

New Orleans: Capitalist Crimes and Cover-Ups

SEPTEMBER 27—Hurricane Rita was supposed to be the Bush administration's opportunity for a comeback from the manmade social disaster around Hurricane Katrina, when the federal, state and local governments abandoned thousands of poor and black people to suffer and die. Yet what happened when Hurricane Rita slammed into Texas and Louisiana? People trying to evacuate by car

were trapped for up to 20 hours in the broiling sun on jammed highways that became parking lots. At least 23 nursing home patients died when their damaged bus, brought into service after Governor Rick Perry ordered a waiver on safety restrictions, burst into flames. Nobody could board flights out of the area until government officials flew in airport screeners to check that passengers didn't

pose a "terror" threat. Some of the poorest residents of Houston and other cities were simply left behind. As one man standing in a line of 100 people trying to cash his paycheck angrily put it, "This is crazy. How are you supposed to evacuate a hurricane if you don't have money?"

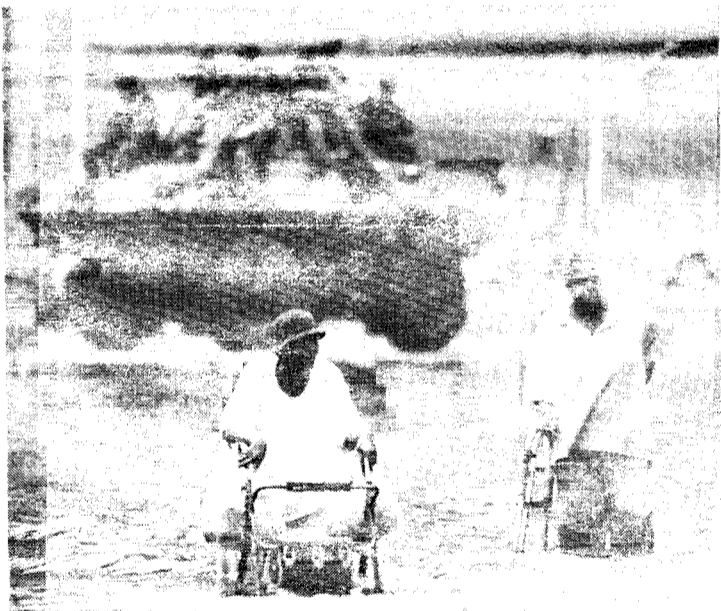
Commenting on the nightmarish evacuation of Houston, a *New York Times* (25 September) article reveals that across

the U.S., government plans to relocate, house and feed hundreds of thousands of people who could be displaced by natural disasters "are embryonic at best and nonexistent at worst." Compare this with Cuba and its collectivized economy. Despite its relative poverty, intensified by the U.S. imperialists' 43-year economic embargo and Stalinist bureaucratic

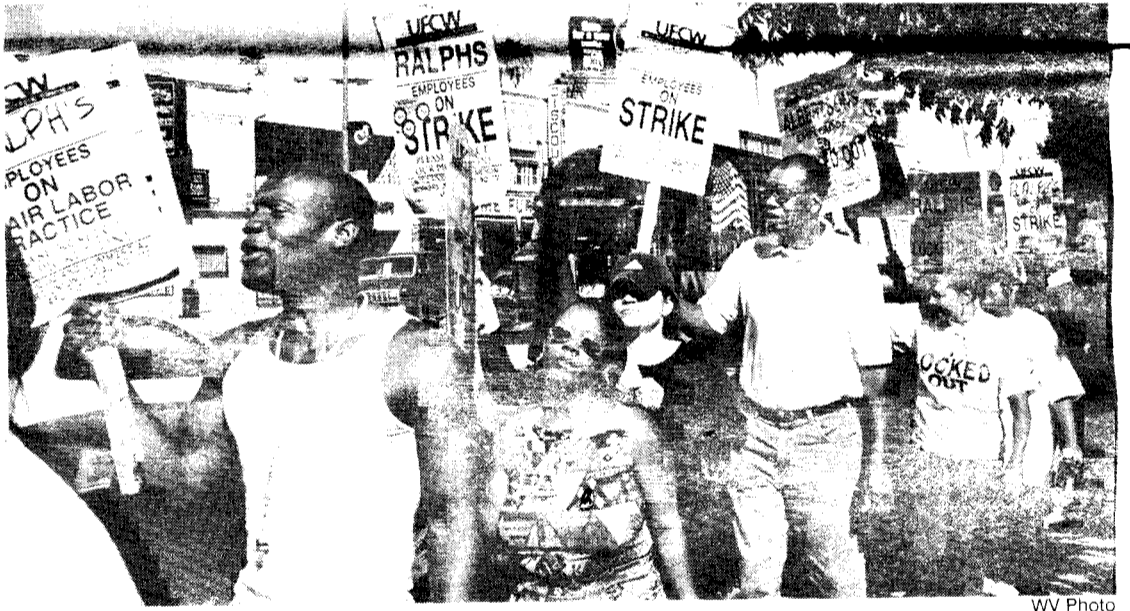
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Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party!

Black Liberation and the Fight for a Workers America



Ainsworth/Dallas Morning News



WV Photo

Left: Capitalist rulers left New Orleans blacks, poor to die. Right: Southern California grocery workers on strike, October 2003. Under revolutionary leadership, black workers would link anger of ghetto masses to social power of proletariat.

We print below a September 15 speech, edited for publication, by Don Alexander of the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Spartacist League Central Committee. Comrade Alexander's presentation was part of a united-front rally in New York City initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee under the slogans, "The 'War on Terror' Targets Blacks, Immigrants, Labor and Leftists! Fight Government Repression!" More coverage of the rally inside.

I appreciated some of the speakers emphasizing the fact that all the victims of this racist, capitalist frame-up system have to be defended. We are here to rally and to demand: Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Hands off Lynne Stewart! Hands off Mohamed Yousry and Ahmed Abdel Sattar! Hands off Assata Shakur!

The same ruling class whose capitalist system framed up and imprisoned Mumia and countless other fighters is responsible for the racist atrocity in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region after Hurricane Katrina.

Over the years, I've helped to fight numerous racist and anti-labor frame-ups—Angela Davis, Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), Mumia—and have participated in building the labor/black mobilizations against the Klan and Nazis that were initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee, the Spartacist League and also the Labor Black Leagues. About the remark that was made here that we're living under fascism—far from it. This is a very right-wing capitalist government, which has carried out a qualitative diminution of our rights. But the working class has not been defeated in struggle.

In 1995, I went to South Africa for the first time. I met many leftists, trade unionists and women's organizations and won support for Mumia. It was crucial that we got the support of COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), whose millions-strong organizations came

out to save the life of Mumia and for the abolition of the racist death penalty. While we were there, Pennsylvania Democratic governor Tom Ridge signed a death warrant for Mumia. It's hard to overstate the importance of the power of mobilizing international protest, centered on unions representing millions of workers around the world, to beat the rulers back! And that's the power we urgently need to mobilize today to stop them from persecuting and crushing our fighters, like Lynne Stewart, Mumia and Assata.

The Labor Black League, which is fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, has assisted in distributing the very fine statement issued by the Spartacist League in the wake of the New Orleans disaster (see WV No. 854, 16 September). On the LBL membership card is a statement made by Karl Marx almost 150 years ago: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." The LBL is an activist organization, based upon a class-struggle program that encapsulates the perspective of the Leninist tribune of the people:

mobilizing the social power of labor on behalf of all of the oppressed, challenging American capitalism's bedrock of anti-black racism. Our work is to further the common struggle to build a revolutionary workers party that will fight for a workers government.

Hurricane Katrina has ripped away the tattered facade of the U.S. government as "of the people, by the people, for the people," exposing the racism, venality and ineptitude of the White House gang. It also demonstrated the utter irrationality and anarchy of the profit-driven capitalist system. And what we saw on the streets of New Orleans in the past two weeks was the core of the racist capitalist state: bodies of armed men defending private property. The Democratic governor of Louisiana authorized troops to "shoot and kill" as National Guardsmen, cops and private gunmen tried to reassert capitalist "law and order." Their cops acted like they were facing an incipient slave insurrection, and at every opportunity they pointed guns at people trying to escape.

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Court Approves "Disappearing" Citizens

Free Jose Padilla!

In the latest setback to basic democratic rights, on September 9 a federal appeals court overturned a lower court ruling and affirmed the government's indefinite detention of American citizen Jose Padilla in the name of the "war on terrorism." Seized at Chicago's O'Hare airport on 8 May 2002, Padilla was initially held for a month as a "material witness" in the September 11 grand jury investigation. The Bush administration then declared him an "enemy combatant" on the basis of outlandish allegations that he had been thinking of building and setting off a radioactive "dirty bomb." He has been locked up for over three years without charges or recourse to a hearing or trial—for most of that time without access to an attorney.

The recent decision was written by Judge J. Michael Luttig, one of the right-wing judges on the short list to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court. Luttig's decision seeks to overcome limitations placed on the government by last year's Supreme Court ruling in the case of Yasser Esam Hamdi, an American citizen imprisoned without charges who the U.S. claimed was cap-

tured on the battlefield in Afghanistan. In that decision, the Supreme Court held that "a state of war is not a blank check for the president" and that the government could not indefinitely hold Hamdi without "notice of the factual basis for his classification" as an enemy combatant and a "fair opportunity to rebut the government's factual assertions before a neutral decision-maker." In a companion case, the Court also ruled that the hundreds detained at Guantánamo had to be provided the right to file *habeas corpus* petitions to challenge their imprisonment. Some 200 of these detainees have been on a hunger strike that began in mid-August protesting their indefinite imprisonment and abuse and beatings by guards.

As we stated in "Supreme Court Rulings—Partial Setback to Bush Administration" (WV No. 829, 9 July 2004):

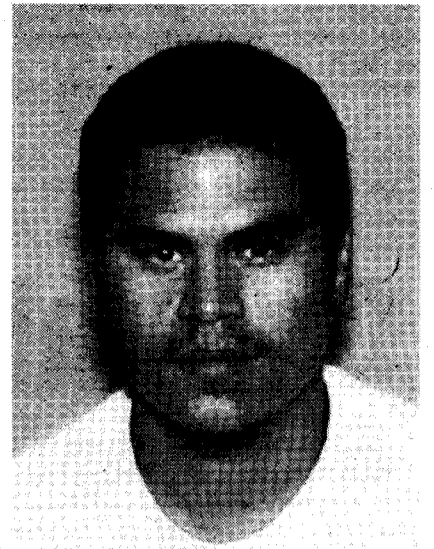
"Any impediment to the government's police state designs is welcome, but the Court's decisions were far from the 'emphatic repudiation' of the Bush administration the ACLU claimed them to be. Though upholding some limits on presidential power, the Court's decisions recognize a right of due process and *habeas corpus* so truncated that in any other context, these decisions would be

seen as consistent with the wholesale shredding of these protections."

While granting Hamdi the limited right to challenge the allegations under which he could be jailed indefinitely, the Supreme Court accepted the government's pretext that since Hamdi was captured on the battlefield, he could be held as an "enemy combatant." In the Court's eyes, the "neutral decisionmaker" for such an "enemy combatant" could be something as obviously biased as the military commissions set up by the Bush administration. Three commission prosecutors have resigned, protesting that the tribunals were rigged. Following last year's Supreme Court ruling, Hamdi agreed to be deported to rejoin his family in Saudi Arabia on condition that he renounce his U.S. citizenship.

The same day it issued its ruling in Hamdi's case, the Supreme Court dismissed Padilla's first legal challenge on the flimsy ground that his *habeas corpus* petition was filed in the wrong court. While the Court ruled that the government has the authority to prevent "enemy combatants" from returning to the field of battle while fighting continues—Afghanistan in Hamdi's case—a ruling on Padilla's case would have compelled the Court to confront the administration's claims that the "battlefield" in the "war on terror" is everywhere and its duration eternal. To conform to the Court's Hamdi ruling, the Feds simply changed their story on Padilla. Now they claim Padilla was a member of Al Qaeda who fought on Afghan battlefields. Dumping the "dirty bomb" pretext, the Feds manufactured new lurid allegations that Padilla "may have been planning" to destroy apartment buildings by using gas lines (*New York Times*, 10 September).

In *amici curiae* (friends of the court) briefs submitted on Padilla's behalf in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals and later in the Supreme Court, the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Com-



Reuters

mittee denounced the "unprecedented assertion of imperial powers by the President." The briefs noted: "What the President asserts is nothing less than the right to disappear citizens.... The District Court's deference to the President's determination of Padilla's status as an enemy combatant relegates to the President the role of sole arbiter of the exercise and applicability of democratic, constitutional rights. This is consonant with the rationale of a police state."

From the outset of the "war on terror," we have insisted that the government's repressive measures, directed initially at Muslims and immigrants, and trampling on political dissent along the way, would necessarily broaden to include black people and the integrated labor movement. Workers, fighters for black rights and all defenders of civil liberties must demand: Free Jose Padilla! ■

To get a copy of the brief filed in defense of Padilla by the PDC and SL, which is reprinted in *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* No. 31, order for \$.50 from: Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013.



TROTSKY

For Black Emancipation Through Socialist Revolution!

The social disaster in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina graphically exposed that the racist oppression of black people is embedded in the very foundations of U.S. capitalism. Writing in the late 1950s in the midst of the developing civil rights struggles, James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, argued against the liberal policy of gradual reform and stressed that genuine black equality can only come about through

the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system by the multiracial working class.

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

The Negroes, more than any others in this country, have reason and right to be revolutionary.

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

Reforms and concessions, far more important and significant than any yet attained, will be by-products of this revolutionary alliance. They will be fought for and attained at every stage of the struggle. But the new movement will not stop with reforms, nor be satisfied with concessions. The movement of the Negro people and the movement of militant labor, united and coordinated by a revolutionary party, will solve the Negro problem in the only way it can be solved—by a social revolution.

—James P. Cannon, "The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement" (1959), reprinted in *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, Pathfinder Press (1962)



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Mexico: López Obrador, Democratic Rights and the Tasks of the Working Class

We print below the concluding part of an article translated from *Espartaco* No. 24 (Summer 2005), published by our comrades of the *Grupo Espartaquista de México*. Part One was printed in *WV* No. 853 (2 September). The article centrally deals with the attempt by Mexican president Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) and a section of the former ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to strip Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO) of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of his political immunity—a process called *desafuero*—in order to eliminate him from next year's presidential race.

PART TWO

The reactionary policies of the PRD are not the result of an underhanded betrayal or the corruption of this or that leader, but the logical and inevitable consequence of its class character. In a backward and dependent capitalist country like Mexico, the national ruling class depends overwhelmingly on credit and investment from its U.S. masters. Any political alternative that, like the PRD, stands for the continuation of Mexican capitalism—i.e., that ultimately defends the rule and interests of a wing of the national bourgeoisie—will be forced to reject in deeds the democratic demands it promises. Thus, confronting a modern and socially powerful proletariat and a vast and discontented peasantry on its own territory, the national bourgeoisie is fundamentally much more hostile to “its own” masses than to its American masters. Whatever the rhetoric, there is no anti-imperialist wing of the bourgeoisie. The only thing bourgeois nationalists can propose is to better negotiate the terms of their own subordination to imperialism and the con-

ESPARTACO

sequent abrogation of the population's democratic rights. The PRD doesn't even oppose NAFTA, which by its nature is a “treaty” for the one-sided rape of the Mexican economy by the imperialists, but merely wants to renegotiate it.

The inextricable link between the broad, unresolved democratic demands and the international and socialist struggle of the proletariat is at the core of Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. In one of his “Basic Postulates” of the permanent revolution, Trotsky explained:

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

—Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* (1931)

The peasantry, submerged in the most remote and backward regions, is part of the heterogeneous layer Marxists call the petty bourgeoisie. The landless peasants are reduced, in the best-case scenario, to subsistence agriculture and lack social power. The small landowners compete with each other to market their produce. Their interest lies in the private ownership of land. That is why the peasantry is incapable of reorganizing society, of playing an *independent* revolutionary role. Today's peasantry is the product of

No Support to Capitalist PRD! Forge a Workers Party!

the backwardness inherent in Third World capitalism; peasants fight against the large, mechanized farms whose spread is turning many peasants into rural workers. We communists take sides with the peasants in their struggles against the land-

necessary to begin expropriating the means of production and establishing a collectivized, planned economy, as well as a state monopoly of foreign trade. Instead of bourgeois parliamentarism, the Russian Revolution implemented work-



Petrograd, June 1917: Bolshevik banner (right) demands: “Down With the Ten Capitalist Ministers! All Power to the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies!” Theory of permanent revolution developed by Leon Trotsky (inset) was confirmed by October Revolution.

owners and the government and seek to win their support for socialist revolution. But we understand that, inasmuch as it struggles to maintain its existence against modern industrial capitalism, the peasantry seeks to roll the wheel of history *backwards*. The poor peasantry, still millions strong, may play an important role in the revolution, but it will necessarily be subordinated to the leadership of the industrial urban proletariat.

The working class, or proletariat, is responsible for collectively turning the wheels of the modern industrial economy—the factories, communications, transport. Possessing nothing other than its own labor power, the working class has no interest in the continuation of the rule of private property. Its historic interest lies in *the abolition of private ownership of the means of production*, which would place the entire economy at the service of human needs and would lay the fundamental basis to eradicate exploitation, oppression and misery. For this reason, the working class is the only genuinely revolutionary class of our epoch, able to lead the peasantry, the impoverished urban masses and all the oppressed in the fight for their emancipation.

The Russian Revolution points the way forward for Mexico. In fact, the Trotskyist perspective was confirmed in practice by the Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917. At that time, the Russian working class took in its hands the tasks of the democratic revolution that the bourgeois regime had not been able to solve: it freed the country from the imperialist yoke by repudiating the foreign debt contracted by the tsar and the bourgeoisie; it laid the basis for the emancipation of women and issued laws banning all types of discrimination against homosexuals and ethnic minorities. It also abolished private ownership of land and called on the poor peasants to carry out an *agrarian revolution* to destroy the feudal estates and the remnants of peonage. But in order to accomplish this, it was

ers democracy through the soviets—councils of workers and soldiers in charge of directing the economy and the whole society. That is what a workers government meant: a government based on the proletariat supported by the peasantry.

These measures laid the initial basis for the socialist reorganization of society. Certainly, given the degree of economic interpenetration in the modern world and as the example of the Soviet Union showed, no country can grow in isolation from international trade. Thus, from the very beginning, a victorious revolutionary party in a backward country—and even more so in one that shares a border with the U.S.—would have to fight, as part of a single international party, *for proletarian revolution* within the American imperialist behemoth and on an international scale. In fact, only the triumph of workers revolution in the U.S. could guarantee the genuine national emancipation

of Mexico. The multiracial U.S. working class, in particular its strategic black component, is potentially the most powerful ally of Mexican workers. As our U.S. comrades recently wrote in an article denouncing the racist atrocities of the paramilitary “Minutemen” and demanding full citizenship rights for all immigrants (*WV* No. 849, 27 May):

“An effective defense of the working class requires an *internationalist* program, expressing the common class interests of workers on both sides of the border drawn when the U.S. stole much of the Southwest from Mexico in 1848. The fight for immigrant rights must be seen as part of the struggle against all forms of oppression. And in the U.S., that means a struggle against black oppression, the bedrock of American capitalism. Workers must fight against the capitalist rulers' attempts to pit one oppressed group against another—such as the recent gross statement by right-wing Mexican president Vicente Fox that Mexican workers ‘are doing the work that not even blacks want to do in the United States’.”

The millions of Mexican and Central American workers and peasants who migrate “illegally” to the U.S., facing all sorts of dangers, lack any rights and are forced to take the hardest and worst-paid jobs. But the racist hypocrite Fox cares for neither the rights of Mexican workers nor those of blacks. *For joint class struggle in Mexico and the U.S. against the capitalist rulers!*

The LTS: “Free and Sovereign” Reformism

Among those who claim to be “Trotskyists,” the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS) opposed the anti-democratic attacks by the PRI and the PAN while correctly emphasizing its denunciation both of the PRD as a bourgeois party and of those “socialist” groups that collaborate with it (*Estrategia Obrera*, 16 April). However, the strategic aim that the LTS links to its position on the *desafuero* is explicitly reformist and not revolutionary: for the Mexican masses to mobilize in order to “impose a Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly in which the great demands of the worker and peasant majorities of the country are discussed.”

This constituent assembly would be open “not only to the PRD and AMLO, but also to all social, labor and left-wing organizations” and would “discuss” burning democratic issues such as a “radical agrarian reform,” “decent wages and

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Spartacist contingent in March 2002 Brooklyn protest against anti-immigrant repression.



Mexico...

(continued from page 3)

employment." the refusal to pay the foreign debt and the cancellation of "all treaties, like NAFTA, that subordinate us to American imperialism." The LTS assigns to a constituent assembly—i.e., a bourgeois parliamentary body—the task of solving the just aspirations of the masses, promising beforehand it will include the PRD! Throwing permanent revolution overboard, the LTS' plan does not mention, even in passing, that the solution of these questions requires a socialist revolution: the creation of a collective, planned economy and the struggle to extend workers power internationally.

For communists, the call for a constituent assembly—i.e., a legislative assembly within the framework of bourgeois democracy—is justified in situations in which existing laws do not even establish the most basic and formal democratic liberties (as in the case of a military dictatorship or under unconsolidated bourgeois-democratic governments, like the Russian "Provisional Government" of February 1917). In those cases, this call can be used to link the concrete and immediate aspirations of the people with the struggle for socialist revolution. It is, hence, a "transitional demand," proceeding from the spontaneous consciousness of the masses to revolutionary consciousness.

However, if this call is used, as it is by the LTS, simply as a means to "improve" the existing capitalist democracy in a backward country, it has exactly the opposite effect, reinforcing the illusion that capitalist democracy can be qualitatively improved. Linking the legitimate aspirations of the masses for fuller democracy *not* to the struggle for socialist revolution *but* to a "Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly" constitutes a "transitional program" moving from the spontaneous struggle of the masses...to conscious reformism.

IG: From Break with Trotskyism to Break with Reality

But without a doubt, the most absurd of the pseudo-Trotskyist groups is the (mis)named Internationalist Group (IG), whose leadership is made up of ex-members of our organization. For years they have stridently accused us of "abstentionism" and "abstract propagandism," while they promise to find the road to the masses. Having broken in deeds with revolutionary Marxism, in order to justify its existence the IG first got rid of basic honesty, but now has also had to break with reality.

In its most recent publication in Spanish (*El Internacionalista*, May 2005), this little group boasts of its absolute indifference toward the legal campaign against López Obrador. The extraordinary thing about the case is that, in the same article, the IG itself affirms that it defends "the elementary democratic right of any political party to run in the elections with whatever candidates it chooses" and recognizes that:

"What they [the Fox government and the PRI] are seeking is that, once he is sub-



Mexico City, August 2004: Electricians union marches in protest against Fox government.

ject to trial, according to Article 111 of the Mexican Constitution. López Obrador will be denied the right to participate in the elections."

How do they explain this obvious contradiction? With this absurd argument, which immediately follows:

"But it will be months before this is concretized. At the present time, he [López Obrador] isn't even the candidate of the PRD (others, including the perennial PRD presidential hopeful Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, are also vying for the nomination), and no party has presented, much less registered, its standard bearer... Should Fox and the PRI be so bold as to carry out their idiocy...then we would defend the right of López Obrador to run for president....

"Up to now AMLO hasn't been denied the right to present his candidacy. To pretend otherwise is to enter openly into the electoral game of the PRD."

So the IG would only defend the democratic rights of an *official* PRD candidate? What a Marxist criterion! In reality, the "idiocy" of Fox and the PRI that the IG's article situates in a hypothetical future ("Should Fox and the PRI be so bold as to carry out") had already culminated in the *desafuero* 15 days before the date of the IG's article (25 April). It is comical that just two days after the date of its article, and *three days before* the date of the paper in which it first appears, Fox himself gave implicit recognition to the fact that he had been attempting to take away López Obrador's political rights, and backed down. In denying that the attack on democratic rights was already a reality, the charlatans of the IG would have entered into a *de facto* bloc with the Fox government...which wasn't to be because the IG got there too late. But maybe the deposed attorney general, General Macedo de la Concha, would still appreciate their arguments.

The IG also scolds us for opposing AMLO's *desafuero* because the *fuero* [political immunity] for members of the executive branch, the IG maintains, is an "anti-democratic measure." In order to justify its refusal to defend an elementary democratic right *in the concrete*, the IG resorts to democratic *abstractions*. We took a position against the *desafuero* of López Obrador based on the interests of the working class in the concrete case, not on generalizations about *formalities* of bourgeois law like whether or not the Chamber of Deputies should vote on whether to prosecute *any* functionary based on *any* accusation. The question is rather simple: 1) expropriating land to build an access road to a hospital isn't a crime against the proletariat; 2) the accusation was nothing more than an anti-democratic lie of the clericalist Fox & Co. to get rid of the bourgeois-nationalist AMLO as a contender for the presidency.

Understandably, many leftist youth who are fed up with the sludge of capitalist politics feel that revolutionaries should never "take sides" in "intra-bourgeois" quarrels, nor oppose the injustices of the state when the victims are capitalist politicians, since, from this moralistic point of view, these people "deserve it." These are the sentiments that the IG appeals to. However, this has never been

a Marxist criterion. The task of communists is not to adapt to existing consciousness but rather to raise it, telling the truth in all its complexity. The social polarization at the root of Fox's maneuver posed pointblank the *concrete* application of permanent revolution. The IG can quote Trotsky backward and forward, but in refusing to oppose Fox's attack it is renouncing the essence of the Trotskyist perspective; the struggle for the democratic demands of the population in underdeveloped countries is a motor force of socialist revolution. In deeds, this group turns its back on the millions of workers fighting for their democratic rights.

The IG asserts:

"The attack on López Obrador is not the plot between Fox and the North American imperialists that pseudo-Marxists like the Militante group make it out to be. On her visit to Mexico in early March, hawkish American secretary of state Condoleezza Rice stated that the U.S. government would accept a left-wing government in Mexico. According to a report in *Reforma* (10 March), 'Rice ruled out the idea that electoral victories by governments headed by left-wing politicians could worry the United States'."



PRD leaders López Obrador (left) and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, 2003.

The IG shows such touching faith in the promises of the Bush administration! We do not know what secret dealings went on between Fox and his imperialist masters. If for now the U.S. imperialists find it expedient to restrain Fox out of concern that his *desafuero* campaign could destabilize Mexico, only someone very naive would conclude that the imperialists have forsaken their decades-long practice of using the CIA and other forces to foment military interventions in Latin America against regimes not to their liking.

Indeed, the IG's dismissal today of the very real dangers posed by the provocations of the right-wing Fox government is reminiscent of the kid-gloves treatment the IG gave to the leaders of the Venezuelan CTV trade-union federation, who are closely linked to the CIA and have played an active role in the imperialist-supported failed coups directed against the populist bonapartist Hugo Chávez. In a November 2000 article, the IG played down the dangers of U.S. imperialist intervention in

Venezuela and the connections between the CTV and the imperialists.

The IG's double standard is captured by the fact that it considers the corporatist CTV to be a genuine trade union while asserting that the corporatist CTM union in Mexico (which sometimes calls strikes against the bosses) "represents the class enemy" (*El Internacionalista/Edición México*, May 2001). In the IG's mind, the only real unions in Mexico are the "independent" unions run by pro-PRD bureaucrats (see "IG on Venezuela—Opportunism Makes Strange Bedfellows," *WV* No. 787, 20 September 2002). The IG is incapable of defending the class independence of the proletariat, repeatedly tripping over the class line and oscillating between conciliating the PRD left-nationalists and being blind to right-wing provocations.

The IG also accuses us of repeating "the PRD's electoral propaganda and joining in its campaign" for having written in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 846, 15 April), in the introduction to a translation of our 7 April leaflet, that Fox is a "long-time ally of Bush and a favorite of the U.S. imperialists." That the IG attacks such an obvious assertion is testimony to its distance from reality. It does not take a Marxist to realize that Fox licks the boots of U.S. imperialism and that his right-wing economic policies and obscurantist religious backwardness match those of the current Republican Party administration. The PRD demagogically denounces these facts in order to increase its popularity while making it clear to its masters in the north that AMLO is not a "Mexican Chávez," as his opponents on the right say.

Polemicalizing against us, the IG also writes:

"Taking sides for López Obrador against Fox's attack, no matter what provisos are tacked on, is giving him political support. Think of parallel cases: 'Down with the Republican Attack on President Clinton!' during the impeachment proceedings, for example. Or, 'Down with Bush's Attack On Gore!' following the 2000 elections, when the U.S. presidency was decided by a right-wing Supreme Court. No matter how many times one might say 'Break with the Democratic Party!' this would indisputably amount to political support to a section of the bourgeoisie."

The IG implies, retrospectively, that it was indifferent to the Republicans' right-wing attack against Clinton. In 1998, the Republicans subjected Clinton to impeachment proceedings, similar to a political trial, for having lied about his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. This move was part of a reactionary moralistic crusade, which Clinton himself had widely promoted, to shore up "family values." As our U.S. comrades wrote at the time in an article titled "Impeachment Drive Threatens Right to Privacy for All" (*WV* No. 697, 25 September 1998):

"The drive to remove Bill Clinton from the presidency for his consensual sexual affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky poses a threat to every one of us. At issue is one of the most fundamental democratic rights, the right to privacy—which in practice comes down to the right to a private sex life without meddling or snooping by state and church authorities. The politicians and media are going after Clinton for about the only thing he's done that *isn't* a crime from the standpoint of the working class."

In general, one of communism's most distinctive and unique trademarks is the capacity to distinguish between opposition to reactionary attacks and political support to the victims of those attacks. But the IG finds it very difficult to make this distinction.

Norden vs. Norden

The IG truly has a lot to explain in order to justify its line. In July 1988, in the face of obvious electoral fraud that gave Salinas the presidency over Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and even before the election results were known, we wrote in *WV* (No. 457, 15 July 1988), whose editor was none other than Jan Norden, today the IG's main international leader:

"If Cárdenas was elected president, Marxists defend his democratic right to take office. But we do not join forces



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with a bourgeois Cardenista political bloc: rather we defend the workers' democratic rights by proletarian means."

This was a genuinely Trotskyist position, in contradiction with the IG's current indifference to *the same* democratic rights. The absurd pretexts that the IG presents today to justify its agnostic position with respect to Fox's attempted fraud only serve to dishonestly hide its break with this tradition.

In a similar case, in 1984 we offered to contribute a security team composed of trade unionists and supporters of the Spartacist League to defend the Democratic National Convention against growing threats of attacks by the belligerent lunatic Reagan's Republicans. We wrote then: "The profound political and class difference between the Spartacist League and the Democratic Party in no way belies our position that the Democratic Party has the right to assemble and nominate its candidate" (WV No. 358, 6 July 1984). Has Norden changed his mind? Ironically, our pseudo-Trotskyist opponents at that time accused us of capitulating to the Democrats by inventing a "fictitious threat" to the Democratic Convention, just as today the IG declares Fox's bonapartist attack to be nonexistent.

While in AMLO's case we are dealing with a judicial attack and not a military coup, our position in defense of democratic rights under right-wing attack has a historical precedent in the fight of the Bolsheviks against Kornilov in August-September of 1917, on the eve of the Russian Revolution. At that time, Russia was still governed by the bourgeois Provisional Government headed by Alexander Kerensky. Lacking a social base, the Kerensky government tried to balance between the proletariat and the autocratic bourgeoisie. The growing discontent of the workers and the opposition of the workers soviets shackled the Provisional Government. The bourgeoisie and the monarchists were also fed up with social "instability" and the weakness of the government, which was incapable of smashing the workers. Under these conditions, General Kornilov—the Pinochet of his time—risked an attempt at a coup d'état to defeat the Kerensky government and smash the soviets.

Lenin argued for a change of tactic: Since Kornilov's attack was directed, ultimately, against the masses, it was necessary to fight with Kerensky's troops against Kornilov, without giving any political support to Kerensky and without ceasing to denounce the bourgeois character of his government. Lenin wrote ["To the Central Committee of the RSDLP," August 1917]:

"What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?"

"We are changing the *form* of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must *take into account* the present situation. We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting against him *in a different way*, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) Kerensky's *weakness* and *vacillation*. That has been done in the past *as well*. Now, however, it has become the *all-important* thing and this constitutes the change."

According to the IG's new line, Lenin was giving political support to Kerensky, "no matter what provisos are tacked on."

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

As the entire history of the workers movement shows, no isolated generation of militant workers can, alone, accumulate sufficient experience to form their own fully developed politics. However combative their spontaneous consciousness might be, they will not question the social dominance of the bourgeoisie and will necessarily tend to look for their political complement in one or another capitalist party.

It is urgently necessary that the most advanced workers and radicalized intellectuals who take the side of the proletariat on the basis of a Marxist program organize as an independent and disciplined tendency, that is, as a party. That is the only way to combat class collabora-

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Video showing of **Lynne Stewart's** presentation at New York Rally
Don Cane, Labor Black League for Social Defense
Jack Heyman, ILWU Local 10—Executive Board
Brian McKeever, AMFA Local 9—Vice-President*

Moderator: **Valerie West**, Partisan Defense Committee

*organization affiliation for identification purposes only

For more information: (510) 839-0852 or e-mail: pdcbayarea@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO

Saturday, October 1, 5 p.m.

University of Chicago Law School, Room 2 — 1111 East 60th Street

Speakers include: **Lydia Barashango**, sister of Mumia Abu-Jamal
Standish E. Willis, Chicago Conference of Black Lawyers
Mike Elliott, UAW Local 551, Chair, Education Committee*
Don Alexander, New York Labor Black League for Social Defense
Fred Redmond, USWA Assistant Director District 7*

Moderator: **Brian Mendis**, Partisan Defense Committee

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For more information: (312) 563-0442

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, October 8, 4 p.m.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church** — 3300 Wilshire Blvd. (at Berendo St., 2 blocks west of Vermont/Wilshire Red Line Station)

Speakers include: **Lydia Barashango**, sister of Mumia Abu-Jamal
Don Cane, Labor Black League for Social Defense
Henry Walton, Host, KPFK—Labor Review*

Moderator: **Valerie West**, Partisan Defense Committee

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**The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

For more information: (213) 380-8897

tionism, nationalism and all the other ideological means by which the ruling class chains and disarms the proletariat. Only Marxism, which embodies the combination of humanity's highest culture and more than a century of experience in the workers movement, can arm the proletariat with the capacity to defend its historic interests on the political plane. Thus, to speak of the independence of the working class necessarily implies speaking of forging a revolutionary workers party.

For now, illusions in the bourgeois

López Obrador are dominant in the consciousness of the masses in struggle, including the working class. While this continues, however massive their mobilization might be, they will be condemned to remain within the sterile framework of a huge electoral campaign. We know that today our revolutionary politics won't be the most popular in the movement of the masses. But when, in the not-too-distant future, the Mexican working masses, struggling in their own interests, run up against the bourgeois PRD's class opposi-

tion and begin to consider left alternatives, the most conscious workers will remember who defended their basic democratic rights when the right wing was attacking them in 2005, and, most importantly, who dared to denounce the reactionary nature of López Obrador when he was at the height of his popularity. Therefore, today we invite the most conscious leftist youth and workers to seriously consider these arguments and to join the struggle of the Grupo Espartaquista to build a revolutionary workers party. ■

New Orleans...

(continued from page 1)

rule, the government has repeatedly safely evacuated up to two million people from hurricanes.

As we wrote in a 4 September Spartacist League statement (reprinted in *WV* No. 854, 16 September): "This anarchic, irrational profit-driven system cannot even provide for the safety and welfare of the population—the system must go." The situation starkly underlines the need for the overthrow of the capitalist system and the marshalling of the resources and wealth of society by a workers government administering a planned, collectivized economy. To realize this goal, a workers party must be forged to lead the working class, at the head of all the exploited and oppressed, to power.

The Real Looters

The government and media are still covering up the real number of those who died in New Orleans and surrounding Gulf Coast areas. When the Feds finally sent in troops to New Orleans, it wasn't primarily to get anybody out but to assert control over the city, to disarm the remaining population and to enforce the government's suppression of the truth

time never happened." The only verified shooting inside the Dome was of a soldier...who shot himself in the leg!

Meanwhile, the real looting going on is by the capitalists and their patrons in government, who see this mass devastation and death as a golden opportunity for profit-making. The Feds have arrested David Safavian, who before he resigned as the White House's top federal procurement official was enmeshed in Gulf Coast rebuilding contracts, for obstructing an investigation into lobbyist corruption. But Bush & Co. continue to dole out big bucks to their cronies like the Shaw Group and Halliburton's Kellogg, Brown & Root subsidiary, both of which are represented by former Bush campaign manager and former FEMA head, lobbyist Joe Allbaugh. More than 80 percent of the \$1.5 billion in FEMA contracts has been handed out without bids or with only limited competition. In a case of criminals investigating criminals, the Bush administration is running its own investigation into the disaster.

The government has also moved quickly to carry out long-sought reactionary social measures. Bush issued a wage-slashing order exempting jobs created by companies engaged in rebuilding efforts from the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act, which stipulates that federally funded construction projects pay prevailing wages. Then

2006 and take back the White House in 2008."

But what would it mean to have a Democrat back in the White House? The last Democratic president, Bill Clinton, responded to the New Orleans atrocity by rushing to the side of the Bush administration as popular anger against the government swelled. Now, the Democrats see electoral advantage in taking some swings at the administration. On September 18, Clinton attacked Bush, saying, "You can't have an emergency plan that works if it only affects middle-class people up." He claimed that under his presidency, from 1993 through 2000, black and poor people were better off. Clinton stated that while poverty went up under the Reagan and Bush administrations, "we had a different policy."

Despite the fact that Clinton's presidency spanned the short-lived economic boom of the 1990s, under his administration the income gap between rich and poor increased massively as did the wealth gap between black and white households. Using a recent survey by the Pew Hispanic Center, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* online reports that between 1996 and 2002 the median net worth of black families fell by 16.1 percent, while net worth for white families grew by 17 percent. Median

elect officials that they've endorsed to say, "This is an attack on labor!" But a fighting labor movement will not be forged through impotent appeals to "friend of labor" capitalist politicians but through a sharp political struggle to break with such representatives of the capitalist class enemy. That means seeing that the Democrats are the alternate party of capitalist rule and thus every bit as much a part of the problem as the Republicans—even more so because there's the element of trickery in their posture as the friend of labor and the oppressed.

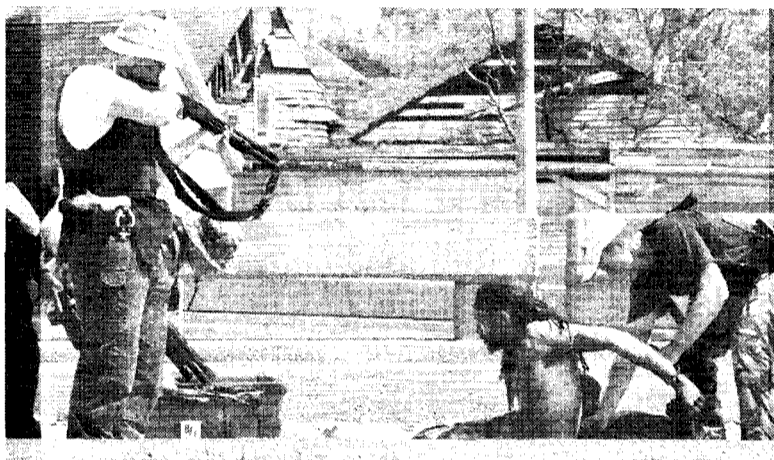
Frederick Douglass said that "power concedes nothing without a demand." It is necessary to galvanize the evident anger among black people, trade unionists and others at the government around an axis of *working-class struggle* against the capitalist profit system. It took a Civil War to end chattel slavery, and it's going to take a socialist revolution to end wage slavery and overcome the segregation of the black population on the bottom rungs of this capitalist society. To unleash the social power of this country's multiracial proletariat, there needs to be a fight to replace the labor bureaucracy with a leadership committed to mobilizing labor's power, independent of the capitalist state and politicians, in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed.

Reformist leftists like the WWP and International Socialist Organization (ISO) provide platforms for capitalist politicians (Democrats or Greens) because, at bottom, they share the same framework as liberals like Jesse Jackson—reforms under the aegis of the capitalist state. The reformists' lifework is protest politics within the framework of bourgeois democracy, and not the training of workers and youth in the revolutionary understanding that fundamental change can come about only through uprooting the capitalist system. What all their talk of "grassroots democracy" and "mass movements" amounts to is pressuring the capitalist state to reorder its priorities from money for war to...fill in the blank.

The fight must be for a workers revolution that shatters the capitalist state apparatus and erects a *workers state*, replacing the anarchic, exploitative and oppressive capitalist order with a society based on the collectivization of the means of production and centralized economic planning. The power of the working class to carry out this revolution is based on its numbers and its organization and social position derived from the unique role it plays in the process of production. What is needed is the consciousness that exploitation and oppression are inherent in the profit system, that the interests of the proletariat and its exploiters are irreconcilably counterposed, and that the historic role of the working class is, indeed, to be the gravedigger of the capitalist system. That consciousness can be achieved only in the course of class struggle and through the intervention of a revolutionary Marxist party, such as the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky that led the workers to power in the October Revolution of 1917.

There is a host of immediate, burning needs in the wake of the Gulf Coast disaster: a fight for union jobs at union wages, putting displaced and unemployed people to work building housing, schools and the infrastructure necessary for a modern society to function. All this points to the fundamental needs of working people and the oppressed: jobs for all, quality integrated housing and education, free quality medical care. The capitalists will always claim that there is not enough money to provide these necessities, that there will always be rich and poor. But as Trotsky wrote in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding program of the Fourth International:

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



Getty



AP

Left: Cops arrest New Orleans flood survivor. Right: Clinton rushed to back up Bush in face of massive popular anger at government.

about the death toll. How many bodies had been washed away will never be known. Democratic Louisiana governor Blanco's contemptuous message to those who refused to leave as Rita threatened was: "Perhaps they should write their Social Security numbers on their arms with indelible ink."

The murderous racism of the U.S. rulers' response to Katrina was unmistakable and indelible. Echoing the capitalist press and government spokesmen at all levels, black Democratic New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin ranted that the masses packed into the Superdome had descended into an "almost animalistic state," with "hooligans killing people, raping people." The "looting" and "rape" hysteria whipped up to depict black survivors as criminals now turns out to be a *pack of lies*. A front-page article in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (26 September) reports that according to soldiers, police and rescue personnel, "most of the worst crimes reported at the

the White House dumped affirmative action provisions for federal contractors on new Gulf jobs. Right-wing ideologues are even pushing plans to make the region a "flat-tax free-enterprise zone." The "faith-based" administration is also giving business to churches for relief efforts—as those packed into the Houston Astrodome saw when they were handed bibles—and pushing for a bill to give school vouchers to displaced children, an attack on public education in favor of private and especially religious schools.

The cronyism and profiteering that is such a blatant hallmark of the Bush administration is not an aberration but is in fact the essence of capitalist "democracy." As Friedrich Engels, cothinker of Karl Marx, wrote in 1884 in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*: "The democratic republic no longer officially recognizes differences of property. Wealth here employs its power indirectly, but all the more surely. It does this in two ways: by plain corruption of officials, of which America is the classic example, and by an alliance between the government and the stock exchange."

The government's murderous contempt for black people and the poor, its corruption and incompetence, its attacks on fundamental democratic rights, the continuing bloody occupation of Iraq—all have stoked growing popular revulsion and outrage. More than 250,000 people rallied in Washington on September 24 in a protest initially called against the occupation of Iraq, but which included demands addressing the Gulf Coast disaster. The protest was organized chiefly by the ostensibly socialist Workers World Party (WWP), through its ANSWER coalition, and the liberal United for Peace and Justice. The speaker's platform featured the usual array of liberal-pacifist warhorses, a few "progressive" trade-union tops and some black Democratic Party politicians. The message was summarized by Jesse Jackson: "We'll change the Congress in

white family wealth is now *more than 14 times* that of black families. The article added that "in 2002, nearly one third of all black families in the United States had a negative net worth." Over the past 20 years, both Democratic and Republican administrations have presided over the massive enrichment of the already rich, with the net worth of the 400 richest Americans increasing *almost five-fold*, from an average of \$600 million in 1985 to \$2.81 billion now.

It was Clinton who enacted the end of "welfare as we know it" and presided over the huge increase in incarceration of black and also Latino youth. Clinton paved the way for Bush's Iraq war through eight years of regular bombing attacks and a starvation embargo, which led to the deaths of some 1.5 million Iraqis. He also helped pave the way for Bush's "war on terror" at home with the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 and other repressive measures.

Unchain Labor's Power!

Organizers for the Laborers' International Union are attempting to fight the undoing of Davis-Bacon and to defend union rights in the reconstruction effort. In Mobile, Alabama, the Laborers have set up tables to inform workers recruited by construction companies that they should be entitled to union-scale wages, and union organizers have canvassed shelters to sign up workers to join the union. But it's going to take a hell of a lot more than information tables to turn this situation around.

The 29 September *Workers World* uncritically publishes an article by two left-talking union officials, Clarence Thomas, executive board member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, and Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808. The two denounce the labor leadership's lack of response to the New Orleans racist atrocity, adding, "They're not calling on their

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On New Orleans Racist Atrocity

10 September 2005

To the editor,

During the Reagan years I spent many occasions in the Mississippi Delta and New Orleans. My lasting impression of the two is that New Orleans was the most unpleasantly racist place I have ever endured. In Mississippi racist whites try to be civil and if they have Klan sympathies they reveal them in subtle ways. In New Orleans racist whites were uncivil and those with Klan sympathies were provocative. I attributed this difference to the prominence at the time of David Duke, the Klan in a suit. In everyday affairs Duke supporters were commonly visible and accepted. But there were more reminders that I found at the time—a park placard commemorating the bloody white gangs that overthrew Reconstruction; restaurants where blacks simply did not go; black ghetto housing stock that reminded one of Richard Wright stories, etc.

Today the administrators of the American capitalist state reveal the incredible depth of their class arrogance and ignorance. They honestly believed they could abandon the poor, the old, and the sick of New Orleans to their own fate with the excuse that “we told them to get out and they didn’t”! One commentator

titled his piece “The Storm After the Storm,” advising American rulers to prepare for social blowback at the base (*New York Times* online, 1 September). He noted the obvious: the sight of so many desperate blacks will ignite outrage among wide layers of the oppressed. The disgustingly racist anti-crime propaganda will not cover up this fact. The key question here is who controls production, distribution and transport, presently held as private property of the capitalists. This is the big picture

buried under the looting question—which is nothing but a plebeian assault on private property. The American ruling class has looted entire countries and continents. Now, every manner of black leader admonishes or apologizes for New Orleans blacks “acting badly” by seizing the necessities of life. But even the “good” people (presumably white) are not trusted to respect the sanctity of private property: they line up to enter stores one at a time, under watchful eyes no doubt, to spend their money.



Abandoned public housing in New Orleans, 1995.

Don C.

Black Liberation...

(continued from page 1)

For those who say, “But this is America; how can this be happening?” we say: Yeah, this is America, the so-called land of the free but in reality a brutal, racist capitalist system, in which a handful of exploiters own the means of production, that is preparing even worse atrocities. Our program is for socialist revolution, for expropriation of the capitalists without compensation, for a planned economy under workers rule. Such a socialist society would be a system of production for human needs and not profits.

This racist atrocity of leaving black people, poor people to die has created a major political crisis for the Bush administration. It intersects growing opposition to the bloody U.S. occupation of Iraq, which is supported by the majority of Democratic politicians. The revulsion over the New Orleans racist atrocity undercuts “national unity” patriotism, which has been whipped up under the guise of the “war on terror” following the criminal attack on the World Trade Center. The “war on terror” is a war on labor, blacks, immigrants and leftists. There can be no unity between the capitalists and exploited workers because their interests are irreconcilably counterposed.

Iraq is unraveling, as the U.S. imperialists kill thousands and now desper-

ately scramble to create a woman-hating Islamic regime. We demand: U.S. troops out now! Down with the imperialist occupation! Insofar as the forces on the ground in Iraq aim their blows against the occupiers, we call for their military defense against U.S. imperialism. But we give no political support to the insurgents and vehemently oppose the inter-communal violence and religious fundamentalism. It is necessary for class-conscious workers to wage class war at home against the racist capitalist rulers, to fight for workers revolution to defeat bloody U.S. imperialism.

Finish the Civil War!

Bush has been pretty blatant with his racist contempt for black people. He refused to even visit the shelters where

they were suffering and dying, holed up in glorified slave pens. His Secretary of State, his secretary of imperialist slaughter, Condoleezza Rice, denied that racism was a factor in the government’s response. Kanye West spoke the truth. But it’s not only Bush who doesn’t care about black people. Neither did Clinton nor the rest of the bloodsuckers before him who ran this system. The capitalist oppressors are modern-day slaveholders who regard black people as expendable.

What happened in New Orleans was no “aberration” but grows out of the entire history of American capitalism, which was built upon black chattel slavery and many of whose “democratic” founding fathers were slaveholders. It took a civil war to end slavery and destroy the economic and social power of the Southern slaveholders. The Civil War was the last progressive war of the American capitalist class. But the political counterrevolution that destroyed Reconstruction left the black masses in a position of semi-slavery and cemented ties between the Northern industrialists and the defeated slaveholders in order to extend capitalism on a nationwide scale. Bourgeois domination was secured through bloody Klan terror and the brutal subjugation of the black masses. We say: *Finish the Civil War! Fight for a workers America!*

American capitalism is a racist nightmare for the majority of black people. Our program is revolutionary integrationism. It is premised upon mobilizing the working class to take up the fight for black freedom—a class-struggle fight to uproot the source of black oppression, which is capitalism. We fight against every manifestation of racial oppression:

for an end to segregation in schools (championing busing against the white racist demagogues), against segregation in housing, jobs and education. This program is counterposed to both liberal integrationism and separatism, both of which accept the permanent existence of racial divisions and of capitalism. Many misleaders push reactionary schemes such as “black capitalism” in order to exploit the ghetto poor. The role of the petty-bourgeois black leadership is to console the masses with the empty promises and lies of the capitalists, and to keep the black masses in check.

Contrary to the utopian perspective of black nationalism, which is a pseudo-nationalism, blacks are not a “nation” with an independent political economy. The special oppression of black people as an oppressed race-color caste—stigmatized by skin color—is deeply rooted in the structure of U.S. capitalism. The material basis of this oppression is the capitalist system of production for profit, now consigning an entire generation of black youth to permanent unemployment, jail and the imperialist military. The last hired, the first fired, the first jailed—the black masses will finally achieve liberation through proletarian revolution, the smashing of racist capitalist rule.

Black people are not simply victims. Although a lot of industrial jobs have been lost over the years, black workers are a leading component of the working class and, armed with a class-struggle program, can open up the road to struggle against this system. But what kind of program and leadership will be in place

continued on page 8

Library of Congress

Black soldiers played key role in defeat of Southern slavocracy in Civil War.



South African workers at June 1995 COSATU protest hold up flyers demanding, “Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!” International mass protest, which stayed hand of executioner, must be mobilized to free Mumia.

Black Liberation...

(continued from page 7)

is decisive. Program is key.

In response to New Orleans, all over the country there is a lot of sentiment among working people to rally on behalf of the thousands of terribly suffering, displaced people and to help in the rescue and massive rebuilding efforts. There are powerful unions with large black and immigrant memberships such as the TWU transit workers and ILA and ILWU longshore unions, representing thousands of workers with tremendous social power that could be wielded on behalf of the oppressed. In the face of this crisis that has uprooted thousands, a class-struggle labor movement would hurl aside and defy the social parasites who are using this massive breakdown and immiseration to fatten the coffers of Halliburton, Bechtel and the like. It would organize black and white, Hispanic and immigrant workers *now* to organize unions, to fight for union jobs, public works at union wages with health care, emergency clothing and safety equipment. Such a fight would also strike a blow against the bosses' and the capitalist government's attempts to pay below prevailing wages on federally funded construction projects. And since the capitalists will undoubtedly resist these most modest demands, we say: Let's organize to get rid of their system!

There has to be a political struggle to mobilize that power to fight for the jobs, housing and education that we desperately need, not only in New Orleans but throughout the country. If you look at Detroit today, for instance, sections of the city have been hard hit by layoffs and cutbacks by a series of Democratic Party administrations. I was recently there, talking to some workers in AMFA [Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association] who are on strike against Northwest Airlines. And one of the stories that was in the papers the days I was there was about a funeral home that had been shut down for over one year. Someone discovered that there were two black male bodies still remaining in the coffins. This is a surplus population in the eyes of the racist rulers. We have to weld the power of the multiracial labor movement to the anger and desperation of the ghettos and the barrios, which requires forging a class-struggle leadership.

Neither the AFL-CIO tops nor the Andy Stern wing of the labor movement are rallying on behalf of displaced workers. None of them. They're not fighting against the racist union-busters who are trying to smash the AMFA mechanics and cleaners on strike at Northwest Airlines. The South today is still largely unorganized because the misleaders of labor have a program of class collaboration, which means that they are loyal to the "sacred" private property system. Their refusal to fight for black rights is the single most important factor in crippling

Mumia Abu-Jamal Greetings to NYC Rally

The following taped message by Mumia Abu-Jamal was played at the September 15 New York City rally.

Ona Move! Long live John Africa! I want to thank you all for your long and consistent support for my struggle for liberation. When we began this journey for justice, we were virtually alone. We can't say that today. The struggle has grown by leaps and bounds and yes, so too has resistance. Yet we struggle on. For, to quote a slogan from the Black Panther Party, "Repression breeds resistance." And for that, I thank you.

This is a struggle that we can and will win. As you all gather today, it's not solely for my benefit, but for the freedom also of two extraordinary women, Assata Shakur and Lynne Stewart. One, the state seeks to imprison for an alleged breakage of a mere prison rule.

The other, the state seeks to return to the New Jersey dungeons for the rest of her life, or to kill her in the tropical streets of Cuba. Some may consider this as but rhetoric, but was it not just days ago that a major American religious leader called, on nationwide TV no less, for the assassination of a Latin American head of state? If Reverend Pat Robertson can call openly for the killing of Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez because, in his words, "It's cheaper than a war," why should we regard the state's one-million-dollar bounty on Assata as anything other than hit money?

Assata is targeted because she is what America has always hated the most: an escaped slave. Lynne is targeted because she dared to represent folks who were in the underbelly of the U.S.

empire, folks like Larry Davis, imprisoned for daring to survive a police hit team, and a blind Egyptian sheik, Omar Abdel Rahman. The real crime that Lynne Stewart committed was the very same offense charged against John Brown: treason. Lynne Stewart, by coming to the defense of the oppressed, is facing prison for betraying the white nationalist, capitalist empire.

All of us are targeted for being rebellious to this empire of blood and greed. We need look no further than the cold response of the state to the hurricane, the horror and sufferings of poor blacks on the Gulf Coast. They don't care. They really don't care. It is for us to care, to dare, to resist, for freedom for us all. I thank you. Ona Move! Long live John Africa! From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

pling class struggle against the racist rulers. A class-struggle leadership will be forged by waging a political struggle to replace the trade-union bureaucracy. Such a leadership will champion the interests of the oppressed: for abortion and gay rights, for full citizenship rights for immigrants, for an end to the bloody occupation of Iraq, for a revolutionary workers party that would fight for a workers government.

We need a Bolshevik party, a Leninist vanguard party that's a tribune of the people—like the one built in tsarist Russia under the leadership of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky that led the working class to a socialist revolution in October 1917. It was the only successful workers revolution in history.

The Capitalists Are Not Fit to Rule

There are natural disasters. But thousands of people have had their lives shattered through this racist atrocity that was facilitated by capitalist madmen who, under both Clinton and Bush, cut the funds needed to protect New Orleans. They knew that the disaster was upon us. The poor people who couldn't get out were mainly black, though to be sure there were poor whites and a lot of immigrants left to die also. The capitalists are not fit to rule. The workers have to fight to run this world.

The profit and rent hogs, the Wall Street money sharks and their political allies—both Democrats and Republicans—are the ones looting and lining up at the trough, feeding off the corpses while ranting about black "criminals" running wild in New Orleans. You've got corporation heads in this country making several hundred times more than an average worker makes. Their real intent was made clear by a sign that was put up by the cops at a temporary jail in a Grey-

hound Bus station that said, "We Are Taking New Orleans Back."

To increase the rate of exploitation, the capitalist rulers target for destruction workers and the oppressed at home and abroad. Their gratuitous racist cruelty in the U.S. is matched abroad by similar barbarism toward dark-skinned people. Never forget that it was the Democrat Clinton whose administration implemented United Nations sanctions that killed about a million and a half Iraqis, many of them children who died from malnutrition and starvation. Or, if you're simply in the way, they bomb you virtually into oblivion, as the Serbian population found out in 1999. Clinton is known in the eyes of some benighted people as "America's first black president." Now he has the nerve to put his arms around black children after having driven black and poor women into miserable, low-wage jobs by axing welfare. And during his first presidential run, as governor of Arkansas he oversaw the execution of Ricky Ray Rector, a brain-damaged black man.

Capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union—the main military and industrial powerhouse of the degenerated and deformed workers states—and East Europe has meant terrible impoverishment and repression for the working people. And it has emboldened the capitalist exploiters here and around the world to intensify their assaults on workers and the oppressed. But they don't always get their way. The Cuban government has thwarted the U.S. imperialists' attempt to have their slavecatchers snatch Assata Shakur.

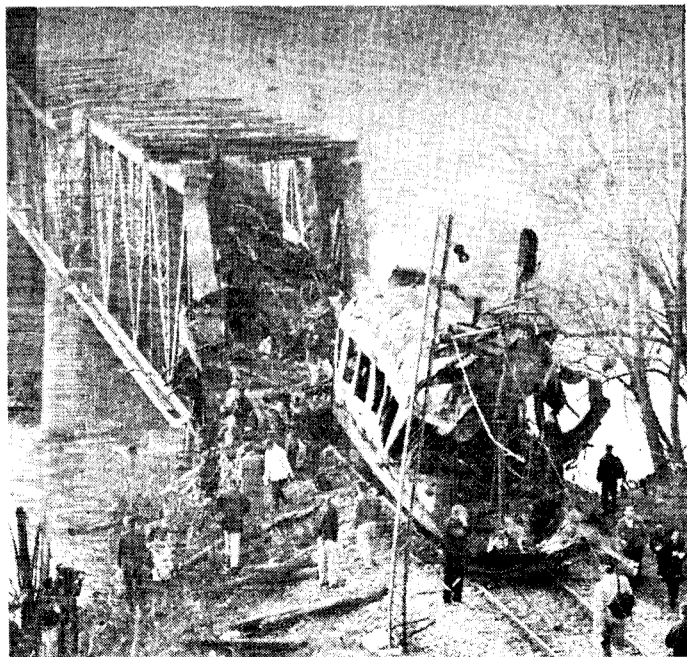
If you look at how the Cuban deformed workers state deals with hurricanes, you can see the superiority of a collectivized property system and planned economy in action. The Cuban Revolution threw out the bloody Mafia and the capitalist exploiters. The profit motive does not rule

there. There are no Rockefellers or Donald Trumps deciding who to send to their death. Despite having had to endure a 45-year embargo by the U.S., the Castro regime offered doctors and financial assistance to the U.S., which was of course arrogantly and predictably rebuffed. On many occasions they have provided assistance to the poor and oppressed around the world.

We fight for the unconditional military defense of Cuba and the other remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea and Vietnam—and their collectivized property against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. Undermining the defense of the deformed workers states are the ruling nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies. We say that the best defense of the gains of those states against capitalist imperialism is to fight to extend the revolutions internationally. Basing themselves upon the anti-internationalist perspective and program of "socialism in one country," however, the Stalinist bureaucracies are hostile to this perspective. This was shown, among other examples, by the support that the Castro regime gave in 1973 to the Chilean bourgeois popular-front government of Allende, which paved the way for a bloody massacre of the working class and for the rise of the blood-soaked, U.S.-backed Pinochet regime. We fight for workers political revolution in Cuba to sweep away Stalinist bureaucratic misrule and to establish genuine workers democracy and Leninist internationalism.

For Proletarian Independence!

It is necessary to have a historical materialist perspective that is based upon understanding the role of class struggle as the motor force of history. The barbaric attacks against the black population are part of decades of bipartisan assaults on workers and the poor, from "ethnic



Reuters



Reuters



Alan Pogue

Democratic Clinton administration: imperialist murder abroad, war on poor at home. Left: Serbian passenger train destroyed in U.S./NATO bombing, 1999. Center: Signing of bill ending "welfare as we know it," 1996. Right: UN-imposed sanctions, 1990 to 2003, killed some 1.5 million Iraqis.

Fight Government Repression!

Lynne Stewart Speaks at NYC Rally

Some 150 trade unionists, leftists and students turned out for a united-front rally against government repression on September 15 in New York City, the first in a series of rallies across the country. The rally was initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League. PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein acted as moderator.

Participants with a range of political views joined together to demand: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, a symbol of defiant opposition to racist oppression, on death row for over 20 years, falsely convicted of killing a policeman; Hands off Assata Shakur, framed-up former Black Panther who escaped prison hell and fled to Cuba and who has had a million-dollar bounty put on her head by the U.S. government; Hands off Lynne Stewart, leftist lawyer who faces decades in prison—effectively a life sentence—for her vigorous legal defense of Islamic fundamentalist cleric Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman (see *WV* No. 842, 18 February). Stewart and co-defendants Mohamed Yousry and Ahmed Abdel Sattar are scheduled to be sentenced on December 22.

Speakers included James Webb, President Emeritus of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Cleo Silvers from 1199ers for Peace and Justice, the Communist Workers Organization and Workers to Free Mumia; Pam Africa, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia

Leftist attorney Lynne Stewart addresses NYC defense rally.



Abu-Jamal; Chris Silvera, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 808 and Chairman of the Teamsters National Black Caucus; Brother Sadki "Shep" Ojore Ougbala, N.Y. Hands Off Assata Shakur Coalition; and Don Alexander of the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense and the SL Central Committee (see article page 1). The rally heard taped greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Monique Code read a statement of support for the rally from Mumia's son, Jamal Hart, imprisoned on frame-up firearms possession charges for speaking out in defense of his father.

The execution of a black woman, Frances Newton, in Texas the day before the rally gave added emphasis to the fight

to abolish the racist death penalty. As the PDC wrote in a September 11 protest to the governor: "The despicable death penalty is an outgrowth of lynch law in the United States, the racist legacy of centuries of slavery and segregation. It is this legacy which led to the grotesque atrocity in New Orleans where thousands of poor and black people were literally left to die."

We print below an abridged and edited version of Lynne Stewart's speech to the rally. *WV* plans further coverage of these rallies in an upcoming issue.

* * *

When I heard that Frances Newton had been executed in Texas, my heart sank, just as it always sinks when I hear of any-

one being executed. But so much more particularly in this case. This young woman, 40 years of age (we just celebrated our daughter's 40th birthday), went to her death because the lawyers didn't care. She went to her death because the lawyers didn't file her appeals on time. They didn't share the evidence with her. She was just a defendant; that stuff's "too important" for defendants. And so here she was, strapped to the gurney—and let's not make it nice, because it's not nice—strapped to the gurney knowing that she's innocent, knowing there are ballistics that can prove that, and knowing that nobody gave her the shot she deserved in front of a jury.

That's why my fight is important. My fight is important because of all the Frances Newtons out there, all those people who are accused by the state of crimes, which the state decides they are guilty of without doing the investigation, without testing them in the way that they should be tested in the adversary system. And let's not forget, the same "dream team" that's prosecuting me—George Bush and Attorney General Gonzales—is the same team that put Frances Newton in the death house. This is Texas. This is their place. This is where they worked all this out. So, we are looking right now at a case where justice was so miscarried, and yet at the final moment there was not one person on the Board of Pardons and Paroles, there was not one person on the United States

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purity" Jimmy Carter (which is the way he described himself in defense of segregated neighborhoods) to Reagan and Bush Sr. and the "new Democrat" Clinton. Successive Democratic and Republican administrations have taken deadly aim at the gains of labor and the civil rights movement that were wrested from the exploiters through struggle. It didn't begin with New Orleans. Remember the 1985 MOVE massacre, which killed eleven black men, women and children. That was the bloody signature of the Reagan years, orchestrated by the FBI, the Philadelphia Police Department and black Democratic Party mayor Wilson Goode. We have been fighting to burn the memory of that racist crime into the consciousness of the working class and the oppressed—as we must do with the racist atrocity in New Orleans. We do this not only in order to illuminate how terrible the oppression of blacks is (despite the lies of the capitalists and their apologists to the contrary) but to imbue the working class with a consciousness of its historic interests and tasks. The working class cannot be free unless it fights for black freedom, and you cannot have a workers revolution without black freedom at the center of your program.

The workers in this country have to have a class-conscious perspective because the Democrats—that's the other party of capitalism and war, racism and repression—are working to turn this political crisis for the Bush regime into electoral gains for themselves. They have smiles on their faces and knives behind their backs. Malcolm X, who wasn't a Marxist with a class-struggle perspective but had sharp observations about the capitalist politicians' con games, referred to the Democrats as "foxes" and "Dixiecrats" and the Republicans as "wolves." And he didn't just denounce white Democrats. The liberals, both black and white, feared and hated him.

The white ruling class has at its disposal black Democratic Party front men and women, who work to keep any struggle within the bounds of capitalism. While black suffering was unfolding in New Orleans, Jesse Jackson stated early

on that he knew that there were black people saying that there was racism in the government's response. But "no sir, boss," he wasn't saying that, "yessuh, boss." Sharpton went to Louisiana—and I bet when he was there he didn't tell the people that here in New York he was stumping for a fellow Democrat named

1995 blamed black people for their own oppression; it was a march for "atonement," which appeased the racist exploiters—and it also excluded women. We have nothing to atone for! Clinton & Co. ate it up. It changed nothing, and that's why Clinton is supporting this Millions More March. It's an attempt to pressure

the struggle within the safe bounds of this system.

The working class, because of its numbers, organization and role in production, uniquely has the social power to bring down this barbaric profit system. But it takes revolutionary leadership. We have the program to unleash the power of labor and black to strike a hard blow against the growing government repression! So let's use it!

The Black Panther Party represented the best of a generation of young black radicals who wanted a social revolution. I was attracted to the Panthers because of their boldness and revolutionary spirit. In 1972 I saw Geronimo ji Jaga convicted. He remained unbowed and unbroken. He exemplified courage, and that certainly helped me to continue to fight. However, through intensive struggle, study and travel, I learned the truth of what Lenin said: that the most "refined" and "just" nationalism is incompatible with proletarian internationalism. And that is why I became a Trotskyist.

The reason for the Panthers' demise was not simply the bloody role played by the hideous FBI COINTELPRO program that killed 38 Panthers and fanned internecine factional bloodletting. I saw this unfold from the vantage point of being a visitor at the Panthers' international headquarters in Algiers in 1971, since I was living in the Middle East during that period and had met Panthers. But what also facilitated their destruction was their false program, which they called "revolutionary nationalism." Like most of the New Left, they rejected the central role of the working class, which meant basically going it alone.

Capitalism is a worldwide system and must be overthrown internationally. Our program must be revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist. It must be a program for world socialist revolution. The road to this lies through building internationalist revolutionary workers parties. Otherwise the capitalists will prevail.

We say: **Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty! Fight government repression! Hands off Lynne Stewart! Hands off Assata Shakur! Free all class-war prisoners! Join us!** ■



SL contingent at February 2000 NYC protest against acquittal of cops who gunned down Amadou Diallo.

Fernando Ferrer who said it wasn't a crime when the murderous cops pumped more than 40 bullets into African immigrant Amadou Diallo.

Watch out for the hustlers who occasionally use militant rhetoric but whose program is to deflect the anger and outrage at this system away from the racist capitalist rulers and to channel it right back into pro-Democratic Party electoral politics. They are not our friends. They are enemies of the working class and the oppressed. And now you have the anti-Semitic, nationalist demagogue Farrakhan calling for a march commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Million Man March. This is obscene. That march in

the Democrats to pressure Bush.

It's the same old, same old—pressure the capitalists to reorder their priorities. One of the organizers, Reverend Willie Wilson, has spewed vicious, anti-gay bigotry, which tells you a lot about who's organizing this. We say that democratic rights are indivisible. It's in our interests to fight for democratic rights for gays in all aspects of social life, including the right to marriage. The Millions More March is not about waging militant struggle against this brutal system of exploitation and oppression, but about venting some steam in light of growing anger against the present government. Its purpose, again, is to keep

Stewart...

(continued from page 9)

Supreme Court, there was not one person that could say, "Hold it, let's check this out again." She died, and she died because of bad lawyering. She died because nobody cared. And they remarked that there were 50 people gathered at the time—that was the size of the protest.

But we know life is cheap. We know black life in particular is cheap. It is, at least, to this administration. It is to the people running things. We know that from New Orleans, and we know it from Frances Newton. We know it because Assata—after she leaves to go to Cuba and is basically out of their hair, out of their sight, no longer doing the great political work she did when she was here—suddenly is named a "terrorist" (and I want to come back to that in a second), and a bounty is being put on her head.

What is the importance of "terrorist"? You know, because I know some of you here. I see the gray hair out here. You had on your door like I had on my door, "Assata Shakur is welcome here." That's when she was on the run and underground. But now if you put that on your door, you could be accused of materially aiding terrorism. And if they prove that that was your intent, to help this "terrorist"—whether she's innocent or guilty doesn't have anything to do with it, whether she went to jail and served time, whether she was shot by a cop when she was down on the ground—all of that doesn't matter. What matters to them is being able to prosecute you and me.

So the real important change about Assata is probably the fact that they have added her to the "terrorist" list. And I can just tell you that the latest from my case (and I'll come back to this, too) concerns the government in the pre-sentence report. This is the report that the Probation Department writes to inform the court about the case. We have been urging everybody to write letters to ask for no jail. The judge has the power to give no jail. The sentencing guidelines is the grid which puts you at a certain level, and the judge in days gone by had to follow that grid, *had* to sentence you at that level. That is no longer true. He now has complete discretion. But the Probation Department still figures it out, because, you know, these are judges, but they are also part of a big bureaucracy. And bureaucracy likes grids and likes to say, "Well, I think the guidelines are fair," and that they can mete out a fair sentence.

At any rate, the Probation Department has decreed that my guidelines (get ready to take your breath) come in at 260 months. If you put that into years, it's over 20. So, when we said 30, we weren't kidding. That's the maximum. But 26 is what the guidelines said because they bumped them

up for terrorism, and they bump up everything for terrorism. And so I will be sentenced the same as if I were maybe a three- or four-time loser. That's the category I get put in, as does Mohamed Yousry, the translator. He ends up also in that category.

So we know we are going into a situation here that started out unfair, that started out outrageous and remains outrageous. It doesn't change. I can say that I'm not in the same position as Jose Padilla [detained since May 2002 as an "enemy combatant"; see article on page 2], who Rachel mentioned. If we really think about how far the scene has shifted to the right, we just have to think about the fact that here is a U.S. citizen, arrested on U.S. soil, never charged with a crime, who first had to fight over whether he could get a lawyer. Now two courts, including a court of appeals, have ruled that he does not even get a chance to go to court and confront the charges against him. Not that any charges have been made, just some Ashcroftian innuendos about "dirty bombs." But that's enough to scare people. And that's enough to keep the populace where this government wants them, scared. Scared and docile and willing just like the Nazis of the



Indymedia

Frances Newton

'30s to go along with whatever is going on as long as the government does it.

I thought, and I am still hoping we have a window, that when the population sees what happens in Louisiana and sees that this government, far from being all-powerful and able to protect people, is actually doddering, ineffectual—these are mild words for what happened there—is incompetent to protect us. And they never had that on their minds to begin with. What they had on their mind was paying off paramilitaries, was getting their friends the best contract, i.e., Halliburton. But will the American public wake up? Will they wake up when they pay four dollars a gallon for gas? Will that be enough to cause people to get to the streets—I don't know. But I know one thing. We got to keep working at it. They are giving us a golden opportunity here to

**Bronx, 1988:
Lynne Stewart
and William
Kunstler won
acquittal of
Larry Davis (on
Stewart's right)
on charges
of attempted
murder of cops
wounded in
shootout.**



Donna Dietrich

raise consciousness, to show people.

And that's what keeps me going, because it seems to me they are experiencing a decline. And we have a certain insight. We have a politic that informs us. We have a politic that lets us know why this is happening, what is likely to happen next, and what we have to do to make it real to the people we talk to. That is why my case is important, because it brings it home to the people I talk to.

I will say to you that the real reason— if you ask anyone in the Bronx why I was prosecuted, persecuted—has nothing to do with Sheik Omar and the Middle East and terrorism. The people up there and the guys I've defended, they all know it's Larry Davis. [In 1988, Larry Davis, a black resident of the Bronx, was acquitted of charges of attempted murder stemming from a 1986 shootout during which six policemen were shot, probably from their own crossfire.] That's why they are out to get me. And there are those that carry it maybe a step further. One was in to see me the other day—he has done 17 years for mainly being nothing much more than someone they denigrated as being a follower of Larry Davis. But anyway, he had gotten out of jail; he came down to say hello, and he said: "It's because you're out there helping all of us. You aren't helping them; you're helping us, and that's why they want to put you away."

So if I am guilty of anything—and we all sometimes get guilty of this—it was that at a point in my career in life I was complacent, and I underestimated the perfidy and power of the government to want to get me. I didn't think that was in the cards. I should have known better. I had a lifetime of political experience. I had a lifetime of people telling me how they were framed. I should have known better and I didn't. And I didn't really understand that what they wouldn't do to Ramsey Clark [co-counsel for Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman and former U.S. Attorney General], they would do to me.

So, I go back to my old professor, Arthur Kinoy, who said, we don't win these cases in the courts, we win them outside the courts. We win them by mobilizing people, by making the people speak with a voice that can't be denied, that even the *New York Post*—with all its clever headlines and "terror lawyer" and clever positioning of my picture next to the latest leader of Al Qaeda—cannot deny. And that voice has got to say: *Hands off Lynne Stewart!* We have urged people to say "no jail." They are urging the judge to say "24, 26, maybe a life sentence." So we have to be aware of that. The date of sentencing is now October 21. [Note: Sentencing has been rescheduled for December 22 at 9:30 a.m.] Please engrave that on your memory bank and please be there.

We have an opening. The opening is the juror who came forward. Those of you who attended the trial remember the very slender black woman who sat in the back row. She's a Harlem resident. She wrote to the judge about a couple weeks after the trial ended and said that she had been intimidated, that she had rendered a verdict that wasn't truly hers, that she feared for her life from the other jurors who came in, she said, with an agenda. Now, will they brush this under the rug? Will they say it doesn't really matter? She "didn't come

forward in time"? Will they allow Lynne Stewart, like Frances Newton, to lose on a technicality? Or is this really profound? Is this really something important that this juror felt that she was being intimidated by her fellow jurors to the extent that she feared for her life, and she rendered that verdict under that kind of pressure.

We have all this business before the court. We are going to keep on fighting. I'm going to keep on fighting. I feel that this cause is so righteous. It exposes the inequities of the judicial system. And I just hope that there will be people to keep on fighting in the courts even as I fight outside the courts.

My newest lawyer, I am happy to announce here, who has made application to the court this day, is Liz Fink. And Liz of course is of Attica history, which we celebrated only two days ago. She stayed with that case for 30 years. She finally won that case for the people who were so terrorized, traumatized, tortured—all three T's. She likes to say to me, "Lynne, there are only about ten of us who do this work." And that is true. But we need more. Because I believe there is going to be greater and greater repression, greater and greater need for the *real deal*, the real lawyers to stand up. And as I said when I heard that the Cuban Five had been exonerated or at least are getting a new trial, my only sadness is that I'm not there to say I'd like to sign on for that next trial [see "Cuban Five Convictions Overturned," WV No. 854, 16 September]. Because as you know, the greatest punishment is not to be able to practice.

I can only say that it's meetings like this that keep me going. You know, I can have some low points. When I picked up that probation report and it said 24 years, I said, "Whoa!" But when I come and I see your shining faces here—and I know you turned out on this sticky, miserable night, and I know that you're politically involved, and we're all working like demons to try to set this back, to make sure that these things are stopped from happening, that we can live a life that is full and rich and with all the promise that America should be—I am heartened because I am not alone. Thank you very much. ■

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Abortion...

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to enforcing age-of-consent laws and limiting abortion rights for minors, they are promoting a witchhunting atmosphere over "child sexuality." And according to California state law, no one under the age of 18 can legally consent to sexual activity, and anyone 18 or over who has sex with a minor can be charged with statutory rape. **Down with reactionary age-of-consent laws!** We advocate the concept of **effective consent**—that is, as long as both parties consent to the act, nobody, least of all the state, has any right to tell them they can't do it. The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs fight for a socialist society that, among other things, would guarantee teens the means to lead independent lives.

Heightened media sensationalizing over "fetal pain" has helped promote proposed national legislation mandating that doctors tell women seeking an abortion at 20 weeks or later that the fetus will feel pain during an abortion! Such hypocritical, guilt-tripping statutes—already law in Georgia and Arkansas—go against all known science. Such laws are being pushed by the forces of religious reaction, which serve as a mainstay for the oppression of women. **For the separation of church and state!**

The truth is that the government doesn't give a damn about the suffering of children and teens. Even by the state's own inadequate guidelines, tens of thousands of California students are failing to meet the most basic standards of literacy and mathematics. Fully 20 percent of California's high school students—predomi-

nantly those from the ghettos and barrios of the impoverished inner cities—and 40 percent of those who don't speak English as a native language are failing the state exit exam that is now required to receive a high school diploma. California's high school graduation rate is now only 71 percent—60 percent for Latino students and 56.6 percent for blacks—according to Harvard University's Civil Rights Project. Schools are often little more than underfunded, understaffed, rat-infested



San Francisco, July 23: Clinic defense action protected patients from anti-abortion bigots.

holding pens, "preparing" youth for unemployment, lousy jobs or a "future" as cannon fodder in the imperialist army.

It's common to associate the Democratic Party with abortion rights as against the Republicans. But while claiming to support a woman's "right to choose,"

Democratic president Bill Clinton presided over a drastic cutback in the availability of abortion across the country. "Pro-choice" icon Hillary Clinton has announced her respect for those who believe that there are "no circumstances under which any abortion should ever be available." Meanwhile, Democrats proclaim their support for "family values," pandering to the same backward religious forces that fuel the anti-abortion crusade. The liberal feminists' program of reliance

to abortion must be defended through a class-struggle mobilization for women's rights, independent of the capitalist parties.

The ruling-class onslaught on abortion emboldens "pro-life" fanatics and the violent thugs who intimidate and harass patients, bomb clinics and murder abortion doctors and staff. On July 23 in San Francisco, the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club participated in the defense of an abortion clinic targeted by the anti-abortion group American Life League. Joined by the Freedom Socialist Party and the International Socialist Organization among others, our forces formed a blockade between the doors and the bigots, helping to ensure that the clinic remained open and that patients remained safe from the anti-abortion fundamentalists. We led chants like, "Defend the clinics! Take a stand! Free abortion on demand!" Our signs included: "No to Prop. 73! For Abortion Rights for Teens!" and "For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!" A socialist society would lay the material basis for replacing the family by providing quality, socialized child care, laundries and other services, opening the door to genuine social equality for women.

We advocate a strategy of mass, labor-backed mobilizations to defend abortion clinics. Prop. 73 must be defeated at the polls, but only a real defense of abortion rights through class-struggle methods will count in the long run. There must be a struggle in the labor movement to mobilize the unions to defend the clinics, to defend the rights of women, black people and all the oppressed. We need to build a revolutionary workers party that can provide such class-struggle leadership. **Vote NO on Prop. 73! Free abortion on demand!** ■

Poll Tax...

(continued from page 12)

Detroit. Initiated by Jesse Jackson, the rally was dominated by Democratic Party politicians such as House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, Congresswoman Maxine Waters and former Atlanta mayors Andrew Young and Bill Campbell, as well as current mayor Shirley Franklin.

The prominent trade-union presence at the rally points to the social force that can lead the fight to defend and extend black rights in this country—the integrated labor movement, of which black workers are a key component. The struggles of black people and labor advance together or fall back when they are divided. Today, there is both an urgent need to defend black rights and for labor to organize the unorganized, especially in the South, where black oppression and union-busting have always gone hand in hand.

However, the Atlanta rally underlined

how labor's potential power is subordinated by the union misleaders to the capitalist Democratic Party, which is no less responsible than the Republican Party for the all-sided oppression of black people that is integral to the American capitalist order. When it comes to voting rights, the chief vehicle through which black people have been disenfranchised in recent years has been the *bipartisan* "war on drugs." Over 900,000 black men and women, including one out of every eight black men between the ages of 25 and 29, are in prison, mainly on drug charges. Indeed, black Democrats like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton were at the forefront of promoting the "war on drugs" in the 1980s. We say: Decriminalize drugs!

The "war on drugs" has a direct effect on who votes and who doesn't. All but two states restrict the franchise for convicted felons, and every state of the former Confederacy except Louisiana bars some or all of them from voting. As a result, 13 percent of black men are barred

from voting, while many more who could vote believe they cannot.

While black voters have been a core constituency of the Democratic Party, the Democrats have been tepid at most in their defense of the franchise for black people. Heading up the Commission on Federal Election Reform was former Democratic president Jimmy Carter, along with James Baker III, an old Reaganite who was the official lawyer for the Republicans during the contested presidential vote tally in Florida in 2000.

Nearly 140,000 black men in Florida were denied suffrage in the 2000 elections due to felony convictions. Police roadblocks barred the way to polling places, and many black people who managed to get through found themselves barred from voting even if they carried a voter registration card. When black Congressmen contested the election results, Al Gore, as president of the Senate, ruled them out of order—even though the lost black votes certainly cost him the presi-

dency. The overriding factor for Gore and the Democratic establishment was not black voting rights but the "sanctity" of the imperial American presidency, which they did not want blemished by a dispute over who won.

Marxists are intransigent defenders of the hard-won right to vote and other democratic rights. But the fight for black freedom cannot be advanced through support to *either* the Democratic or Republican parties of capitalism. As we wrote in "Black Disenfranchisement and American 'Democracy'" (WV No. 833, 1 October 2004):

"Working people need their own party, a revolutionary party that recognizes that the fight for black freedom and the fight for the emancipation of labor are inextricably linked. We in the Spartacist League seek to build such a party to do away with the capitalist order and create an egalitarian socialist society in which the perfidies of the past shall be relegated to the history books and expunged from the lives of future generations." ■

Spartacus Youth Club Events

LOS ANGELES

**Come Discuss
Revolutionary Marxism!**
Wednesday, October 5, 5 p.m.
UCLA, Ackerman Union, Rm. 2410

**Marxism and the
Scientific Worldview**
Saturday, October 15, 2 p.m.
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215
(Beverly/Vermont Red Line Station)
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239
or e-mail: sisykla@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

**The 1917 Russian Revolution:
How the Working Class
Took Power**
Wednesday, October 5, 6:30 p.m.
U of T, Sydney Smith, Room 2115
100 St. George Street
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail: spartacan@on.aibn.com

NEW YORK CITY

**Marxism and the
Scientific Worldview**
Wednesday, October 5, 7 p.m.
Hamilton Hall, Room 703
Columbia University
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
or e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

VANCOUVER

**Independence for Quebec!
Marxism and the
National Question**
Thursday, October 13, 5 p.m.
UBC, Student Union Building, Rm. 212
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
or e-mail: tlit@look.ca

**Visit the International
Communist League
Web Site:
www.icl-fi.org**

Spartacist Forums

**Not One Person, Not One Penny for the Imperialist Military!
U.S. Troops Out of Iraq Now!**

Marxism, Militarism and War

Saturday, October 1, 4 p.m.
First Parish Church
3 Church St., Harvard Sq., Cambridge
(This forum is not sponsored by the First Parish Church.)

For more information: (617) 666-9453
or e-mail: bostonsyc@yahoo.com

BOSTON

**New Orleans: Racist Atrocity—
Capitalist Rulers Left Blacks, Poor to Die
Black Liberation and the
Fight for a Workers America**

Break with the Democrats—Build a Workers Party!

Thursday, October 20, 7:30 p.m.
322 W. 48th Street, 1st Floor
(between 8th and 9th Ave.)

For more information: (212) 267-1025
or e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

NEW YORK

WORKERS VANGUARD

California: No on Prop 73!

“Squeal Rules” Threaten Abortion Rights for Teens

For Free Abortion on Demand!

SAN FRANCISCO—In yet another ominous attack on women’s right to abortion, a proposed law would, if it passes in California’s “special election” this November, slap a 48-hour parental notification requirement on abortions for women under age 18. The Spartacist League calls for a “no” vote against this “squeal rule,” which is an assault on what should be every woman’s basic right. Doctors would be required to report abortions performed on minors to the government, and those found not in compliance could face civil suits and liability for damages. Proposition 73 would also rewrite the California constitution to include the religious language of the “right to life” bigots, declaring abortion to be the “death of the unborn child, a child conceived but not yet born.”

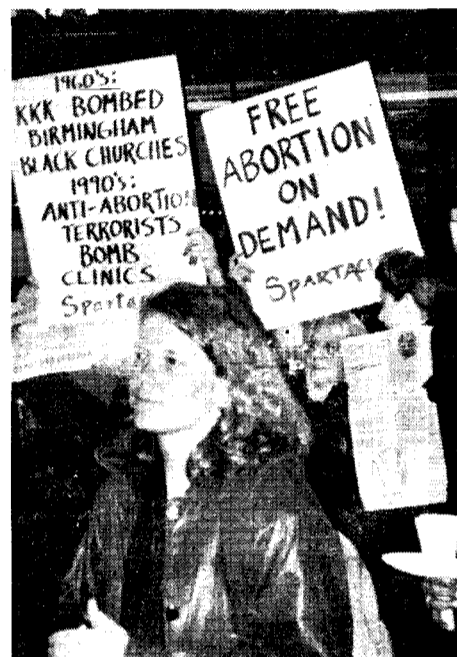
Prop. 73 is just one of the more prominent of a near-record number of proposed anti-abortion laws sweeping the country in the last year. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, 13 states already have parental notification requirements; 21 others require the consent of the young woman’s parents. These “squeal rules” are not only a gross violation of privacy, they also hit the most vulnerable the hardest and threaten to turn a simple and safe medical procedure into a traumatic ordeal.

Planned Parenthood, the California Nurses Association and the California Medical Association, among others, have formed the Campaign for Teen Safety to combat Prop. 73. A court ruled against their lawsuit challenging the despicable lie in the California voters’ guide that “these laws reduce minors’ pregnancy and

abortion rates without danger and harm.” “Squeal rules” mean more back-alley abortions, and they only make access to abortion more complicated, more dangerous, more expensive and subject to interference by parents, judges or other self-appointed guardians of virtue. Teenagers need sex education and access to free, quality birth control, not religious dictates pushing abstinence or punishment. We call for free abortion on demand as a part of free, quality health care for all.

The U.S. capitalist ruling class is on a crusade against teen sexuality, seeking to make teenagers obedient to authority, above all to their parents, and to reinforce their status as “dependents” within the institution of the family. From funding abstinence-only sex “education” programs

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1998 NYC protest against bombing of Birmingham, Alabama abortion clinic. WV Photo

Georgia Brings Back Jim Crow Poll Tax

This past April the state of Georgia enacted a law sharply restricting the right of black people to vote. Widely seen as a “21st-century poll tax,” the law requires those who do not have a driver’s license to get a government-issued photo ID in order to vote. Such IDs will cost \$20 and will have to be renewed every five years—this in a state where black people are nearly six times as likely as whites to be below the poverty line! Moreover, such IDs can be obtained in only 56 locations throughout the state—not one of which is in heavily black Atlanta. Angry black Democratic legislators walked out of the state Capitol when the law was passed. On August 26, Bush’s Department of Justice approved the new Georgia law.

This law is nothing less than a frontal attack on the basic democratic right of blacks to vote, won through over a century of hard and often bloody struggle. The Civil War that smashed chattel slavery won black men the right of the franchise. In the ensuing era of Reconstruction, the most democratic period in American history, large numbers of black people voted, and many held office in the South. But the betrayal of Reconstruction by the Northern bourgeoisie, signaled by the withdrawal of the last federal troops from the South as part of the Compromise of 1877, led to a wholesale assault on black rights. Under the rule of the Dixiecrat Democratic Party, Jim Crow laws, backed up by Ku Klux Klan terror,

systematically enforced racial segregation. Selectively applied “literacy” tests and poll taxes were among the methods used to prevent black people from exercising the right to vote.

Black people in the South regained voting rights through the tumultuous struggles of the civil rights movement—struggles that faced brutal police repression and KKK nightriding terror.

Civil rights activists Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney, whose bodies were dredged from a muddy dam in Neshoba County, Mississippi, in 1964, were among those lynched for fighting for black people’s right to the franchise. That year, the 24th Amendment to the Constitution barred the poll tax in federal elections, and the Supreme Court later extended this prohibition to state



Mississippi, “Freedom Summer” 1964. Voting rights for black people in South, won through massive struggles, face renewed attack. Ted Polumbaum

elections. The following year, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act.

The current attacks on voting rights—vividly demonstrated by the disenfranchisement of black voters in Florida, and elsewhere, in the 2000 presidential elections—epitomize the tenuousness of basic democratic rights in capitalist America. This is especially true for the black population.

Today, Georgia is not alone in rolling back the right to vote. The Pennsylvania State House recently passed a bill requiring a photo ID to vote and increasing restrictions on former felons’ voting rights. On September 19, a Commission on Federal Election Reform, set up after the 2004 elections, announced proposals that would require voters to present a “Real ID” card at polling stations. This proposal would augment the sinister “Real ID” Act passed by Congress this spring with bipartisan support, which deprived undocumented immigrants of driver’s licenses by requiring Social Security cards, birth certificates or proof of legal residency. The Spartacist League opposes any and all restrictions on the right of citizens to vote and stands for full citizenship rights for all immigrants (documented or not)—including the right of franchise.

Some 12,000 people, overwhelmingly black, turned out for a “Keep the Vote Alive!” rally in Atlanta on August 6, which was timed to commemorate the passage of the 1965 act and called to extend those of its provisions set to expire in 2007. Notably, the rally included some 2,000 largely black trade unionists—including significant contingents from the SEIU service employees, AFSCME government workers, UFCW food and commercial workers and other unions—from throughout the South and from as far away as California, New York and

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