it is often forgotten that the greatest historical example of the People's Front is the February 1917 revolution. From February to October, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who represent a very good parallel to the "Communists" and Social Democrats, were in the closest alliance and in a permanent coalition with the bourgeois party of the Cadets, together with whom they formed a series of coalition governments. Under the sign of this People's Front stood the whole mass of the people, including the workers', peasants', and soldiers' councils. To be sure, the Bolsheviks participated in the councils. But they did not make the slightest concession to the People's Front. Their demand was to break this People's Front, to destroy the alliance with the Cadets, and to create a genuine workers' and peasants' government.

All the People's Fronts in Europe are only a pale copy and often a caricature of the Russian People's Front of 1917, which could after all lay claim to a much greater justification for its existence, for it was still a question of the struggle against czarism and the remnants of feudalism.

—Leon Trotsky, "The Dutch Section and the International" (July 1936)



LENIN

## Letter

### Marx and the Franco-Prussian War

To the Editor:

Joseph Seymour cites the refusal of Liebknecht and Bebel to vote for war credits during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War as an excellent example of revolutionary socialist conduct (*Workers Vanguard*, 4/12/96).

That may be—but at the time Marx and Engels thought they were wrong to do so. In an August 15, 1870 letter Engels even called them stupid fools for opposing the war.

Kevin Kelley  
San Jose, California

*WV Replies:* The 15 August 1870 letter by Engels cited, but not quoted, by Kevin Kelley does not oppose or criticize the vote against war credits by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel in the Reichstag of the North German Federation. Neither in this letter nor in any other document known to us do Marx and Engels comment one way or the other on the vote over war credits. Nor did Engels call Liebknecht and Bebel "stupid fools" for opposing the war.

Marx and Engels did have a difference with Liebknecht and Bebel over the Franco-Prussian War, or rather during its first phase before the fall of Louis Napoleon, the German army's occupation of northern France and Bismarck's move to

annex Alsace and Lorraine. Kevin Kelley, however, misrepresents, oversimplifies and overstates this episodic difference. During the 1860s, Germany was divided into numerous principalities of which the dominant power was the Kingdom of Prussia. Marx/Engels believed that unification of Germany into a nation-state, even if initially under the hegemony of the Prussian monarchy, was historically progressive as against the status quo. As Engels put it in the aforementioned letter: "If Germany wins, French Bonapartism will at any rate be smashed, the endless row about the establishment of German unity will at last be over, the German workers will be able to organize on a national scale quite different from that prevailing hitherto...." Liebknecht and Bebel, too, supported German unification but only under the political form of a bourgeois-democratic republic whereas Marx/Engels believed that German unification would facilitate the struggle for a democratic republic in the short run and proletarian revolution in the longer run.

In the above letter, Engels summarizes his and Marx's initial position toward the Franco-Prussian War:

"I think our people can:  
"1) join the national movement...insofar and as long as it is limited to the defence

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## "Custody Death Syndrome" Equals Police Terror

# S.F. Teamster Mark Garcia Killed by Racist Cops

SAN FRANCISCO—Less than a week after the nation was horrified by the videotape of Riverside County sheriff's deputies viciously beating Mexican immigrants to the ground with clubs, 41-year-old Mark Garcia died in the heavily Latino Mission District following a violent arrest by no less than 15 cops. The cops claim Garcia was "pants-less and ranting" in broad daylight, and that one of them was hit in the head by a "crack pipe or bottle," even though their official report admits Garcia was yelling "Help

me, help me" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 8 April). They used pepper spray to "subdue" him, cuffed his hands behind his back and then threw him face-down in a police van and took him to the hospital. While in police custody on the way to the hospital, he suffered cardiac arrest. Garcia was declared dead the next morning.

An integrated crowd of over 100 people attended Mark Garcia's April 19 funeral which was paid for by Teamsters Local 85, of which Mark was a member

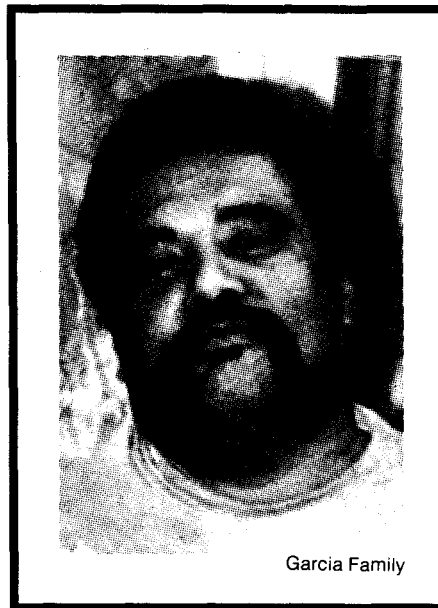
for 15 years. His brother, Daniel Garcia, also a long-time Teamster, thanked the union brothers and sisters for their help. He talked of Mark going to school for and finally getting his Class A trucker's license, and how proud of this he was. Tucked under his trucking license, Mark Garcia had a note reading, "Life is what I make it." But the system of class oppression killed him first.

Since the nationally televised cop beating of Rodney King threw a spotlight on the racist treatment meted out to minorities by the cops, apologists for police terror have invented a new pseudoscientific term to explain away all the dead victims: according to the *San Francisco Examiner* (10 April), "Garcia fit the victim profile for 'sudden custody death syndrome.'" Sure! "Scientific" studies show that if the cops beat the hell out of you after they bust your head, there's a good chance you will die in police custody.

This is only the latest double-talk euphemism for *cop murder*. Back in 1982 they came up with "chokehold syndrome," as former LAPD chief Daryl Gates ranted that black people's arteries were inferior to those of "normal people," to explain why so many died in police chokeholds. After the Rodney King beating, they added "high speed chase syndrome" and "the pink blood effect" as further explanations for "mysterious" deaths in police custody. But there's nothing mysterious about being beaten to death or hanged in cells by racist cops. It's one of the brutal features of living in racist capitalist America.

Pepper spray has replaced the now-banned chokehold. Originally designed to subdue bears in the wild, it acts by constricting the air passages, causing difficulty in breathing. Since 1990, at least 60 in-custody deaths have been linked to pepper spray. According to John Crew of the ACLU, California statistics reveal about one death a month of "suspects" who were hit by the spray while being "subdued" by the cops.

Mark Garcia was the latest in a long string of victims of the racist cops, who were given the green light to go on a



Garcia Family

## "We Stood on the Picket Lines All the Way Through"

Mark Garcia, killed by San Francisco cops on Easter Sunday, was a long-time Teamster from a solid union family. At an April 26 press conference, his family demanded the SFPD release crucial videotape and other information in the "custody death" killing of Mark. These requests have been met by a "blue wall of silence." We print below excerpts from the statement by Daniel Garcia, underlining his brother Mark's union heritage going back to the 1934 SF general strike.

It started with my grandfather. My grandfather was a longshoreman. When they first started with the general strike, he was involved with that. They called in the National Guard to break up the strike. The version of the police is that he was robbed, but the version of the union is that strike-breakers threw him over the bridge and killed him because he was so involved with the labor movement at that time. They thought that he was a threat.

My father has been a union man for a good 10-15 years. My older brother Paul worked out of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters hiring hall. I have my son, Daniel Loyal Garcia Jr., in the Teamsters. So we have three generations in the

Teamsters local.

So our family goes in the labor movement way back into the '30s. My brother Mark, he's been in the union for 15 years, he's the one who brought me in. He's been in many movements with me. When it was the national strike of the freight drivers, my brother and I were involved with the picket lines there. We went to CF, we went to Roadway, we went to Yellow, and we showed our support for our brothers and sisters. We stood on the lines from morning to night, for days on end, straight on through until it ended. I slept on the line and I ate on the line and I picketed on the line. My family, my children and a lot of our members' family and children were on the line, too, to show support.

The freight strike reminded me: I'd never met my grandfather, but I have been told stories by my father and other family about the time that they used to stand around the 50-gallon drums and burn wood to try to stay warm. When they called the National Guard out, my grandfather hated the National Guard because of what happened. He said that people had a right to representation, to good wages, to benefits, and to live like they were raised to live.

# Racist Chicago Cops Execute Deaf Man

CHICAGO—As his horrified mother and grandmother looked on, Eric Smith, a 22-year-old black man, was gunned down by Forest View, Illinois cops on April 10. Eric had been a medal-winning wrestler, first at the Illinois School for the Deaf and then at Gallaudet University, the famed college for deaf people in Washington, D.C. Eric had been a promising student until last October, when the young man saw D.C. cops shoot a black man, and then was himself chased and badly beaten by the thugs in blue for witnessing their street execution. This terrifying experience caused Eric to suffer bouts of depression, ultimately forcing him to withdraw from Gallaudet.

The day of the shooting, Eric, his grandmother and mother were on their way home to Joliet after a counseling session in Chicago when Eric became upset and said he wanted to return to the treatment center. Eric's mother, Wanda Hogue, pulled over to the side of the Stevenson Expressway, the main southwest artery out of Chicago, during rush hour in hope that he would calm down.

A family argument ensued, attracting the attention of a passing police cruiser. Immediately and without warning, the cops grabbed Eric and as he struggled to free himself, the cops barked orders which he could not hear. The cops shot Eric three times in the stomach and chest, then twice in the back, killing him.

In the earlier Washington, D.C. inci-

dent, videotapes show Eric bleeding and swollen in the police station. Eric, who was 6 feet 1 inch tall and weighed 270 pounds, was training to be a wrestling coach after having won several gold and silver medals in the World Games, the equivalent of the Olympics for deaf people, in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1993. Instead, his depression forced him to come back

rampage against minorities by the passage of anti-immigrant Proposition 187 and moves to roll back affirmative action, both pushed by Republican governor Pete Wilson. Clinton's militarization of the Mexican border—called for by California Democratic Senators Feinstein and Boxer—also means terrorizing immigrants through brutal cop beatings and killings.

Last June, Aaron Williams, a 35-year-old black man, died after being arrested by a dozen SF cops. A \$10 million lawsuit filed by his family describes how the cops "threw him to the ground, hog-tied him, beat and kicked him, sprayed pepper gas in his face, and put a hospital mask over his face that kept the spray from dissipating" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 April).

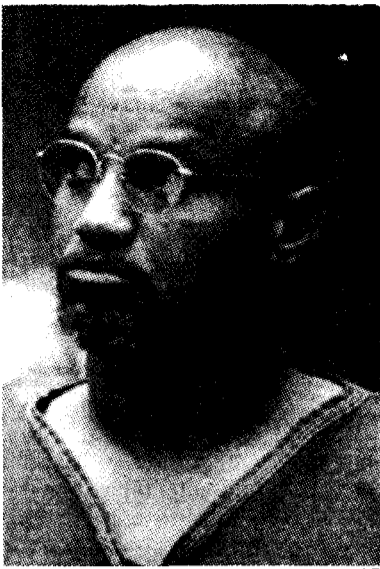
The labor misleaders who cling to the Democrats, as well as various phony "socialists," pushed illusions that the election last fall of liberal Democrat Willie Brown as San Francisco mayor and "progressive" Terence Hallinan as D.A. would restrain the cops. But what happened to Mark Garcia shows that's a lie. Now liberals like Van Jones of the SF group Policewatch, displaying a touching faith in the capitalist state, have called for more police "accountability." The truth is that the cops cannot be "reformed"—they are accountable only to their racist capitalist masters, for whom they act as armed enforcers.

A political strike by Garcia's Teamster brothers and sisters in protest against this racist cop killing would give the ruling class more pause than all the police review boards and other liberal panaceas put together. The profit system rests on brutal repression—it cannot be reformed, it must be rooted out by workers revolution. For a workers party to fight for a workers government! ■



Eric Smith's grieving cousin displays his photo.

# Court Dumps Habeas Corpus Case of Former Black Panther Leader



Los Angeles courthouse demonstration for Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), April 17.



WV Photo

## Mobilize Labor/Black Power to Free Geronimo!

We print below a May 4 statement by the Partisan Defense Committee.

Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), a former leader of the Black Panther Party and an unbowed fighter against black oppression, has been behind bars in the U.S. for a quarter of a century—just one year short of the time that Nelson Mandela was imprisoned by the South African apartheid state. He has been denied parole 14 times and will not be considered again until the year 2000. Framed up by the LAPD and the FBI's "Counter-Intelligence Program" (COINTELPRO) for a crime everybody knows he did not and could not have committed, Geronimo is a living condemnation of the American capitalist state and the racist "justice" of its courts.

The fight for Geronimo's freedom received a savage blow on April 17 when the Los Angeles Superior Court refused to hear his case to overturn his conviction. This continues the series of grotesque cover-up operations by state and federal courts since his conviction in 1972. The current round of court hearings was the result of a habeas corpus petition filed on February 26, Geronimo's fifth attempt at exposing his frame-up for the 1968 murder of a schoolteacher in Santa Monica. The petition detailed two decades of disclosures of government misconduct, orchestrated misidentification and perjured testimony.

Since Geronimo's original trial, COINTELPRO's conspiracy to destroy the Panthers has been exposed; evidence of three sets of FBI wiretaps on Panther

offices showing that Geronimo was 400 miles away at the time the murder was uncovered; the victim's husband's identification of another suspect was disclosed; and the man who testified Geronimo had confessed to the crime, one Julius Butler, was revealed as an FBI and LAPD informer with an ax to grind against Geronimo (facts Butler lied about on the stand). All of this was known at the time by the FBI, the LAPD and the district attorney's office and was hidden from the defense. Geronimo's petition also provides statements from former Panthers that they were at a meeting with Geronimo in Oakland at the time of the murder, and documents the investigation by lay minister Jim McCloskey which identified the likely real killers as associates of Butler.

Presiding judge Michael A. Cowell had ordered L.A. district attorney Gil Garcetti—who has been "investigating" this material for three years—to respond on March 28. Instead, Garcetti first asked for a three-month postponement to "investigate" and then, the day before the hearing, he argued that Geronimo's attorneys had filed in the wrong court. Judge Cowell, assigned to hear the case, acknowledged that Geronimo had raised "some very substantial issues" but gave credence to the D.A.'s "late challenge."

By the next hearing, Cowell had under-

gone a stark change in attitude. In the 13 April *Los Angeles Times*, an unusual "correction" appeared to a story on the March hearing which supposedly "incorrectly suggested that a Superior Court judge had found merit in arguments to overturn Geronimo Pratt's murder conviction." Four days later, Cowell came into court with his mind made up. Ignoring the law which clearly permits a hearing in Superior Court, he transferred the case to the California Supreme Court and, echoing the arguments D.A. Garcetti had made in response to an inquiry from Geronimo's longtime defender, Congressman Ron Dellums, the judge blamed the delay on Geronimo's attorneys for filing in the wrong jurisdiction.

### COINTELPRO's Deadly War Against the Panthers

This is a blatant attempt to once again bury Geronimo's case. The judge and D.A. know that the Supreme Court is not likely to permit any court to hear further documentation on the government's murderous war against the Panthers. Appointed in their majority by California's right-wing governor Pete Wilson, the present Supreme Court was assembled as a conservative law-and-order body with the explicit mission of tearing apart the court's long history of judicial liberalism, most recently under

anti-death penalty judge Rose Bird. Since 1990, Pete Wilson's court has upheld 94 percent of death sentences under appeal.

There are not a few in bourgeois circles who built their careers on the government vendetta against the Panthers. Contragate co-conspirator Edwin Meese presided over the war on the Panthers as Governor Ronald Reagan's top cop in California. Richard Held, a COINTELPRO specialist who played a major role in targeting Geronimo in L.A., led the FBI's August 1985 roundup of Puerto Rican militants, and went on to head the FBI in San Francisco. Richard Kalustian, the deputy D.A. who prosecuted Geronimo and paved the way for FBI fink Butler's admission to the California bar, is now a sitting L.A. County Superior Court judge.

American capitalism rests on the brutal oppression of black people, who are integrated into, but forced to the bottom of society as a race-color caste. The hard-fought and only recently won juridical rights of blacks are once again being overrun as the daily reality of joblessness, cuts in education, welfare "reform" and health care destruction take place side by side with summary executions by the cops in the ghettos, a burgeoning black prison population under "three strikes" laws, and legal lynching ordered by the courts. Geronimo is a symbol of black revolt against this oppression. His continued imprisonment is a message from the ruling class: Those who challenge the racist status quo will not be tolerated.

The state's refusal under any circumstances to allow Geronimo a new trial, let alone free him, is testimony to the fear inspired in the racist rulers of this country by the Panthers' rejection of Martin Luther King's passive acceptance of the brutally oppressive capitalist order. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover ordered the "neutralization" of the Panthers for their advocacy of black armed self-defense against the cops who were, and still are, gunning down black youth with impunity.

Thirty-eight Panthers were shot in cold blood by the COINTELPRO "operations"; those not killed were framed up and imprisoned for years. Mumia Abu-Jamal's role as a young Panther leader in Philadelphia put him in the cops' cross hairs; today, from Pennsylvania's death row, he is fighting to keep his voice of protest against police brutality and racist oppression from being silenced forever. Geronimo was targeted for death as a "Key Black Extremist,"



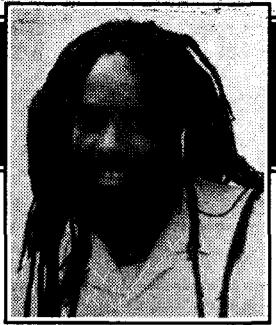
AP photos

8 December 1969: 300 LAPD cops assault Black Panther Party headquarters. Later that week thousands of protesters jammed L.A. Hall of Justice demanding freedom for Geronimo and other arrested Panthers.



# From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

## D.A.—Insult to Justice



In black, Hispanic and poor communities across the nation the office of District Attorney is not a friend, but an ally of all the negative forces dragging down their lives.

From coast to coast, from New York's Bed-Stuy to Frisco's Hunters Point, the D.A. is a hired agent of white, wealthy power.

It is an agency that insures daily that the poor feed the cavernous maws of this ravenous system, while the wealthy find ways to slip the noose; they are an agency of *status quo* which protects the established, while demonizing and exploiting the poor.

In city after city, they are offices which serve as stepping stones of political power; but the rising is not made on steps, it is made on the skulls, the bones, and the shattered lives and fortunes of those without wealth.

Philadelphia provides an excellent case in point!

Where else can a D.A. empanel an "investigating" grand jury on a case of municipal mass murder, and *recommend no charges* be filed against any of the killers, the aiders and abettors or the conspirators who caused this horror?

This actually happened in the legal aftermath of the MOVE bombing of 1985, where at least eleven

men, women and babies were bombed, shot and burned alive in southwest Philadelphia!

Was this not an insult to black life?

Where else can a D.A. look at a case, like that of West Philly's Window-Washing Charlie, where an elderly black man comes to his porch with an unloaded starter pistol to scare away some neighborhood hoods, only to find a phalanx of trigger-happy killer cops instead, *who shoot at him over 100 times*, at least 10 times after he fell, and not call it murder?

Was this not an insult to black life?

Where else can a D.A. sit back and silently allow the brutal street-beating of a member of *her own staff* by a pack of wild, drunken cops and tell him "forget about it" when he dares to try to prosecute this crime in the night?

Victor Ventura, a Puerto Rican prosecutor, had this occur on New Year's 1994, right outside the headquarters of the Fraternal Order of Police; when he asked his supervisor to press charges against the brutes in blue who beat and hospitalized him and a friend, he was told, "Vic—it's an election comin' up and the boss needs the support of the FOP. You understand, doncha?" (Ventura has filed a 25 million dollar civil suit against the D.A. and the city.)

Was this not an insult to Spanish life?

In the exhaustive study *Justice on the Cheap: The Philadelphia Story* (published by Death Penalty Information Center, May 1992) members of the Philadelphia D.A.'s Office testified before the House that they "didn't see" racism practiced in Pennsylvania criminal justice. Several U.S. judges, examining the record of conduct of the then-chief of the homicide unit, found this claim "incredible" and "unworthy of belief" based upon a longstanding practice of that office to systematically and intentionally strip black jurors from trials with black defendants, producing all-white, mostly white juries.

Is this not an insult to Justice?

The acronym "D.A." might as well stand for *District Assassin* given its accomplished history of murdering Justice, especially when it comes to black and Hispanic lives, property and safety.

Aren't they an insult to "justice"?

3 July 1995

©1995 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

**Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Philadelphia black journalist, is on death row at Pennsylvania's Greene state prison. Framed up because of his political views, Jamal faces death for his defiance of the racist, capitalist order. His columns appear periodically in *Workers Vanguard* and other newspapers.**

**To get involved in the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the death penalty, contact the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370.**

narrowly escaping death in a 1969 raid on the L.A. Panthers.

### No Justice in the Capitalist Courts

Many supporters of Geronimo thought that the unambiguous evidence of his innocence, announced by attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Stuart Hanlon at a press conference which included significant participation by important witnesses and community activists, would lead in short order to Geronimo's release. We in the Partisan Defense Committee, who have worked for Geronimo's freedom for over a decade, would have surely welcomed such a turn of events. But our understanding of the nature of the state, race and class in America has led us to see that there is no justice in the capitalist courts.

Justice in America is neither blind nor does it carefully weigh the evidence on balanced scales. The courts, like the cops, are part of the state, which is not a neutral body but exists to administer the exploitation of the working class by the handful of rulers who own the wealth of society. Every extension of democratic rights in this country—from the right to strike, to universal suffrage, to the dismantling of Jim Crow in the South—has come about only as a result of struggle *against* the state. The recent attacks on affirmative action programs are ample evidence that these gains are also only partial and reversible.

The ruling class has always attempted to victimize those who struggle for an extension of rights for working people and the oppressed. The Partisan Defense Committee was launched by the Spartacist League in order to defend such class-war prisoners. In so doing, we look to the organized multiracial working class which has the social power both to fight for temporary gains under capitalism and to end capitalist rule altogether. With their nationalist outlook, the Black Panther Party saw the plebeian ghetto masses rather than the working class as the agent of revolutionary change. In fact, workers have a compelling interest in Geronimo's cause. The cops who rush in to break one union strike after another also beat up immigrants with impunity and kill any minority youth who crosses them, later whitewashed as "custody death syndrome."

Beginning with the most vulnerable, the ruling class is taking aim at the organ-

ized working class to maximize their competitive edge in the "New World Order." From Congress's "counter-terrorism" bill—whose centerpiece is the curtailment of death row prisoner appeals to the federal courts—to the prohibition of press interviews in an attempt to silence prisoners from protesting frame-up convictions and viciously repressive and dehumanizing prison conditions, the

Garcetti's office to present petitions and demand he review the evidence in Geronimo's case.

Integrated unions representing over two million workers have gone on record in support of Geronimo, and a number of key union officials have sent letters of protest to Garcetti in the past months. But the members of these organizations have largely not been mo-

up to vote for Clinton in November. The union banners come out only for Democratic election vehicles. In the words of Mumia Abu-Jamal in a 1993 message from death row, the Clinton White House was "born in the blood of executions and bent on out-Republicanizing the Republicans...proving once again that repression is still repression, no matter which party is in power."

The big business of union-busting feeds on racism; if the state can with impunity frame up and keep in prison those like Geronimo, it will all the more readily turn its sights on the workers movement as a whole. An injury to one is an injury to all! Successful workers struggle requires a strategic commitment to smashing black oppression, and that requires a political fight against the present pro-Democratic leadership of the unions. It's time to build a working-class party which mobilizes its forces independent of the capitalist state and takes up the battles of the poor and oppressed in this country. Free Geronimo now!

\* \* \*

We encourage WV readers to continue to support and build the PDC. Become a monthly sustaining contributor. Send a donation of \$5 or more and receive a subscription to *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*. For a single copy, send \$1 to: Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. ■

Attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Stuart Hanlon (far right) at April 17 press conference present evidence of Geronimo's innocence.



democratic trappings of the bourgeois state are under bipartisan attack. While the legislature debates a national anti-immigrant Prop. 187, undermining the 14th Amendment won through the war against slavery, Clinton has carried out a high-tech militarization of the border with Mexico unequalled in U.S. history.

The bourgeoisie has always tried to exploit racial and ethnic divisions within the working class, hoping to distract the exploited while the capitalists pick their pockets. This is particularly evident in Los Angeles, center of the ongoing frame-up of Geronimo, where the bourgeoisie has worked assiduously to foster racial animosity in the wake of the multiracial rebellion against the Rodney King verdict. In a city which has a gap between rich and poor that ranks third behind Rio de Janeiro and Calcutta, the ruling class relies on racist cop terror to contain any manifestation of social protest. This fact has been understood by the SEIU's "Justice for Janitors," with its heavily immigrant membership, which successfully fought the bosses and their cops to organize their union. In 1994, SEIU locals organized a protest the day before Geronimo's 13th parole hearing, marching into

bilized *in action* to combat this racist frame-up. The integrated demonstrations outside the courthouse at the March and April hearings were spirited, but they lacked the necessary social power. On the day of Geronimo's second hearing, the union representing Kaiser Permanente hospital workers called a protest against the hospital closures which are cutting off medical care for the impoverished black and minority population and slashing hundreds of jobs; the union should have marched down Sunset Boulevard to the courthouse to put some muscle behind its support to Geronimo.

The lack of mobilization for Geronimo is of a piece with the unions' abstention from the struggle in defense of democratic rights for blacks and Latinos, immigrants and women. The fault is with the trade-union tops, who won't even call their members into action to protect their own economic interests against the union-busting offensive currently being waged throughout the U.S. The union bureaucracy is wedded to the defense of the bourgeois order through support to the capitalist Democratic Party; their job is to keep the workers in line, and lined

### Spartacist League Public Offices

—MARXIST LITERATURE—

#### Bay Area

Thurs.: 5:30-8:00 p.m., Sat.: 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor (near 17th Street)  
Oakland, California Phone: (510) 839-0851

#### Chicago

Tues.: 5:00-9:00 p.m.  
Sat.: 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
328 S. Jefferson St., Suite 904  
Chicago, Illinois Phone: (312) 454-4930

#### New York City

Tues.: 6:30-9:00 p.m., Sat.: 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
41 Warren St. (one block below  
Chambers St. near Church St.)  
New York, NY Phone: (212) 267-1025

# Young Spartacus

OAKLAND—What can you say for a so-called “communist” organization which, in the midst of a crucial class battle—the recent Oakland California teachers strike—refused to call for building picket lines, refrained from condemning scabbing, and opposed the main demand of the strike? And what can you say about a “communist” group which refuses to mobilize against the current racist assault on affirmative action, and even echoes the “reverse discrimination” rhetoric of the racist ideologues, claiming that affirmative action is “divisive”? These reactionary positions in *struggle* are precisely those of the self-styled super “communists” of the Progressive Labor Party (PL).

Throughout its 33-year history, PL has zigzagged between abjectly reformist struggles and sectarian abstention, cloaking both with a veneer of “red” phrasemongering. With its constant gyrations between “reform” and “revolution,” PL has spiraled farther and farther from even the pretense of a Marxist, working-class outlook. In 1972’s “Road to Revolution III,” PL junked Lenin’s insistence that communists must fight all manifestations of oppression in class society, including national oppression. In 1982 in “Road to Revolution IV,” PL openly repudiated Karl Marx’s materialist worldview. Now in the process of internal discussions on yet another “Road to Revolution” document (this one, to be numbered 4½, insists that struggle for any reform under capitalism is necessarily counterposed to the struggle for communism), PL has hit a new nadir. As revealed in the Oakland teachers strike and the battle over affirmative action, PL’s “fight for communism” rhetoric serves as a crude cover for accommodation to bourgeois reaction.

## PL vs. Oakland Teachers Strike

Over the past two decades, the racist rulers of this country have let the public education system go to hell. The recent five-week Oakland Education Association (OEA) strike could have been the take-off point for a broad working-class struggle going outside of the usual capitalist pressure politics. The OEA centered their demands on two key issues—higher wages and smaller class sizes. In the face of increasing hostility from the ruling class, with the mayor and state officials threatening strikebreaking injunctions, the strikers won broad support from poor, minority and working-class parents and students. Yet the OEA leadership led a half-hearted strike, and then betrayed the struggle by settling for a contract with no guaranteed reduction in class sizes. Criminally, the labor bureaucracy of the Alameda Central Labor Council (CLC) organized its members to scab on the strike, *sabotaging* this key battle.

PLers appeared on the teachers’ picket lines. But in their eight leaflets issued during the strike, PL never called for building, respecting and enforcing the OEA’s picket lines—nor did they condemn the AFL-CIO scabbing. PL criminally refused to take a clear side in favor of victory to the strike, writing in one leaflet, “Instead of asking ‘Which side are we on—the OEA or the School Board?’, we should be asking, ‘Which side are we on—the working class or the ruling class?’” Instead of? Even with a strike waged by salaried profes-

## On Oakland Teachers Strike and Affirmative Action

# How PL Caves In to Racist Bosses

**PLP**  
editorial

**Affirmative Action:  
A Weight On The Fight  
Against Racism**

**Progressive Labor capitulates to racist purge of higher education, refusing to defend affirmative action.**

On Jan. 18, four hundred students blocked the entrances of the University of California at Santa Cruz. They were protesting the Regents’ decision to end Affirmative Action. This militant action shut down the University. Hundreds of workers stayed home or did not cross the picket line. Many teachers canceled classes. Thousands of students boycotted classes.

The Johnson and Nixon administrations invented and carried out Affirmative Action. It was their response (along with police repression) to the sharp anti-racist battles of the mid-1960s. Its purpose was to create the appearance of fighting racism while actually intensifying it. For example, Nixon pushed the “Philadelphia Plan” for increasing black employment in federally-funded construction.

The crisis of capitalism is growing deeper. of youths find themselves without jobs or a future. They see education as the way to escape prisons and racist cops. They see education as a way to escape racism. This is a deadly illusion. Education under capitalism class. Universities under capitalism class.

**CHALLENGE**  
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PAPER  
7 Feb. 1996

sionals such as teachers—whom Marxists have always encouraged to identify with the working class—the question of *class solidarity* is posed pointblank. This is quite simply the class line, in the real world. Like the miners’ song goes: Which side are you on? It is telling that PL could not provide a clear answer to such a simple question of class struggle.

PL instead parroted the CLC bureaucrats’ arguments for scabbing—that smaller class sizes and higher wages for teachers meant less wages and possible layoffs for unionized school maintenance and clerical workers. In a leaflet titled “School Workers! Unite to Fight for Equality and Communism!” PL wrote:

“The teachers union, the Oakland Education Association (OEA), is missing the boat by calling for a ‘re-allocation of resources.’ With the bosses claiming that there is a ‘budget crisis,’ the OEA demand to spend more money in the classroom will be used by the Board to attack all school workers who aren’t ‘in the classroom.’”

Progressive Labor joined the CLC and the School Board in claiming that any gains for teachers could come only at the expense of other workers. In fact, the OEA leaders sought to reduce the strike to pressuring the School Board to tinker with its budget, while futilely trying to elect their own slate to the im-

posed Board. Like the OEA tops, PL essentially accepted the limits to the Oakland education budget as defined by racist, capitalist austerity. Presenting no program to win the strike, in a leaflet they declared from the outset, “Capital will win here.”

In contrast, the Spartacist League called for mobilizing mass support for the Oakland teachers strike with militant, integrated picket lines and appeals to all other school workers to honor the lines. In the article “Victory to Oakland Teachers Strike!” (WV No. 640, 1 March) we vigorously condemned the CLC’s traitorous scabbing and denounced the OEA tops’ sellout. We raised the necessity for class struggle to beat back the capitalist assault on public education, starting with a statewide teachers strike to save California schools. We urged OEA strikers to champion broader social struggle—like the fight to defeat the racist assault on affirmative action—around the demand for *free, quality education for all*. We sought to link the current felt needs of the working class to the need for socialist revolution by posing a *transitional* program. Against the lying prattle of the OEA and CLC misleaders that the capitalist Democratic Party represents some kind of lesser-evil alternative to the naked fist of the Republicans, we

raised the necessity for the working class to forge a revolutionary workers party, to lead the class in the struggles necessary to bring down this whole rotten system of exploitation and racist oppression.

## PL: Know Nothings of the Left

The logic of PL’s ostensible “pro”-OEA propaganda was *anti-strike*. Nothing makes this more clear than PL’s haughty disdain for the main demand of strikers—smaller class sizes. One PL leaflet raised the incidental call for “smaller class sizes with no layoffs” but *every other piece of PL propaganda argued against the demand that was at the core of the teachers’ struggle*. Here’s a typical sample from *Challenge* (13 March):

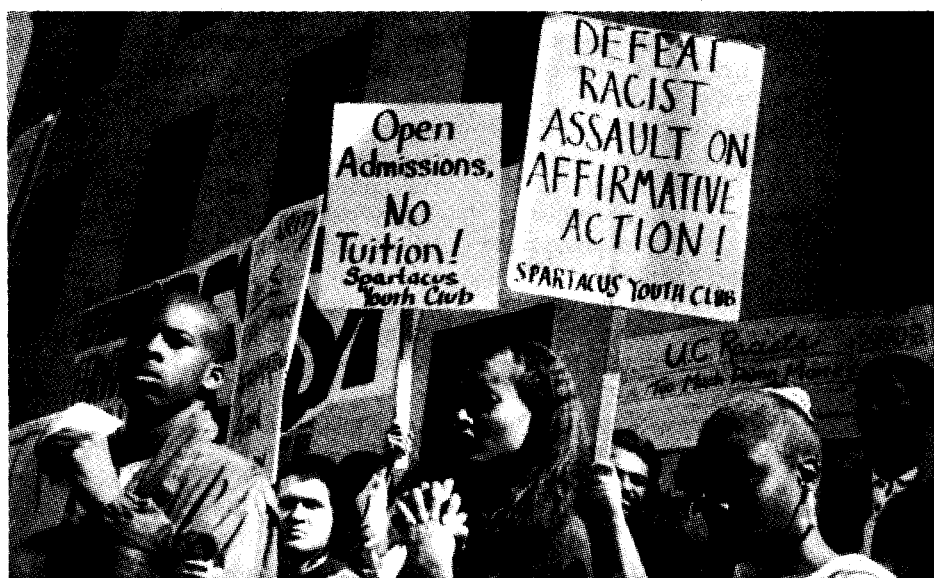
“Probably the biggest illusion is that if only class-size wasn’t so large, students would succeed. This ignores the fact that the schools exist within capitalism—a profit system that exploits workers using wage slavery, racism, unemployment, war, etc. *Smaller class sizes won’t change any of these basic facts*. In fact, the School Board has already signaled that, if the teachers force the issue, it will lay off other school personnel to pay for smaller classes.”

“Such are the contradictions of capitalism: *what seems like a good demand is turned into a divisive issue to encourage different groups of workers to attack each other.*”

In fact, almost every major study of education correlates smaller class size with greater learning on the part of students. As we wrote in articles on the strike, the AFL-CIO unions who were scabbing on the teachers strike were “scabbing on the possibility of a better education for their children.”

The striving for access to the accumulated knowledge and culture of human civilization, always hoarded by the ruling class, has long been a motor force in the struggle for human emancipation. But PL has always denigrated the struggle for working-class and minority access to education and culture. The draft of “Road to Revolution 4½” (*Progressive Labor Party Communist Bulletin*, February 1996) dots the i’s and crosses the t’s on the reactionary implications of this position:

“Within our Party we have discussed schools and education. What line should



Young Spartacus' Spartacus Youth Club demands free, quality education for all in rally at University of California-Berkeley last October.

## Defend Affirmative Action and More! Fight for Open Admissions!

we be pushing in struggles against budget cuts? Let's be clear. There can be no good schools under capitalism. Capitalist values such as individualism and competition are the hallmarks of capitalist education. You cannot reform these schools to make them good."

Similarly, on the issue of affirmative action, *Challenge* (7 February) argues that shutting the doors of higher education to black and Latino youth really doesn't matter, since "education under capitalism only serves the ruling class." *Challenge* continues:

"Universities teach racism, sexism, individualism, anti-communism and other anti-working-class ideas. They push the lie that the 'best and brightest' will get ahead. They push the selfish, competitive view that your goal *should* be to 'get ahead' of someone else."

The reality is a lot more complicated. Karl Marx observed that the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. But that doesn't mean that communists shun the accumulated scientific and cultural heritage of humanity. As Marxists, we in the Spartacist League have always insisted that "ignorance never did anyone any good." We want to use the full realm of human understanding available to reforge society in the interests of the working class. Lenin wrote about this in "On Proletarian Culture" (October 1920):

"Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture."

PL's rantings against education are nothing but an excuse for *accepting* the ruling class' racist gutting of the public education system. An educated populace is one of the greatest fears of the capitalist exploiters. It was not for nothing that slaveowners in the ante-bellum South made death the penalty for any slave caught learning to read and write.

## PL Buys "Reverse Discrimination" Lie

Today, a focal point of the drive against higher education for minorities is the attack on affirmative action, especially in California where the cruelly misnamed "Civil Rights Initiative" is on the November ballot. The crusade against affirmative action as supposed "reverse discrimination" against white people has long been the rallying cry of David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan—the fascists who want to wipe out any vestige of the civil rights movement. While the Democrats seek to channel outrage against the reactionary right into 1996 election votes, mainstream politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties have taken up this cry. Along with the war on "illegal" immigrants and women's rights, the racist assault on affirmative action in education, hiring and contracting has become the cutting edge of the bipartisan ruling-class offensive against *all* social welfare programs.

In the struggles around affirmative action at the University of California, the Spartacus Youth Clubs have raised the slogan "Defend Affirmative Action



Oakland teachers rally at City Hall during recent strike. PL polemicized against teachers' demand for smaller class sizes.

and More—Fight for Open Admissions!" We seek to wage a social struggle which goes beyond the framework of capitalist pressure politics, mobilizing students, workers and minorities against the racial inequality and class bias which pervades the entire education system. To open up



НЕГРАМОТНЫЙ ТЫТ-КЪ СЛЕПОЙ  
ВМЯУ ЕГО ЖАУТ НЕУДАЧИ И НЕУДАЧА.

A. Radakov

PL sneers at struggle for education. Above: 1920 Bolshevik poster used in literacy campaign: "He who is illiterate is like a blind man."

higher education to *everyone* who wants to attend, we fight for no tuition and a state stipend, in order to make education a *right* and not a privilege, as part of the fight for workers revolution to sweep away the capitalist system itself.

While we oppose the racist rollback of affirmative action in college admissions and hiring, quotas are not our program. These token measures inherently acquiesce to the racist status quo. Affirmative action programs were first implemented by the federal government in the late 1960s as a sop to defuse the militant social struggles growing out of the liberal-led civil rights movement, particularly in the North. From the get-go, the intention was to create and co-opt

a thin layer of the black middle class. But these paltry efforts left intact the historic and deep-seated oppression of the mass of the black population—the ghetto poor, historically the last-hired and first-fired industrial reserve army of the unemployed. Pitting blacks against Latinos, women against men, minorities against whites, affirmative action was calculated by the rulers to force a scramble for disappearing crumbs among those seeking to get their "piece of the pie," and early on it was used as a union-busting scheme. But in seeking to eliminate these programs today, the ruling class is declaring that it never wants to hire another black contractor, that it no longer sees the need to provide even the pretense that the doors of higher education are open to blacks and other minorities.

A *Challenge* (7 February) editorial uses the tokenistic nature of affirmative action to sneer: "Programs to increase black employment and university enrollment have done little more than improve the lives of some workers.... Any movement to defend Affirmative Action brings us no closer to ending racism." When an outraged member wrote in to complain that this editorial was too "one sided," *Challenge* (13 March) responded with a blast clearly echoing the words of the "reverse discrimination" ideologues:

"Defending affirmative action ultimately excuses capitalism's inequality, a system that means a decent life for the few near the top. Affirmative action is divisive. It concedes capitalism's inability to provide a decent life for tens of millions. Communists shouldn't compromise on the issue of equality."

The response of communists should be to expose the *lie* of "reverse discrimination," posing a fight against the current racist assault by championing educational and job opportunities for everyone. Instead, while making token denunciations of the racists' claims PL chimes right in with the thinly veiled rationales of those who claim that affirmative action is "divisive" and doesn't square with abstract "equality." PL's position is a *direct capitulation to the*

*white racist backlash*. PLers should feel some gut revulsion in knowing that on the affirmative action issue, they echo the fascists.

Acceptance of the most backward social consciousness bred by capitalism, however, has long characterized PL. You'll never find an article in *Challenge* defending gays—in fact PL claims homosexuals are "sick." Nor will you find much about the fight against women's oppression, defense of abortion clinics, etc. To this day, PL retains the reactionary Stalinist position that the family—the main institution responsible for the oppression of women—can somehow help in the fight for communism.

When PL emerged from the Communist Party USA in the early 1960s, it represented a *left* split, eventually embracing the Chinese, Maoist variant of Stalinism as an apparent opposition to the pro-Moscow Stalinists' utter reformism. But PL refused to examine the roots of Stalinism in the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, i.e., to study Trotskyism. Instead they took up the Maoist line that the Soviet Union had become capitalist—"social imperialist." This meant that PL refused to militarily defend the remaining gains of the Russian Revolution against the U.S. imperialist Cold War II onslaught of the 1980s. PL's capitulation to bourgeois anti-Communism on this touchstone question of Marxism only amplified their Stalinist-derived acceptance of capitalist-engendered backward consciousness on almost every important social question as well.

## PL Reverts to Utopian Socialism

PL's rantings against education, like much of their "communist" rhetoric, are sheer hypocrisy. Anyone familiar with the *Challenge* letters column will tell you that "A Doctor," "A Teacher" and "A Professor" are frequent contributors. Why is it OK for PL members to get college degrees and become professionals, while black high-school students from South-Central L.A. are told that this is the route to sellout and a capitulation to capitalist ideology? PL sounds like liberal petty-bourgeois social workers, preaching to the masses about what is "good" for them.

In fact, in their own self-conception, PLers have become "communist" preachers. In rejecting first Lenin and

*continued on page 10*



Library of Congress

Black Civil War soldiers with New England abolitionist schoolteachers. Education is a prized weapon in fight for black freedom.

## Spartacist Events

### CHICAGO

#### Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

Thursdays, 6 p.m. Next class, May 23:  
*How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*; University of Chicago,  
106 Cobb Hall  
For more information: (312) 454-4930

### EUGENE

#### Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

Saturdays, 4 p.m. Next classes, May 18:  
*Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution*; June 1: *The Fight for a Revolutionary Party*; University of Oregon,  
Room 202, Chapman Hall  
For more information: (510) 839-0851

### LOS ANGELES

#### Spartacist League Forum

Thursday, 7 p.m., May 16: *Black Separatism and "Black Capitalism" Are a Dead End—Class-Struggle Road to Black Freedom*; Hollywood United Methodist Church, 6817 Franklin Ave. (Highland exit off 101 Freeway)  
For more information: (213) 380-8239

### NEW YORK CITY

#### Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

Alternate Saturdays, 3 p.m. Next class,  
May 11: *Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!*; Spartacist Public Office,  
41 Warren Street (one block below  
Chambers Street, near Church Street)  
For more information: (212) 267-1025

# Italy...

(continued from page 1)

order to please the Vatican. D'Alema even got the support of Fiat magnate Agnelli and the blessing of Clinton, who intervened in the Italian election campaign by explicitly declaring that the American government did not fear a PDS government in Italy today. The daily *Corriere della Sera* (18 April) reports on the large number of Catholic Action members who were candidates for the Olive Tree. Consistent with this, D'Alema has proposed that the PDS get rid of the hammer and sickle symbol for good.

This anti-worker government will be supported by Rifondazione Comunista, which has promised to vote confidence in it and will support it at all critical moments. RC has a crucial role to play now since Ulivo will need its support on key votes in parliament—on pensions, social security, education, abortion, immigration, etc. RC will try to act as a spigot, turning class struggle on and off for their own parliamentary advantage. But this regime is going to be so



Newspaper of the  
Lega Trotskista d'Italia

hard against the working class that they are going to need RC not so much for their votes in parliament but to pose as a pressure group ostensibly outside the government in order to divert the workers' anger. Meanwhile, those who stand to lose most immediately from this unholy alliance are women, youth and immigrants. They will be the scapegoats for all the gains taken back from the workers.

As we wrote before the 1994 elections: "Now that the 'republic of the corrupt' is buried, it is time for the second republic of 'clean hands.' But the choice between the right and the left is between bourgeois alternatives, both of which are enemies of the workers and oppressed.... This popular front, a class-collaborationist alliance between the bosses and the reformist workers parties, will not stop the fascists. It preserves the system of racist and capitalist austerity that breeds the vermin in black shirts and demoralizes the working class. Furthermore, it chains the proletariat to its class enemies."

This was fully verified over the past two years, and it is fully valid today. The Lega Trotskista d'Italia (LTd'I), section of the International Communist League, opposed any vote for the popular front and the parties in it, including the RC, in the April 21 elections and insists that what is decisive is not the bourgeois elections or parliamentary blocs but the class struggle. The Ulivo government will be anti-worker, anti-women, and anti-immigrant. A powerful response by the workers is necessary to defeat the all-sided attack that the bourgeoisie is waging against them. If the working class does not intervene to prevent this government from implementing



Carofei/Sintesi

its program of social regression, the popular front in power, demoralizing the workers and throwing the petty bourgeoisie and backward sections of the proletariat further into the arms of fascist and populist demagogues, will open the way for an aggressive comeback of sinister right-wing forces. But for the workers to be able to win, it is necessary to wage a political fight against the PDS, the RC and the trade-union bureaucracy, and to forge a revolutionary leadership of the workers movement. The LTd'I is fighting to build a Bolshevik party that fights for proletarian power and does not take part in bourgeois governments which administer this rotting capitalist society.

## The Popular Front Is Anti-Working-Class...

The attacks on the welfare state, and more generally on the living conditions of the working class and the oppressed throughout Europe, have their origins in the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. The "New World Disorder" has brought on nationalist wars, racist pogroms against immigrant workers, Rom (Gypsies) and Jews, and the immiseration of the proletariat. Drunk with glee over the "elimination of the communist threat" and under the pressure of increased interimperialist competition, the European bourgeoisies are trying to boost profits by cutting social expenditures and other concessions made to the workers which they no longer consider necessary.

In Italy, the official unemployment rate has reached 12 percent. More than six million people live under the poverty line, and the rate of exploitation has increased by 6 percent in the last three years. Working conditions have gotten so bad that four deaths a day are listed as job "accidents." Outgoing prime minister Lamberto Dini has been trying to eliminate all existing safety standards in the workplace, and if this succeeds the number of deaths on the job will increase. Living conditions are following a scissors pattern: the poor get steadily poorer and the rich get richer. There is a widening gap between North and



Merlini/Team

South, men and women, whites and ethnic minorities.

This process of driving down workers' living conditions began with the first attacks in 1983 by Socialist prime minister Bettino Craxi against the *scala mobile* (cost-of-living escalator), but it sharply accelerated after the eruption of the "Bribe City" ("*tangentopoli*") corruption scandal. The Ciampi (1993-94) and Dini (1995-96) governments, which were supported by the PDS, played a significant role in this. RC contributed by supporting the "progressive" coalition and by twice saving the Dini government. The past two years have offered a clear example of what a popular front is and what it means.

When the rightist media mogul Berlusconi was elected head of the government in 1994, he did not hesitate to launch a frontal assault on the system of retirement pensions. The workers movement reacted immediately to this attack with what were possibly the most imposing demonstrations since the "hot autumn" of 1969. The PDS and RC rode the tiger, using the workers' legitimate anger and struggles as an instrument of mass pressure in order to push for a popular-front government. Under the pressure of millions of workers in the streets, Mr. "One Hundred General Strikes Will Not Stop Me" Berlusconi was forced to resign.

After getting rid of their nemesis, the PDS put together a government (supported by RC at every crucial moment) that was headed by the same Lamberto Dini, former governor of the Bank of Italy, who was the author of the Berlusconi government's pension-gutting decree. A few months after taking office in April 1995, Dini succeeded in passing the same pension cuts that Berlusconi had been unable to carry out. The support of the PDS, RC and the trade-union bureaucrats made the difference. They used what remained of their authority to minimize the reaction by the workers. Thus, the popular front demonstrated for the nth time its true nature, a class-collaborationist coalition which subordinates the working class to the bourgeoisie.

## And Anti-Immigrant...

The Dini government, with the support of the PDS, issued a decree on immigration that was much more racist than the previous legislation. Anyone in Italy without documents can now be thrown in prison, as well as being subject to deportation as before. Contrary to all juridical principles, an immigrant who "demonstrates a standard of living that is too high" is presumed to be guilty. Immigrant workers will be tolerated at the state's discretion, and only on the condition that they are superexploited by the local bourgeoisie. Otherwise: Get out or go to jail. The groundwork for this situation has been laid for years by the campaign against immigrant "drug pushers," which the PDS and RC vigorously pursued in Genova in September 1993 and by the racist persecution of immigrants, who are described as "rapists." This was also one of the arguments



La Repubblica

From left: "Olive Tree" leader Romano Prodi, PDS leader Massimo D'Alema and Fausto Bertinotti of Rifondazione Comunista.

which speeded up passage of the law "against sexual violence."

Even the so-called "amnesty" for "illegal" immigrants has been shown to be a gruesome maneuver by Dini & Co. Of 250,000 people who have applied to have their situation "regularized," no more than 100,000 are expected to succeed—by the most optimistic projections—since employers are generally unwilling to pay the contributions required by the INPS (national retirement system) and because most of the requests have been tied up in the bureaucracy. The net result is that the police have been able to register 150,000 "illegals" in their records.

Contrary to the PDS and RC who actively participate in or echo the anti-immigrant campaign, we Trotskyists demand that whoever manages to arrive in Italy have the right to stay. We are for the unionization of immigrant workers and full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

The fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) has been dressed up as the National Alliance (AN), but the core is still fascist and the *squadre* (terror squads) have not disappeared. They continue their attacks against immigrants, RC and PDS offices, other leftists, and the more vulnerable sections of the working class. It is the duty of the entire workers movement to repulse the fascists by mobilizing the workers and other intended victims of the racist terrorists, including through integrated defense militias. This requires a fight against the racist, class-collaborationist politics of the reformist leadership.

## ...And Anti-Women

For the bourgeoisie, the strengthening of the family is an indispensable part of the attack on the living standards of the working class. The family will shoulder the weight of the social services that the state no longer wants to pay for. The "household" must be "morally mobilized" in order to justify the oppression of women, who are first to be fired and who have a much harder time getting a job. Additionally, every "deviation" from the model of the family ordained by the Vatican is persecuted.

The Ulivo popular front is perfectly conscious of this need and fully carries it out. Prodi's support for the campaign of the anti-abortion Movement for Life promoting the "rights of the fetus" was heavily covered by the left press. Ulivo has already declared that it will revise Law 194, which partially legalizes abortion in Italy. In reality, due to the so-called "conscientious objectors clause" of Law 194 (another PCI concession to the Vatican on the altar of class collaboration), it has become practically impossible to have an abortion in the South, and extremely difficult in the rest of Italy. The news media continue to be full of cases of illegal abortions, performed by doctors in private apartments without the most minimal hygienic conditions and at exorbitant prices. Now the popular front wants to cut back even the token legislation that exists on paper.



Spartaco

Milano, August 1993—Trotskyists demand charges be dropped against North African victims of police beating, call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and their families.



Under the supervision of the Dini government, the Movement for Life organized a conference last February in Rome on the "psychological consequences of abortion," while outside cops and paramilitary carabinieri beat up abortion rights demonstrators. The Vatican is in the front line of this moralistic anti-abortion campaign, and RC leader Fausto Bertinotti has pitched in. *Corriere della Sera* (20 April) reports: "The head of the neo-communist party closed his electoral campaign by appealing to Pope John Paul II: 'We didn't go looking for the votes of the Catholics.... It is enough for us to listen to Pope Wojtyla condemn the excesses of capitalism and warn against the laws of the market'."

After decades of negotiations aimed at reaching an impossible compromise, the law "against the sexual violence" was born under the aegis of the Dini government and with the support of the "progressives." The new law above all serves to intensify the intervention of the state in the private lives of individuals and in family affairs. Under the new law, whenever someone presses charges for "sexual abuse" of a minor, the judge is obliged to take action. Particularly under attack are parents, relatives and anyone who has contact with minors, such as teachers. It is now also obligatory for the accused to take a test for AIDS and other diseases that are sexually transmissible, in violation of the right to privacy that formerly existed.

This law was the result of the common work of 67 deputies from the fascist National Alliance to Berlusconi's Forza Italia, from the Catholics of the Christian Democratic Center to the PDS—a true mini-popular front whose official spokesmen were Anna Finocchiaro of the PDS and the fascist Alessandra Mussolini. When the fascists demonstrated against the immigrants of the San Salvario area in Torino last November under the slogan "Cleanliness and Order," representatives of the PDS participated.

It is becoming increasingly common for judges to take children away from parents who are "guilty" only of being poor—victims of the capitalist system that pushes ever larger sections of the population to the margins of society. In early March, the press reported the case of a mother who was arrested because she developed a photograph of her nude son.

We are resolutely opposed to the intervention of the state in the sexual life of consenting individuals. We are opposed to the attempts of the Vatican to establish norms of "moral correctness" for the family, which the state then forcibly implements. Down with reactionary "age of consent" laws! State and church out of the bedroom!

The family is the focal point of women's oppression. We Trotskyists fight to destroy capitalism and for a genuine workers government, the indispensable precondition for women's liberation. We fight against the popular front that sacrifices women's rights to the defense of the interests of the bourgeoisie, and against all forms of discrimination against women. For free abortion on demand, including for minors and immigrants! For the complete separation of church and state and the expropriation of the wealth of the Vatican!

### Rifondazione Comunista Tails the Popular Front

Rifondazione Comunista declared a "no-contest pact" with the Ulivo coalition for the April 21 elections. RC leader Bertinotti "explained" this vulgar class betrayal by arguing that under the new electoral system, without the pact "RC would risk losing its parliamentary representation." Thus, RC waged an all-out campaign for Ulivo, including calling on workers to vote for the bosses who are firing them. Maura Cossutta asked workers at the Superga factory to vote for De Benedetti, the owner of that factory, who has threatened 300 firings.

### Angry workers battle police in Torino, September 1992, as protests erupt against capitalist austerity measures.



Bertinotti has already guaranteed that RC will vote for the motion of confidence in the government, explaining that "after the formation of the Prodi government it will have to earn the votes of Rifondazione on particular questions." In reality, what Bertinotti is saying is that he will limit himself to an eventual, polite—and in any case parliamentary—opposition to an Ulivo government, and only when it doesn't need RC votes. Whenever the issue is important and the votes (or abstentions) of RC are decisive, Bertinotti and the RC will know how to be "responsible" and save the popular front—naturally, in order to "defeat the right." This has systematically been the case in the past year, from RC's abstention on the austerity bill in late 1994, the last act of the Berlusconi government, up to its abstention on the vote of no confidence for Dini presented by the "Pole of Freedom."

It should be noted that on the latter occasion, the so-called "left" of RC, led by ostensible Trotskyists Franco Grisolia and Marco Ferrando, who edit the journal *Proposta*, were in the forefront of the fight to save the Dini government. They opposed the RC majority, which initially was prepared to bring down the cabinet. During the recent elections, as in 1994, the *Proposta* group played a valuable role for the RC leadership by doing everything possible—using "leftist" arguments and misrepresenting Lenin—to convince the most reluctant elements that it is necessary to support the popular front. *Proposta* (January 1995) even appealed for a vote for the Vatican's Popular Party (PPI) "in particular situations where it is necessary to defeat a fascist or reactionary candidate."

The party of Bertinotti and Cossutta is currently participating in many local governments with the virulent racists of the Northern League. At a demonstration against the racist decree in Torino last November 19, RC distributed a statement which grotesquely echoed the racist right: "It is therefore necessary for the appropriate authorities to effectively repress criminality of every type, applying Italian laws with the most modern investigative techniques against drug pushers and the prostitution racket."

The policy of capitulation to the popular front practiced by RC and its "left" tails has not been easily digested by the ranks of the party. It is notable that almost every day *Il Manifesto* published articles, interviews and letters of RC members who intended to abstain in the elections. We are not the only ones on the left calling to abstain on April 21, but we are the only ones to openly say that any popular-front government will be anti-worker, anti-woman and anti-immigrant, and that it is urgently necessary to fight against these policies.

While there is widespread disgust for this popular front among RC members, this does not mean conscious opposition to class-collaborationist politics. Rather, it reflects the fact that this popular front is extremely rightist and revolting. It is

this widespread dissatisfaction, which does not break with class collaboration, that the group around the newspaper *Voce Operaia* (VO) seeks to intersect with its recent opposition to a vote for Ulivo and RC. In the 1994 elections, VO openly supported RC and the popular-front "Pole of the Progressives," and in June 1993 they even called for an "anti-capitalist" vote for three candidates of the camouflaged Christian Democrats of La Rete.

In the fall of 1995, VO wrote a leaflet entitled "No Truce" in which it says, "Throw out the Berlusconi government and put the left in the government!" This is a clear appeal for a bourgeois parliamentary government of PDS, RC and others. When a skeptical reader objected to this popular-frontist slogan in a letter to the paper, VO defended itself by writing, "The slogan 'the left in the government' means 'the workers movement in the government,' to 'defend the workers' interests and the demands of the movement in struggle.'" VO continued, "We said to the workers: let's force them to take power!" VO has the same line as the sellout bureaucrats of PDS and RC—namely, that workers mobilizations should be used as a means to exert pressure for a parliamentary bourgeois "leftist" government. But a PDS/RC government would be racist, anti-woman, anti-worker and imperialist.

### Break with the Popular Front! Build a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

The "New World Disorder" has led to more poverty, exploitation, oppression and war for the vast majority of the world's people. At the same time, the working class has shown its determination to resist—from the impressive

struggles of the Italian workers in the autumn of 1994 to the massive strikes in France last December. Many leftists see working-class combativity as the solution to the problems of the workers, but as we wrote in *Spartaco* No. 45 (February 1995):

"No level of combativity or any organizational form in itself can guarantee victory. The essential element is the political break with the popular front and the construction of a genuinely Bolshevik vanguard party that leads the workers' struggles beyond economic militancy in the direction of a struggle for workers power."

There will inevitably be struggles of the workers and oppressed against the continual attacks of the bourgeoisie. The key question is who will lead these struggles.

While the PDS and RC, orphans of defunct Stalinism, increasingly openly embrace the bourgeoisie, their "left" tails like *Proposta* and *Voce Operaia* act as waterboys for the popular front. Instead, it is necessary and urgent to struggle for authentic communism.

Both RC and the PDS are the continuators of the old PCI and its betrayals. They represent an *obstacle* on this road. Lenin defined these parties as "bourgeois-workers" parties in order to emphasize the contradiction between their working-class base and bourgeois program. They are not reformable and no level of pressure from the base or "tactical maneuvers" can make them become revolutionary parties. It is necessary to build a Leninist party that intransigently opposes class collaboration and fights to split the base of these parties from the leadership, as part of the struggle for socialist revolution. The Lega Trotskista and the International Communist League are fighting to build this Leninist party. ■

## Letter...

(continued from page 2)

of Germany (which does not exclude an offensive, in certain circumstances, until peace is attained);

"2) at the same time emphasise the difference between German national and dynastic-Prussian interests;

"3) oppose any *annexation* of Alsace and Lorraine....

"4) as soon as a non-chauvinist republican government is at the helm in Paris, work for an honourable peace with it;

"5) constantly stress the unity of interests between the German and French workers, who did not approve of the war and are also not making war on each other...."

Thus Marx/Engels' military support for the German side at this juncture was highly guarded and conditional. And these conditions ceased to exist *less than a month* after Engels' letter was written. In early September, an uprising of the Parisian masses established a democratic republic in France and, moreover, threatened a "red republic." Consequently, Marx/Engels changed their line on the

war. Marx's "Second Address" to the General Council of the First International on the Franco-Prussian War (9 September 1870) stated:

"The war of defence ended, in point of fact, with the surrender of Louis Bonaparte, the Sedan capitulation, and the proclamation of the Republic at Paris. But long before these events, the very moment the utter rottenness of the [French] Imperialist arms became evident, the Prussian military *camarilla* had resolved upon conquest."

This same document cites with approval a manifesto of the Central Committee of the German Social-Democratic Workers Party, led by Liebknecht and Bebel:

"We protest against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. And we are conscious of speaking in the name of the German working class.... We shall faithfully stand by our fellow-workmen in all countries for the common cause of the Proletariat!"

Incidentally, during the siege of Paris, Engels drew up military plans for the French to defend themselves more effectively against the German army, an exemplary act of proletarian internationalism. ■

# Victory to L.A. Port Truckers!

LOS ANGELES, May 6—The world's third-largest port was brought to a virtual standstill last week as truck drivers launched a fight for union recognition against the shipping and haulage bosses. Beginning April 29, over 4,000 mostly Latino drivers stopped hauling freight into and out of the L.A. (San Pedro) and Long Beach ports. The *Journal of Commerce* (2 May) complained that they had turned "the nation's busiest container complex into a ghost town." Furiously seeking to break the strike, the shipping companies have been diverting cargo to other ports, while bringing in scab truckers and an army of cops.

A day after the work stoppage began, Communications Workers (CWA) Local 9400 announced that it had signed an "interim agreement" representing the drivers with a start-up leasing outfit, the Transport Maritime Association (TMA). TMA has promised the drivers a hefty initial pay increase and benefits package if they turn over their rigs and work directly for the new company. Fed up with working horrendously long hours as independents—including endless unpaid waits—carrying dangerously unstable container cargo and taking home barely more than the minimum wage, over 4,000 drivers have signed up with TMA. However, many are rightfully leery about the company's sweet-sounding promises.

*The hard-pressed L.A. port truckers will not find an answer to their problems by looking to a corporate "benefactor." What's needed is to build a fighting union, through joint struggle with the rest of the waterfront workers.*

This is a key labor battle for Southern California. A victory here could give tremendous impetus to union organization throughout this notoriously "open shop" region, particularly along the Alameda Avenue corridor between downtown L.A. and the harbor complex. In the past few years there have been a number of combative struggles for union organization by largely Latino and immigrant workers in L.A. Drywallers waged a bitter strike against the employers, cops and immigration (*migra*) agents to join the Carpenters union. The SEIU's "Justice for Janitors" has defied massive police mobilizations. Hotel and restaurant workers have struck repeatedly, and organizing efforts are underway among the desperately underpaid workers in the garment sweatshops. The port truckers, strategically placed in "the leading gateway for containerized cargo in and out of North

America" (*Journal of Commerce*, 3 May), have the potential power to bring the harbor bosses to their knees fast, and to impel unionization efforts among other workers.

When militant Teamsters strikes coincided with independent truckers' protests in the late 1970s, the government pushed through deregulation to drive down shipping costs and strangle union power in the industry. Over a decade ago, Teamster drivers at the L.A. harbor—many of them black—were replaced with "independents" working at a fraction of the cost, without benefits and denied collective bargaining rights. The truckers' position as owner-operators or leasers created a very contradictory consciousness: while operating as petty entrepreneurs, they have been driven to the wall by the big shipping and haulage companies. This has led to repeated efforts to organize. After two earlier strikes, including a six-week walkout in 1988, a stoppage organized by the Latino American Truckers Association (LATA) in 1993 effectively paralyzed the port for eleven days in an unsuccessful bid for Teamster representation.

A fight to win union recognition means tackling head-on the racist anti-immigrant frenzy being pushed by politicians of both parties, from Republican governor Pete Wilson to Democratic Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. Over 90 percent of the *troqueros* are immigrants from Mexico and Central America. During the protests against the immigrant-bashing Proposition 187 in 1994, LATA members marched through the waterfront and led convoys through downtown L.A. in powerful displays of labor action in defense of immigrant rights. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) works hand in glove with the bosses to clamp down on Latino workers, many of them with experience in combative labor struggles in Latin America. The Spartacist League says: Labor must mobilize to stop *migra* terror and deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

But the CWA tops are playing strictly by the bosses' rules. At a May 1 mass rally attended by over 2,500 truckers, CWA bureaucrats warned against "violence" on the picket lines and vowed to enforce court injunctions limiting pickets to six to a gate. But L.A. truckers remember that LATA member Ruderis Lazo was brutally beaten by company police in September 1994. Meanwhile, Latino Teamster Jesse Acuna sits in

prison on a five-year rap after being assaulted by cops for defending his union's picket lines during the national truckers strike two years ago. Labor must demand: Freedom now for Jesse Acuna!

The CWA leadership's strategy is to organize drivers to sign up with TMA and hope that the trucking and shipping firms will play ball. At the May 1 rally, the union platform was handed over to TMA chief Donald Allen, a former trucking insurance agent, who laid out the company's plans to secure a monopoly over all trucking at the harbor. TMA is purportedly promising a \$25/hour wage package—but only for one year. But so far only a handful of haulage companies have signed on with TMA. It's a corporate squeeze play in which the drivers are being used, not to bolster their own union power, but to boost Allen's corporate ambitions. Truckers can only rely on their own strength, by forging a powerful union organization in struggle.

The truckers need an *elected strike/organizing committee* to take control of their action out of the hands of the bureaucrats, and to draw other unions, notably the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), Teamsters and rail workers, into a joint struggle. Rather than the company-supervised "dispatch hall" the CWA is pushing, a *union hiring hall* is needed to ensure equitable distribution of work among all truckers, with a particular effort to reach out to black drivers and thus undercut the bosses' attempts to divide the workforce along racial lines.

Scandalously, ILWU Local 13 tops are having their members unload ships and load scab trucks behind the picket lines. Both the ILWU and Teamster bureaucrats refused to lift a finger to back the truckers during the '93 strike. The ILWU tops' scabherding only emboldens the Pacific Maritime Association bosses, who are trying to extract "productivity" givebacks when the longshore contract expires in July. On February 5, the ILWU shut down the L.A./Long Beach docks to protest the decision to hire a non-union contractor to operate the huge L.A. Export Terminal (LAXT) coal unloading facility currently under construction. *What's necessary is united strike action to shut the ports down tight. For mass pickets that no one and nothing crosses!*

Instead, government-approved Teamsters president Ron Carey even refused to sanction a strike when 215 Teamster workers at the Sante Fe railroad yard in L.A. were summarily fired in 1995.

Far from using the union's muscle to defend its members and organize Latino truckers, Carey organizes grotesquely protectionist, racist demonstrations against Mexican truckers in the name of opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The labor tops' opposition to NAFTA with chauvinist calls to "save American jobs" only serves to fuel the racist assault on Latinos, Asians and all immigrants. We call instead for workers on both sides of the border to join in common class struggle against this neocolonial "free trade" rape of Mexico by the U.S. imperialist bosses.

While there's a lot about the CWA's deal with TMA that's unclear, one thing is certain: collaboration with the bosses is a sure recipe for defeat. This lash-up recalls the CWA's own origins as a company union in the phone industry. The CWA bureaucracy was a linchpin of the sinister American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), a "labor" front for the CIA's anti-union assassins and saboteurs in Latin America. In 1973, the AIFLD organized an independent truckers "strike" in Chile which was instrumental in bringing down the leftist Allende government and ushering in a reign of terror that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of leftist and labor militants.

At home and abroad, the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy sees as its main job keeping labor in line for the American ruling class. Under new, "progressive" president John Sweeney, the AFL-CIO has been recruiting hundreds of college students and other young activists for a "union summer." But instead of building support for L.A. truckers and other workers fighting for union recognition, Sweeney & Co. are throwing organizers and money into bringing out the vote for Clinton's Democrats in November, so they can have another four years to push through racist attacks on blacks and immigrants.

Like the recently organized Latino drywallers and carpenters, the truckers are having to fight their way into the unions. To achieve any real victories for the working class, what's needed is a political struggle within the unions to drive out the labor lieutenants of capital and to forge a class-struggle workers party which unites all workers—black, white, Asian and Latino—to sweep away this union-busting, racist capitalist system. *Victory to the L.A. truckers! Organize the unorganized!* ■

## PL Caves In...

(continued from page 7)

then Marx, PL has essentially reverted to the old utopian socialist view that the struggle for communism is simply a question of convincing everyone that collective living would be a good idea. PL has completely rejected the understanding that socialist revolution requires a material basis to construct a society of plenty along the lines of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." This is achieved centrally in the organization and consciousness of the working class built up through class struggle. Genuine communists are fighters for the material interests of the working class. It is only by building up the organization, social strength and consciousness of the proletariat—by winning struggles and point-

ing the way forward—that we can forge the revolutionary communist party necessary to effect the overthrow of decaying capitalist society.

PL does not lead its members to be fighters for the working class, but to be proselytizers for increasingly weird ideas about what a future communist society would look like. PL makes no distinction between working-class organizations like trade unions, and social service organizations, churches, and even bourgeois political parties like the Democrats. As far as PL is concerned, all of these are "reform" organizations, which PLers are sometimes encouraged to join in order to find recruits and "build a base." In 1972, when petty-bourgeois youth opposing the war in Vietnam had massive illusions in Democratic Party presidential candidate George McGovern, PLers actually formed "Grass Roots for McGovern" committees. The draft of "Road to Rev-

olution 4½," projects a PL demonstration "to fight for a workers dictatorship" outside the Democratic Party convention this August. Thus PL, for all its "communist" rhetoric, reveals again that in practice it simply capitulates to the current backward consciousness in the working class—in this case to the idea that the Democratic Party is some kind of "lesser evil" to the Republicans.

Anyone serious about making the working class conscious of its historic interest in overthrowing capitalism should recognize that the poisonous racial and sexual divisions spread by the ruling class are key impediments to class struggle, as are illusions in the racist, capitalist Democratic Party. For all their talk of multiracial unity, Progressive Labor surrenders to the racist backlash against public education, and to the Democratic Party of war and racism. For youth, for workers, for women, blacks

and Latinos, the way to smash the entrenched racist, sexist status quo is forging a revolutionary workers party—against both the Democrats and Republicans. Communists fight for a party that serves as a tribune of the people, taking aim at every manifestation of racial and sexual oppression. ■

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# MOVE...

(continued from page 12)

massacre have now had to take the stand, it has been clear from the beginning of the proceedings on April 9 that the "legal" conspiracy against MOVE continues. Both Wilson Goode and the current mayor, Ed Rendell, who was district attorney at the time, had already been granted immunity from lawsuits. Under Judge Pollak's rules, some of the facts that came out in Goode's commission on the MOVE bombing will be heard, but *not* the finding in the final report that "dropping a bomb on an occupied rowhouse was unconscionable and should have been rejected out of hand." In this 40 percent black city, the pool for jury selection was 90 percent white, composed entirely of *people from outside Philadelphia*. While attorneys for the city used some peremptory challenges to remove black jurors, the panel which resulted is made up of five whites, two blacks and an Asian.

That it required civil suits to bring any of those guilty of the mass murder of MOVE onto the stand is itself an indictment of American bourgeois "democracy" and its "justice" system. The suit brought by Ramona Africa clearly lays out that the bombing and "the events of years leading up to May 13, 1985 are an *extension of a planned conspiracy*" to eliminate MOVE entirely. In regard to the 1978 Powelton Village police siege, in which a policeman was shot and killed, the suit documents that even though the sentencing judge publicly admitted he did not know who killed the cop, nine MOVE members were framed for the shooting and sentenced to 900 years in prison. MOVE's protests against the continued imprisonment of their members led to the city's May 1985 attack.

Ramona Africa's suit details the cops' enormous military deployment, beginning on Mother's Day, May 12, which led up to the bombing:

"Our home was surrounded by *hundreds* of fire and police officials armed with: squirt guns, tear gas, concussion grenades, explosives, M-16 rifles, 30.06 caliber scoped sniper rifles, 12 gauge shot guns, Uzi machine guns, 22.250 caliber rifles with silencers, .357 magnums, Smith and Wesson 9 MM automatic hand guns, .45 caliber Thompson sub-machine guns, Browning automatic rifles, .50 caliber machine guns, M-60 machine guns, 20 MM armor piercing anti-tank guns and the diabolical ingredients to make bombs.

"During the first 90 minutes or so of the confrontation, approximately 10,000 rounds of bullets were fired at me and my family by police officers...."

The suit also points out that much of this arsenal was acquired with the aid of a BATF agent.

The city's official line on the decision to drop the bomb was that it was meant to destroy the "bunker" on the roof of the MOVE house. In recounting the cold-blooded actions of the police who had the house surrounded, Ramona's suit

exposes the murderous intent of their decisions:

"High powered explosives were used on various areas of our home, on orders of defendant [police commissioner Gregore] Sambor and/or his agents.... Defendants *knew* we had gasoline stored in our home for our generator *and* defendants believed we had a half truck-load of stolen explosives in our home, so to use high powered explosives on the house in such a situation shows clearly what their intention had to be."

The papers go on to point out that the bomb dropped on the house the afternoon of 13 May 1985 "ignited a fire that defendants deliberately refused to extinguish," and that while the house burned, a police videotape recorded cops and officials stationed across the street laughing and saying, "That's the last time they'll call the Commissioner a mutha fucka." As screaming adults and children tried to leave the burning house, "we continued to encounter gunfire

Brooks (the city's managing director in 1985), then-fire commissioner William Richmond, and police lieutenant Frank Powell, a key player in planning the attack who personally dropped the C-4 bomb from a helicopter. All followed Goode's lead in tossing out leaky alibis, while trying to rat on each other. Sambor claimed not to know that C-4 was mixed into the bomb. Richmond baldly asserted that his decision to let the fire burn was "a judgement call. There was not evil intent"! Richmond also testified that Sambor suppressed an order from Brooks to put out the fire.

Obscenely, Leo Brooks testified that the device that touched off the inferno was not a bomb at all, since it didn't have "aerodynamic capabilities, fins, etc., to direct its trajectory." Rather it was a "bag in which explosive was put." As Ramona Africa replied, referring to the Unabomber and the destruction of

forum in New York City in July 1985.

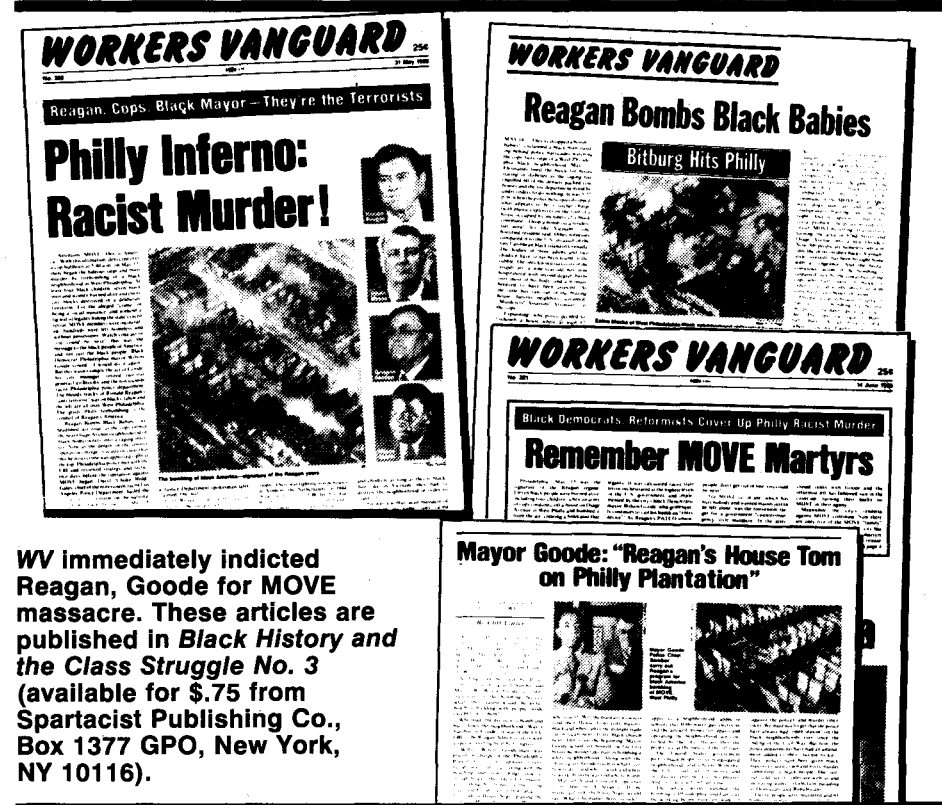
The rest of the left (with the exception of the Revolutionary Communist Party and Progressive Labor) reacted either by alibiing for Wilson Goode or refusing outright to defend MOVE. The Communist Party demanded the resignation of the city manager and the fire and police commissioners as a way to get Goode off the hook. Workers World Party guru Sam Marcy echoed Goode's denial of responsibility, stating that Goode "was merely informed of the planned assault and was not a participant in the plans" (*Workers World*, 30 May 1985). The most grotesque response came from the ludicrously misnamed Revolutionary Workers League, which wrote that there should have been "black self-defense" groups to "deal" with MOVE. What they had in mind was a *mugging*, saying such "defense" groups "could have intercepted MOVE members on the street and administered some more powerful forms of persuasion" (*Fighting Worker*, June 1985).

The Spartacist League prepared to stand with MOVE at a protest called in Philadelphia two weeks after the bombing. But prior to the demonstration, the Socialist Workers Party and others organizing the event sought to blunt any protest against Goode, outrageously debating in planning meetings whether MOVE would be allowed to speak! Hearing of the attempt to censor MOVE, we bitterly announced in a press release that the SL would not attend the protest: "No indication has been given by the organizers of today's protest...that MOVE will be defended or given the respect their martyrdom demands. We have no interest in lending our forces and good name to a gathering which has effectively cut off the participation of the MOVE victims" (reprinted in *WV* No. 381, 14 June 1985).

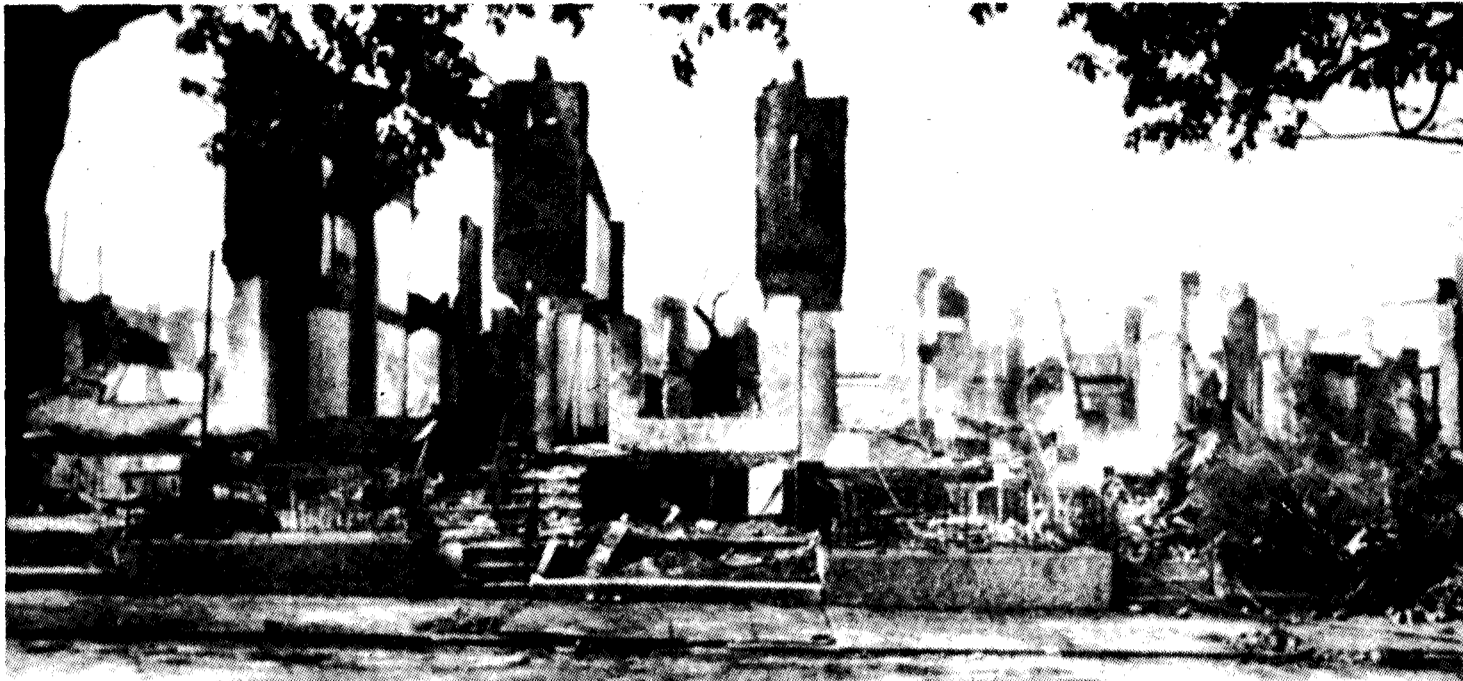
The capitulation of the SWP, CP, RWL, et al. to MOVE's tormentors showed their prostration before the capitalist state—and in particular its black Democratic Party front men—at a time when the state had clearly revealed its impulse toward racist genocide. The MOVE bombing was, as we said at the time, the signature of the Reagan years. Eight years later, Democratic president Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno conspired to carry out the grotesque mass murder, by weapons and fire, of 86 men, women and children in the racially integrated Branch Davidian complex near Waco, Texas.

Like MOVE, the Branch Davidians were targeted because they dared to exercise basic democratic rights, like the right to association and to bear arms. In both cases, the state felt it could get away with its murderous actions because the groups were perceived as isolated from the rest of the population. In response to the Waco holocaust, virtually the entire left either ducked the issue or aped Clinton/Reno's smearing of the Branch Davidians as a violent "cult." The Spartacist League was virtually the only socialist organization to denounce and protest this act of bloody state terrorism.

The MOVE and Waco holocausts demonstrated that the Democrats and Republicans are partner parties of racist capitalism. A decent future for the working people and impoverished ghetto masses can only be assured by throwing the corrupt, racist ruling class from power and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. This task demands the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party committed to mobilizing the working class, through its mass organizations, in defense of all the oppressed. Concretely today this means fighting for the trade unions, along with black organizations and youth, to actively take up the cause of freedom for the MOVE prisoners, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and all victims of capitalist repression. Through such struggles, the workers and their organizations will only be strengthened for future battles against the racist exploiters who are the enemies of us all. ■



# WORKERS VANGUARD



Meyers/NY Times

## MOVE Survivors Put City Rulers on Trial



Shaffer/NY Times

Black Philadelphia neighborhood in ruins following the cops' helicopter bombing of MOVE commune. Ramona Africa (left) spent seven years in prison for surviving police assault which killed eleven men, women and children.

### Philadelphia: 11 Years After Racist Cop Bombing

13 MAY 1985: In an act of calculated racist mass murder, Philadelphia police dropped a powerful bomb on the Osage Avenue home of the radical back-to-nature group MOVE. The cops pumped thousands of rounds of ammunition into the house, and as the blaze caused by the bomb was allowed to burn out of control, they fired at people trying to flee. The death toll was eleven black people, including five children, while 61 homes in the black West Philly neighborhood burned to the ground.

The cop attack on MOVE was carried out with the aid and assistance of the FBI, which helped plan the assault and provided the military explosive C-4 used to bomb the house, and of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF), which helped procure the weaponry. It was a message from the Reagan White House: Step out of line, and this is what you get. In the aftermath, the bombing was "reviewed" by the Justice Department, a state grand jury and a city commission appointed by the black Democratic mayor at the time, Wilson Goode. Yet no charges were ever brought against the perpetrators of this heinous crime—from Goode, who approved the attack, to the various local, state and federal cops and officials involved. The only person to be put on trial afterwards was Ramona Africa, the sole adult survivor of the

attack, who suffered seven years in prison on trumped-up charges of "riot" and "conspiracy."

Now, eleven years later, the government's murderous conspiracy to destroy MOVE is again the focus of attention, as a trial takes place in the Philadelphia court of U.S. District judge Louis Pollak over three separate civil suits against the city, its police and fire commissioners at the time, and others. They are being sued by Ramona Africa, Louise James (who owned the MOVE home and whose son Frank Africa was one of the murdered MOVE members) and LaVerne Sims, sister of MOVE founder John Africa.

The potential impact of the court hearings in Philadelphia, where any discussion of the state's war against MOVE is explosive, is magnified by current investigations into massive Philly cop corruption and brutality, which have already forced the reversal of 116 drug convictions and the review of nearly 2,000 other

arrests. Furthermore, a huge spotlight has been thrown on the city's racist frame-up system by the international protests for black journalist and death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who became a supporter of MOVE after reporting on a massive cop assault in 1978 against MOVE's Powelton Village home.

Ramona Africa's suit, filed over nine years ago, is asking for compensatory and punitive damages, as well as "any declaratory or injunctive relief necessary to insure that such religious persecution never happens again." It goes without saying that those victimized by the bloody state vendetta against MOVE should receive every dime they ask for. But as Ramona Africa stated, "I didn't file this suit for money. We intend to instill in people the motivation to stand up for themselves."

Immediately following the racist firebombing on Osage Avenue, the Spartacist League declared our solidarity with



Barger/WCAU-TV

MOVE. Since then, we have sought through protests, public forums and articles in our press to sear the memory of this atrocity into the consciousness of the working people. The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle defense organization associated with the SL, has defended MOVE members victimized by state repression, for example through the PDC's program of monthly stipends to class-war prisoners. As we declared in May 1985: "Avenge the Philly inferno—For black freedom through socialist revolution!"

While as a result of the civil suits some of those responsible for the MOVE

*continued on page 11*

Former city officials guilty of murder: (from left) Mayor Wilson Goode, Managing Director Leo Brooks, Fire Commissioner William Richmond, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor (at 1985 hearing on MOVE bombing).

