

“Law and Order” Elections Target Blacks

Down with Clinton's Racist “Anti-Crime” Bill!

As the returns in the bitterly contested NYC mayoral election between black Democratic mayor David Dinkins and Republican Rudolph Giuliani flashed across the TV screens on November 2, one black New Yorker commented that a Giuliani win would be “very bad for us.” He added, “White people don’t know it, but it will be bad for them, too” (*New York Times*, 3 November). Cop candidate Giuliani’s victory, coming after the election earlier this year of right-wing racist Richard Riordan in Los Angeles, exemplifies the “anti-crime” hysteria being whipped up by the racist rulers from coast to coast. And the Democrats, from Wall Street bankers’ candidate Dinkins to retired L.A. black mayor ex-top cop Tom Bradley, had nothing to counter but... more cops and more layoffs.

Despite his paper-thin vote margin, the election of Reagan Republican Giuliani as mayor in an overwhelmingly Democratic, heavily multiracial and traditionally liberal city is a sign of the times in racist America. For the first time in two decades, not one of the country’s five largest cities will have a black mayor, as white racist candidates march into city halls and state houses. Offering nothing to the dispossessed black masses but police batons and bullets, the ruling class is dispensing with its black plantation overseers. Washington-based British journalist Martin Walker put it bluntly: “the one constant theme in every mayoral election is that crime is *the* issue. ‘Crime’ these days is the code word for race” (*London Guardian*, 30 October).



Clinton and his top cop Janet Reno (right) plug “crime bill” for 50,000 more cops, boot camps for minority youth and speedup on death row.

In the past few weeks, the bipartisan “law and order” campaign has reached a crescendo of hysterical proportions. Washington state voted up a referendum imposing mandatory life sentences on third-time offenders. In Washington, D.C. the black chief of police declared a “crime emergency,” while black Dem-

ocratic mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly called for National Guard troops to patrol the capital city’s ghettos. They’re not just going after inner-city youth but also the working class: in Pontiac, Michigan an undercover drug sting operation in two truck plants rounded up 23 GM workers. Meanwhile President Clinton’s draco-

nian “crime package,” initially introduced by the Bush administration, is set to pass with one of the most overwhelming majorities in Congressional history.

In a grotesque display of racist “doublespeak,” Clinton used a speech to a black congregation in Memphis on

continued on page 8

Rap, Reno and the Cops

As racist politicians fall over themselves proclaiming that they are “tough on crime” and vote billions more for cops, courts and prisons, the mass media attacks cartoons on MTV and rap music as responsible for every social ill, from children playing with matches to gun-fighting in the streets. Rap music, which went from being an underground phe-

nomenon that emerged out of New York City and Los Angeles in the early 1980s, has grown into the wildly popular music of today’s youth, especially black and Hispanic youth. Now police, press and preachers want to blame rap and television for violent social problems whose roots lie in the mass unemployment and racism of decaying American capitalism.

During last year’s presidential election campaign, Ice-T’s song “Cop Killer” was blamed by the police for the L.A. riots! Their latest target is movie star rapper Tupac Shakur, whose mother is former Black Panther Afeni Shakur, one of the New York 21 acquitted in 1971

after nine months of trial on trumped-up charges including “conspiracy to commit murder.” “2-Pac’s” songs are known for their strongly anti-cop lyrics. Former vice president Dan Quayle publicly questioned why Shakur’s music was even released, declaring that “it has no place in our society.”

A couple of weeks ago, Tupac was charged in Atlanta for successfully defending himself against two off-duty Southern cops who pulled their guns on him during an argument. Witnesses say Tupac shot back in self-defense and fortunately was not hurt. As he told one magazine interviewer, “Every black man needs to be strapped. We’re endangered species, and we can’t get anybody to help us.” This incident dramatically underlines that *gun control kills blacks*. We say: Hands off Tupac Shakur! Drop the charges!

Tupac’s lyrics, expressing a desire for vengeance against police brutality and murders of young blacks, have struck a responsive chord. Even if it’s only a fantasy, songs about black power and rebellion against the racist system have a powerful appeal to American youth living both in urban slums and boring sub-

urbs. The phony “war on drugs” has turned America’s ghettos and barrios into free-fire zones for the cops. And the recent outpouring of “anti-crime” rhetoric is a call for unleashing more police firepower against minority youth, who are to be left to rot in countless new dungeons under construction.

The not-so-new twist is to simultaneously blame those most oppressed and victimized by capitalism for their own suffering. So to wash their brains, Attorney General Janet Reno is threatening to bring in the government censors. Those “Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics” labels weren’t enough for the music McCarthyites; they want to blame it and ban it altogether.

“General” Reno is not alone. Her boss Bill Clinton appealed to white racist voters during the presidential campaign by denouncing rapper Sister Souljah’s black nationalism at Jesse Jackson’s PUSH banquet. (More recently, he joined Jackson in blaming black youth and black families for the violence that is rampant in the devastated inner-city ghettos.) And a few months ago, Rev. Calvin Butts of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church,

continued on page 3



HOLIDAY APPEAL FOR CLASS-WAR PRISONERS

The cops and courts seek to ensure that those who fight the poverty and racism endemic to capitalism are "safely" housed in prison hellholes or their graves.

In 1986, the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) revived an International Labor Defense (ILD) tradition of sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoners as an expression of solidarity.

In addition to its regular monthly support, the ILD raised extra funds

during the holidays for the prisoners and their families.

Help build our program of monthly stipends to these victims of racist capitalist injustice.

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TROTSKY

Expel the Imperialists from the Colonies!

A keystone of Leninist internationalism is unconditional support to the right of self-determination of oppressed nations, that is, to freedom of political separation, and in particular the demand for independence of the colonies from their imperialist overlords. In the post-World War II period, the "democratic" imperialists have sought to disguise their continued colonial rule with sham "autonomy" schemes (e.g., "common-

wealth" status for Puerto Rico) and outright annexation, using occasional empty referendums to supposedly register the subject peoples' acquiescence to their subjugation. While various reformists lend credence to these colonial schemes, Lenin was adamant that proletarian internationalists stood foursquare for the complete independence of the colonies, while fighting for working-class unity and socialist revolution.

The proletariat must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right to self-determination. The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by "their own" nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words; neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between the workers of the oppressed and the oppressor nations....

On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in face of all manner of intrigues, treachery and trickery on the part of the bourgeoisie....

Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation—and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing else than the recognition of the right to self-determination; they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising—or revolutionary war, in the event of one—against the imperialist powers that oppress them.

—V.I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (January-February 1916)



LENIN

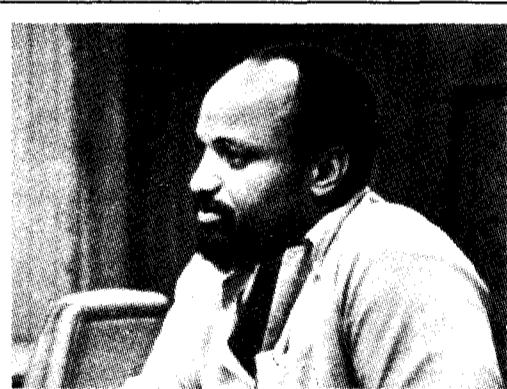


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Mumia Abu-Jamal, death row political prisoner, is fighting for his life. Former Black Panther, well-known journalist, "Voice of the Voiceless," MOVE supporter—framed up and sentenced to die for his political beliefs and utter defiance of the racist capitalist order.

22-hour-a-day lockdown, no "contact" visits—under constant harassment for his refusal to bow down and be silent, Jamal continues to fight from behind bars with his biting columns which are published in newspapers across the country and his powerful voice tapes that ring out against racist injustice.

The New World Disorder has meant speedup on death row. Jamal's case is a "Handbook of Constitutional Violations." They are rewriting their laws and ignoring their own precedents to keep Mumia on death row. The state nurtures a vicious vendetta against this fighter for justice and his executioners await. All opponents of the racist death penalty must mobilize now to fight to stop the execution. Join the campaign! SAVE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!



WV Photo

Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), America's foremost class-war prisoner, 46 years old. Former Black Panther, highly decorated Vietnam vet—victim of racist FBI COINTELPRO frame-up. Geronimo has now served over 23 years for a crime the government knows he did not commit. The racist state fears him as a leader of militant resistance—a fighter for black liberation—and keeps him jailed despite the compelling evidence of his innocence. He is at San Diego, CA.

We send stipends to eleven MOVE members who are in prisons scattered throughout Pennsylvania. Nine of them are serving sentences of 30-100 years.

Carlos Africa, Dallas, PA
Charles "Chuckie" Africa, Pittsburgh, PA
Consuewella Dotson Africa, 41 years old, Muncy, PA
Debbie Sims Africa, 38 years old, 20 years in MOVE, Muncy, PA
Delbert Orr Africa, Dallas, PA
Edward Goodman Africa, Camp Hill, PA
Janet Holloway Africa, 21 years in MOVE, Muncy, PA
Janine Phillips Africa, 20 years in MOVE, Muncy, PA
Merle Austin Africa, Muncy, PA
Michael Davis Africa, Huntingdon, PA
William Phillips Africa, Bellefonte, PA



Buck Family

Robert Buck, 28 years old. Ravenswood steel worker (Local 5668) railroaded by the feds for defending his union and job from scabs and thugs in the bitter West Virginia strike. Bob courageously refused to wear a wire for the feds and went to jail rather than spy on his union brothers and sisters. He is currently in Springfield, MO.

Ed Poindexter, 50 years old. Former Black Panther supporter, former leader of the Omaha Nebraska Committee to Combat Fascism, victim of racist FBI COINTELPRO. Framed on charges of killing a cop in 1970, he was sentenced to a life term. He was vindictively denied parole last year—he has served more than 21 years at Lino Lake, MN.

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa (David Rice), 47 years old. He and Poindexter were victims of racist FBI COINTELPRO, framed up for an explosion in 1970 which killed a cop. Both men were convicted on perjured testimony and sentenced to life. Mondo is an award-winning writer and artist. He is at Lincoln, NE.

Hugo Pinell, the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. Militant anti-racist, leader of prison rights organizing along with George Jackson. In prison for over 28 years, currently serving a life sentence at Crescent City, CA.

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There Was No Assassination Plot Against Bush

Clinton's Flimsy Lie for Bombing Baghdad

When 23 cruise missiles loaded with 1,000-pound warheads smashed into a densely populated neighborhood in downtown Baghdad on June 26, President Clinton arrogantly gloated that he felt "quite good" about this wanton atrocity which murdered eight civilians, including a baby and celebrated artist Layla al-Attar. According to Clinton, this was "retaliation" (in the manner of the Nazis' "collective punishment") for "a plot to assassinate former President Bush...directed and pursued by the Iraqi intelligence service" when Bush visited Kuwait in mid-April. To back up his claim, Clinton pointed to an FBI report which came out the day before he decided to bomb. We immediately denounced "Baby-Killer Clinton" and the "U.S. Sneak Attack on Baghdad" (WV No. 579, 2 July) and dismissed the flimsy lie on which it was based.

Now an article by Seymour Hersh in the *New Yorker* (1 November) confirms in detail what was obvious from the outset: that the supposed Iraqi plot to assassinate George Bush last April was a tissue of lies concocted in order to justify yet another murderous imperialist attack on the long-suffering Iraqi people. In his oh-so-diplomatic way, intelligence gadfly Hersh debunks every facet of Clinton's deadly Big Lie, reporting: "none of the Clinton Administration officials I interviewed over a ten-week period this summer claimed that there was any empirical evidence—a 'smoking gun'—directly linking Saddam or any of his senior advisers to the alleged assassination attempt. The case against Iraq was, and remains, circumstantial."

The only "evidence" the U.S. ever offered was "confessions" of intelligence connections extracted under torture from two of eleven Iraqis arrested by the Kuwaiti emirate, "the ease with which the alleged Iraqi assassination team had crossed the border," and a car bomb whose design supposedly betrayed the distinctive "signature" of the Iraqi intelligence service. "Each of these assertions has now been shown to be factually incorrect," writes Hersh.

The "assassins" turn out to have been smugglers who were running whiskey to the piously Islamic but high-living Kuwaiti aristocracy. Eleven Iraqis and three Kuwaitis were put on trial in Kuwait City for the plot after the U.S. had already "retaliated." Most had been arrested the day before Bush arrived, but the key people were seized only the day before he left, even though the smugglers' hideout "was under round-

the-clock surveillance by the Kuwaiti police." Not until *four days* after the arrests was a "plot" allegedly "discovered," when confessed smuggler Wali al-Ghazali told a tale of being "sent into Kuwait by Iraqi intelligence to kill Bush." Despite imprisonment and torture, not one of the other prisoners admitted knowing anything about an assassination plot.

During the trial, 73-year-old Ali Khdair Baddai testified that he had confessed to smuggling—but not assassination—after being beaten. "This is the way of the Kuwaiti police," explained one of the defense attorneys. The 1992 Human Rights Watch report notes that "torture remains common" in this feudal emirate. Yet the FBI agents who interviewed the prisoners denied that they had been tortured or beaten. Former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Akins commented: "Either the investigators were idiots or they were lying."

The only "compelling evidence" which Clinton could point to in the FBI report was the allegation that the remote-control firing device for the car bomb had the same "signature" as previously recovered Iraqi devices. The White House released photographs to bolster its case, but as Hersh writes:

"When I asked seven such [bomb forensics] experts about those photographs last summer, they all told me essentially the same thing: the remote-control

devices shown in the White House photographs were mass-produced items, commonly used for walkie-talkies and model airplanes and cars, and had not been modified in any significant way."

So much for a "signature"!

Well before the bombing, the CIA had issued a classified report (leaked to a *Boston Globe* reporter) suggesting that Kuwait might have "cooked the books" on the plot to prove a "continuing Iraqi threat." But Clinton wanted to prove that he could be no less coldblooded a leader of the imperialist "New World Order" than his predecessor.

Not content with slaughtering tens of thousands of Iraqis during its 1991 "Desert Slaughter," the U.S. and its imperialist allies have murdered at least 300,000 more people in the last two years with their starvation blockade. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently reported that the country is on the brink of famine, warning that "A grave humanitarian tragedy is unfolding" in Iraq (*Los Angeles Times*, 9 August). A United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) report also criticized the sanctions, which have left the country without the resources to import food and medicine.

Noting that Iraq "once boasted one of the highest literacy rates in the developing world," the *Times* article summarized the brutal results of the embargo: "skyrocketing typhoid, measles, infant mor-

tality, malnutrition and primary-school dropout rates, as well as widespread child labor and deepening psychological disorders." Fueling the epidemic of disease is the deliberate U.S. devastation of Iraq's infrastructure, formerly among the most developed in the Near East, which has left water treatment and sanitation systems virtually inoperable.

During the Persian Gulf War, we called to defend Iraq against the imperialist onslaught, while giving no political support to the butcher Hussein. We oppose the "UN" sanctions which are aimed at subjecting Iraq to the imperialist diktat. From the devastation of Iraq to the colonial occupation of Somalia in the name of "humanitarian aid," the "democratic" imperialist cops of the world are the greatest enemies of humanity. Iraqi strongman Hussein has plenty of blood on his hands, to be sure, but the grand masters of assassination plots and massacres are to be found in Washington.

The Clinton administration, fresh from the incineration of an integrated religious commune in Texas, fabricated the whole non-plot for the non-assassination of ex-president Bush. They want to "teach a bloody lesson" to regimes they don't like ("outlaw nations") by showing that the U.S. can rain high-tech death from the sky on defenseless people at any moment. *U.S. bloody butchers: Hands off Iraq and the world!* ■



Baghdad, June 26: Victims pulled from the rubble after U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles slammed into residential neighborhood.

Rap...

(continued from page 1)

blaming rap music for undermining the morals of black youth, grabbed headlines by dumping a pile of CDs in front of Sony Music offices and threatening to smash them with a steamroller.

Rap was even blamed in a *New York Times* op-ed piece this summer for causing the "whirlpooling" phenomenon in NYC, when groups of teenage boys chanting the lyrics of the popular rap song "Whoomp, There It Is!" surrounded and sexually assaulted girls at public swimming pools. A few years back the media were blaming pricey sneakers for youth crime in the cities.

If rap is to blame for drugs and crime in the inner cities, what's to explain white suburban "juvenile delinquency"? Suburban white kids are supposedly being turned into potentially violent video zombies by the overnight success of MTV's

satirical cartoon "Beavis and Butt-head," which features two antisocial teenage boys who divide their time between critiquing music videos and committing arson and assorted mayhem. When a five year old playing with matches burned down his mother's trailer home this summer, killing his baby sister, his mom got national press coverage for blaming Beavis and Butt-head.

Now Janet Reno, a real expert in burning down houses with people in them, is obscenely vituperating against "TV violence" as the cause of juvenile crime. Reno has the blood on her hands of 86 members of the Branch Davidian religious group outside Waco, Texas—slaughtered on her orders last April by federal stormtroopers and carried live on national television. When MTV moved "Beavis and Butt-head" from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. in response to criticism, South Carolina Senator Hollings called the move an admission of guilt. But as columnist D.C. Denison remarked, noting the sensationalism of TV tabloid news and sleazy talk

shows, "To make a real difference, apparently, the entire television industry would have to shift to a new time: the 1950s" (*Boston Globe*, 24 October).

The McCarthyite '50s were a period of anti-Communist witchhunts in the unions and universities; dissent was thoroughly stifled and conformity reigned supreme. Blacks were "kept in their place" until the emerging civil rights movement began asserting itself. What Reno, Clinton and the rap-bashers want today is to silence any disquieting voices appealing to working-class and minority youth, to ban images of the increasing brutality of life in racist, capitalist America. In their "Brave New World" Order—with the U.S. economy "downsizing" and blacks denied education, employment, housing and hope—the racist rulers don't want a new generation of youth making trouble at home.

Rap music and TV violence are convenient scapegoats for explaining away the poverty and violence endemic to American inner cities. The Spartacist

League opposes any government censorship of TV or music. But unlike opportunist groups like Socialist Action, which patronizingly hails "The Revolutionary Message of Rap Music" (!), we do not cover up, for example, the demeaning sexism, the repulsive use of "bitch" and "nigger," the anti-Semitic and anti-Korean lines which are pretty common in rap music. The boasting and rage of the so-called "hip-hop nation" actually reflect a spirit of despair that accepts the degradation and oppression which pervade this rotten capitalist society.

Communists seek to bring socialist consciousness to the working class and win workers and youth to fight for a revolution. The desperation and anger of youth against this screwed-up society, felt especially by black and Hispanic youth—reflected by rap music or satirized by the likes of Beavis and Butt-head—must be channeled into a working-class program for revolution. Clinton, Reno: Leave the kids alone! ■

Army Rule Shaken in Nigeria

Down with the Puppet Government! For Workers Revolution!

LONDON, November 13—Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is caught in the grip of the sharpest social and political crisis since the bloody 1967-69 Biafra War. Following a government-ordered increase of more than 700 per cent in the price of petrol November 8 and a high court ruling three days later that the army-installed government is itself illegal, the trade unions are threatening a general strike for the fourth time in three months. For several days demonstrations by thousands of working people and students have blocked the main roads of Lagos, the commercial capital of the country. But the regime announced its determination to carry through the drastic austerity measures and suppress opposition. The stage is set for a showdown in the ongoing turmoil that has rocked Nigeria since last summer.

On August 27 Nigeria's military strongman, General Ibrahim Babangida, moved out of the presidential palace and installed a hand-picked "interim government" with a civilian president. The political opposition in the country was furious at this manoeuvre to avoid turning over power to Moshood Abiola, the victor in the June 12 presidential election. Ethnic and religious tensions threatened to explode into civil war. For days, Lagos was paralysed by protest strikes called by the five-million-strong Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). Significantly, the strategic oil workers union (Nupeng) also came out on strike, demanding recognition of the outcome of the election which was won by the business tycoon Chief Abiola but was annulled by the Babangida regime. Although they were mobilised on behalf of a capitalist candidate, this was the biggest display of the workers' power against the army which has ruled Nigeria for 25 years since independence in 1960.

Since 1986, Babangida's regime, in its attempt to negotiate the rescheduling of Nigeria's massive debt of \$34 billion to Western bankers, has imposed a highly unpopular "Structural Adjustment Programme" on the workers. To defuse political opposition, the military junta promised on and off to hand over power to an elected civilian government. Eventually they allowed elections to take place in June, a process that combined breathtaking buffoonery with murderous repression. The military regime set up



AP

two political parties, and even wrote their manifestos. One, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), was supposed to be "a little to the left" and the other, the National Republican Convention (NRC), "a little to the right." The two presidential candidates that emerged, Moshood Abiola for the SDP and Bashir Tofa for the NRC, are both multimillionaires who are personal friends of General Babangida.

However, after the votes had been counted and it turned out that the regime's preferred candidate, the NRC's Tofa, had lost, the election was retroactively annulled. The only excuse given by the regime was the fact that, as is usual in Nigeria, both presidential candidates had deployed their vast financial resources to canvass for votes. In the following weeks, General Babangida made it clear he was prepared to drown

the country in blood. Student protests which erupted mainly in cities across the southwestern region, Abiola's home base, were ruthlessly suppressed by the police and the army. In early July tens of thousands marched and erected barricades in the streets of Lagos. Over a hundred people were killed, and scores of pro-democracy activists were jailed. Most of the newspapers in the country were banned. Within a few days, Abiola fled in his private jet to his elegant house in London.

But the protests did not stop, and indeed they escalated. In mid-August, millions observed a three-day stayaway general strike. The normally congested streets of Lagos, notorious for its traffic jams, were empty and silent; businesses were shuttered, rail and bus transport stopped. Faced with a mounting political crisis, General Babangida formally turned over the reins of government to Chief Ernest Shonekan. Like Abiola, Shonekan is a member of the Yoruba tribal elite, as well as head of Nigeria's largest conglomerate, the United Africa Co., a subsidiary of the British-Dutch Unilever. The new government promised fresh presidential elections (with new candidates) in February 1994. Prominent oppositionists and several journalists jailed by the Babangida regime were released.

After a few days in which mass protests took place mainly in the southwestern parts of the country, the NLC federation called off their strikes. However, the Nupeng oil workers union, which had long been considered in the government's pocket, kept up their strike action for ten days. This paralysed industry and put a squeeze on the government, since oil provides 95 per cent of Nigeria's export earnings and 80 per cent of government revenue. And when the Shonekan "interim government" was sworn in at the end of September, the oil workers threatened to strike again. The unions have been tied politically to sections of the bourgeoisie through



Gilbert/Syigma

Lagos: Thousands demonstrate in June against annulment of presidential election. Nigerian strongman General Babangida (above right) refused to turn power over to wealthy businessman Chief Abiola (below right).



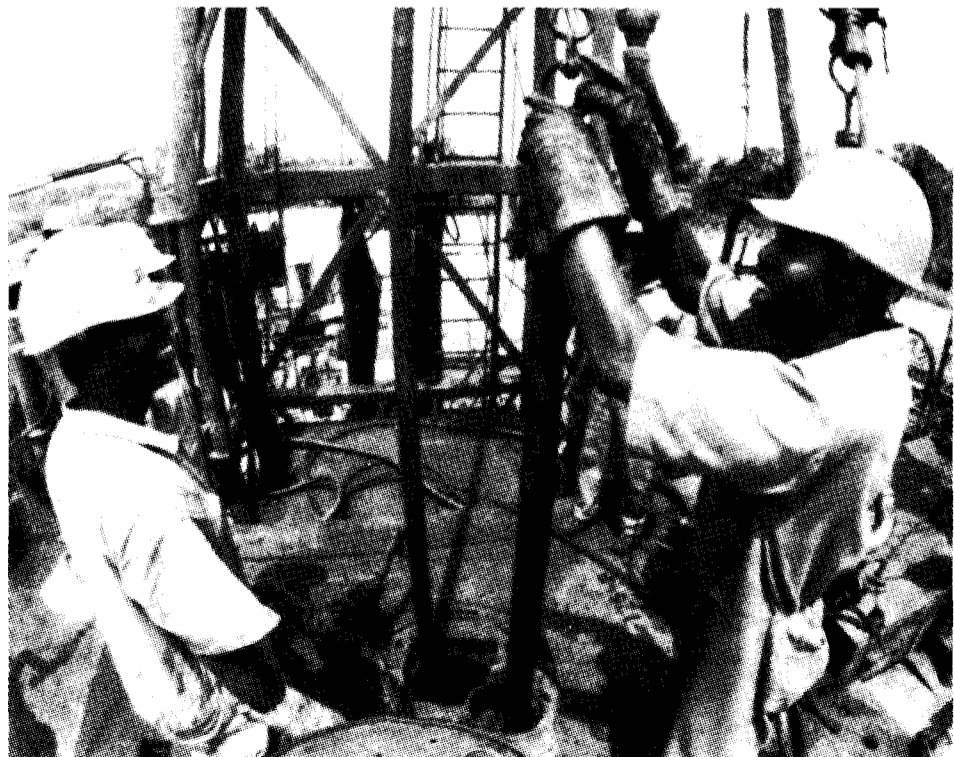
Peterson/Gamma-Liaison

the Campaign for Democracy (which includes as well human rights, student and women's groups), but the potential for independent working-class action was clear to all.

Worst Crisis Since Biafra War

Despite the figurehead civilian president, the military junta still effectively controls political power. The new vice president, General Sani Abacha, was a leader of the palace coup that brought General Babangida to power in 1985. General Abacha still retains his post of defence minister and has since moved to consolidate his power base in the military. At the beginning of November a supporter of Abiola, Iyorchia Ayu, was ousted as speaker of the senate. But a few days later, under the pressure of street protests, the senate condemned the drastic fuel price rises. In late October, a group of youths hijacked an airliner from Nigeria to neighbouring Niger, demanding that Babangida be put on trial, while at the same time declaring that Abiola is "a thief like the others." And meanwhile, tribal-regional tensions are mounting, with talk of Nigeria breaking up into several independent entities.

The political chaos and social misery in Nigeria, a country with a population of over 90 million, defies description. The military regime spent some \$10 billion to build the capital of Abuja closer to its northern power base, as a counter to the turbulent port city of Lagos. At the same time, per capita income is now under \$300 (having fallen from \$1,000 in 1980). Workers in many of the 30 states have not been paid for months. Unemployment among college (high school) leavers is over 80 per cent. Inflation is running at about 100 per cent. The monthly income of most families is not enough to buy food for two weeks. The mass of city populations live in crowded ghettos, with infrequent water and electricity supply, and thousands are homeless. In the vast countryside peasant populations eke out a bare subsis-



The Economist

Oil workers struck in August, paralyzing industry, but unions are tied to bourgeoisie through multi-class "Campaign for Democracy."

tence, living an unmitigated life of toil and grinding poverty. For women, whether in the city or the village, life is an endless catalogue of oppression and pain.

The condition of women in Nigeria, as in most of Africa, is comparable to that of slavery. The bride price is prevalent, in both Christian and Muslim communities. Men treat their wives as property. The practice of purdah (seclusion) among the Muslims means that most women are not allowed out of the house during daytime, and even at night when they go to visit relatives they have to wear a veil and be accompanied by an escort. In strongly Muslim communities, few women are able to work even when they are allowed to go to school. Wife-beating is common all over the country. Female genital mutilation is practised in several parts of Nigeria. Abortion is illegal, leading to the death of many young women at the hands of quack doctors. The fight for basic rights for women in Africa is a central strategic task in the struggle for workers revolution.

Nigeria is an amalgam of several nations and ethnic groupings. As part of the divide-and-rule legacy of colonialism, Britain left behind an independence constitution crafted so as to give greater electoral advantage to the politicians from the mainly Muslim Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups in the north. The Yorubas and the Igbos (Ibos), in the southwestern and southeastern parts of the country respectively, are mostly Christians. When in January 1966 the federal government was overthrown in the first military coup, rumours spread that the Igbos were plotting to dominate the country. In the orchestrated pogroms that followed, thousands of Igbos were massacred and their houses and shops were looted and destroyed. Those Igbos who managed to escape fled to the southeastern region.

In 1967, the southeastern region decided to secede and form the Republic of Biafra. The nascent Nigerian bourgeoisie could not countenance losing the oil-rich region. A ferocious three-year civil war then ensued, in which close to two million people died mainly due to mass starvation as the Nigerian army succeeded in throwing a land and air blockade around Biafra. Biafran forces surrendered to the Nigerian government in January 1970.

The Spartacist League was unique on the socialist left in the U.S. and Europe in defending the right of Biafra to secede and form a separate state. We gave no political support to the bourgeois-nationalist government of Biafra. As Leninists, we defend an oppressed national minority and seek thereby to overcome national antagonisms and promote working-class unity against the bourgeoisie. In contrast, the rest of the left lined up behind the Nigerian government, because of its ostensibly anti-imperialist rhetoric. Shamefully, most Nigerian leftist intellectuals supported the Nigerian government with its genocidal slogan of "One Nation, One Nigeria." The few who voiced their opposition to the war were rounded up and thrown into jail by the then military strongman General Yakubu Gowon.

Neocolonial "Democracy" in Africa?

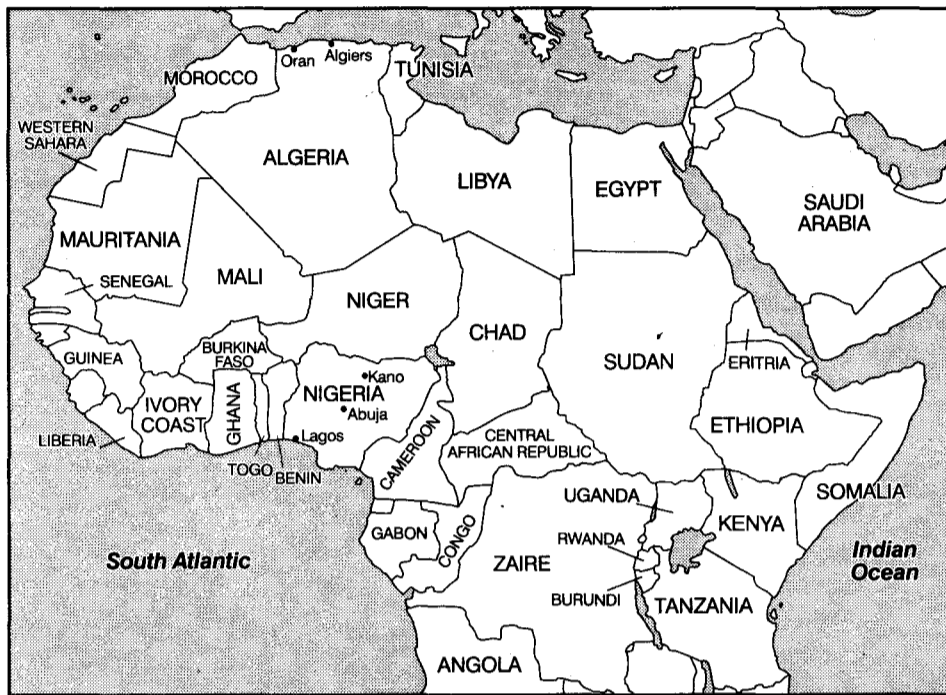
The triumph of capitalist counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the ending of the Cold War are having political repercussions throughout the world, including Africa. Most African countries gained political independence from their colonial masters in the 1950s and 1960s. After the Second World War, Britain and France sought to maintain their colonial empires, with some pseudo-democratic window-dressing under the guise of local "self-government." As David Fieldhouse writes in his book *Black Africa, 1945-1980* (1986), they "squeezed and exploited their colonies in Africa in ways never seen before." However, the European "democratic" imperialists had

been weakened as world powers, and were forced to relinquish their formal colonial hold over much of the continent. Worried by the increasing influence of the Soviet Union on national liberation movements, they eventually acquiesced in handing over power, where possible to amenable native leaders.

The racist imperialists never cared if these leaders turned round and butchered their own people or national minorities. Thus in the former Belgian Congo (now Zaire), for example, UN officials stood by while Mobutu's forces aided by the CIA murdered Patrice Lumumba and thousands of his supporters in 1961. After a brief period in which independence movements held sway, almost everywhere in Africa they were soon replaced by generals, captains and even

of post-independence Africa is the direct result of imperialist domination, which has sucked out *tens of billions of dollars*, far more than the piddling sums of "foreign aid," while imposing neocolonial satraps. Workers must demand: U.S./UN out of Somalia! Nigerian and other foreign troops out of Liberia!

Realising the inherent weakness of 50-odd states and statelets in a post-colonial Africa, pan-Africanism was a point of reference for early independence leaders (Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré). But by vowing to maintain the borders inherited from the colonial carve-up of the continent, the OAU that they set up legitimises the Balkanisation of the continent and perpetrates the suppression of the rights of national minorities. And while Nkrumah courted Soviet



sergeants from the ex-colonial armies. These neo-colonial military regimes were shored up by the former colonial powers, who dispatched arms and occasionally troops when their puppet dictators were threatened. But now that the geostrategic "Soviet threat" is no more, the imperialists have little incentive to shore up corrupt tinpot dictators. And they are insistent that African governments "restructure" their economies so as to pay off their massive debts to the international bankers and the IMF.

In line with Reagan/Thatcher policies, state companies would be "privatised," while IMF-ordered austerity programs hold the workers and peasants in thrall. And in order to divert mass opposition over greater economic hardship, the imperialists have been pushing "political liberalisation" and elections. The "wind of democracy" was supposedly blowing across Africa. Elections were ordered, one-party states and army rule would be ended. And "Africa's biggest experiment in democracy" was to be Nigeria. But instead, as *The Economist* (4 September) headlined in a survey of "Democracy in Africa," there was "A Lull in the Wind." Rather than Western-style "multi-party democracy," long-ruling despots arranged their re-elections (as in Kenya, Ghana and the Ivory Coast), or disguised their continued rule by installing stand-in puppets as in Nigeria. And across the continent a host of civil wars have produced widespread hunger.

In Somalia, the imperialists opted for direct military occupation in the name of "humanitarian" aid. For months now U.S./UN "peacekeeping" troops have been gunning down defenceless civilians. In other cases, Western-aided armies are serving as regional gendarmes under the cover of international groupings. Through the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Morocco has maintained its occupation of Western Sahara. And for three years now the Nigerian army has occupied Liberia under the mantle of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Meanwhile, even imperialist liberals are grotesquely talking of the need for instituting a new racist colonialism in the name of "nation-building." Yet the devastation

aid to counterbalance imperialist pressures, and authored books like *Class Struggle in Africa* after he was overthrown in a 1966 coup, in power he suppressed the Ghanaian workers, including smashing a general strike in 1961. The "socialism" and "class struggle" he and other left-nationalists espoused to the attempts by a petty-bourgeois elite to mould itself into a ruling class by using the state (what the Soviet Stalinists called the "non-capitalist road of development") as the primary source of capitalist accumulation.

Even after the rapid demise of Lumumba, Nkrumah and Touré, various fake-socialists have undertaken to be the publicity agents for the next generation of left-posing nationalists in Africa. The U.S. Socialist Workers Party promoted Thomas Sankara, the assassinated military leader of Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), as a revolutionary hero. But apart from radical nationalist demagoguery, he was no liberator of the working masses. The tiny bourgeois layer was harassed (as were the unions), but cap-

italist property in Burkina Faso remained intact. As in the case of the butcher Mengistu Haile Myriam of Ethiopia, who massacred thousands of Eritreans and other national minorities, "Marxist-Leninist" phraseology was used to mobilise support for a military clique.

Post-independence Africa has been dominated by bonapartist dictatorial regimes, civilian and military. Some like Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast are more right-wing, but despite the occasional anti-imperialist rhetoric the others are not qualitatively better. They all face the same conditions of abject poverty. In the imperialist epoch, the neocolonial African countries have no chance of achieving significant economic development under capitalism. With scant industrial production, the bourgeoisie consists mainly of generals, government ministers, government contractors and small merchants. Such a feeble ruling class cannot possibly achieve national emancipation from imperialism, and certainly can't risk any semblance of "democracy" for the working masses. As we wrote several years ago:

"Whether openly neo-colonialist, 'African socialist' or 'Marxist-Leninist,' post-independence nationalist regimes have bowed down before the imperialists. They have been unable to achieve even capitalist development of their economies, and as the poverty deepens it is accompanied by a recrudescence of tribalism. Only the proletariat, standing at the head of the peasant masses and establishing its own class rule, can emancipate the black masses of Africa."

— "South Africa's Proletariat Is Key," *WV* No. 160, 3 June 1977

For Permanent Revolution in Africa!

In August, a major public meeting was held in London on "Democracy in Nigeria." One of the speakers was Abiola himself. The main organisers, Africa Research and Information Bureau (ARIB), praised themselves for successfully organising a cross-class alliance. ARIB's self-appointed resident Marxist, Abdulrahman M. Babu, declared: "I think we should thank Babangida for having created this situation of unity for all Nigerians and Africans.... I have noticed Marxists here, social democrats, some conservatives, not extreme conservatives but of the liberal kind, all unified."

The last thing the Nigerian working class needs is unity with the bourgeoisie. In actuality, this "unity" means subordination of the working class to the capitalists. In the current political crisis Nigerian trade unions have demonstrated a consciousness of their relative social weight. But this social power has been mobilised in the service of bourgeois politicians, who moreover have no appetite to fight against military bonapartism. While workers and youth faced down Babangida's regime and its puppet government, the leaders of both the SDP

continued on page 9

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Algeria in Turmoil

The following article has been adapted from *Le Bolchévik* No. 125 (September-November 1993), published by the *Ligue Trotskyste de France*, section of the *International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)*.

NOVEMBER 11—Algeria has gradually slipped into an underground civil war between reactionary Islamic fundamentalists and the widely despised military-based regime. Attacks and ambushes take place daily. Last summer, the fundamentalists took to burning down industrial plants, including a consumer electronics factory, a shoe manufacturer and a flour mill. They have made a particular target of leftists, announcing at the end of September that they would assassinate a communist every Tuesday. And in October the fundamentalists launched a wave of kidnappings and assassinations of foreigners in Algeria. The army, meanwhile, is ruling through a state of emergency since taking open control in January 1992 from the discredited FLN (National Liberation Front), which had run the country since independence in 1962. The military's latest prime minister is Redha Malek, a former executive director of the World Bank, who was installed in late August with orders to step up privatization of industry and repay the debt to imperialist creditors.

The regime has progressively lost any semblance of control since the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf in June 1992. A curfew is in force in ten *wilayas* (districts) and last April 15,000 troops were sent to reinforce the special forces of the gendarmes and police in and around the capital. Mixed assault squads of police, gendarmes and army special forces wearing black jumpsuits and ski masks, nicknamed "ninjas," cordon off whole districts and brutally search the population while attacking homes of "suspects" with rockets. Faced with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the HCE (High State Committee) front for the military is on its last legs. Imagining themselves to be spiking the fundamentalist danger, they can only answer with desert concentration camps holding up to 2,000 prisoners, prison terms ranging from five years to life, and meting out 350 death sentences. So far this year



The streets of Algiers under the state of emergency, declared by the army in January 1992 after fundamentalists swept elections. *Der Spiegel*

three batches of executions have been carried out, the latest on October 11 when 13 fundamentalists were shot by a firing squad.

According to unofficial sources, the death toll of this reactionary war on both sides has reached more than 2,500. To this balance sheet must be added a dozen prominent intellectuals assassinated by the fundamentalists over the past seven months. Among those murdered last spring were the writer Tahar Djaout and sociologist M'Hamed Boukhobza, and last month two TV journalists including 31-year-old Smail Yefsah. In carrying out their threats to kill a communist a week, on September 28 the fundamentalists murdered Abderrahmane Chergou at his apartment building, and on October 5 they gunned down Rabah Guenzet outside his home. Both were longtime leaders of the (Stalinist) Party of the Socialist Vanguard (PAGS).

Meanwhile, since late September an "Islamic Armed Group" has killed seven foreigners, including two Russian military advisers and two Latin Americans

and a Filipino working for an Italian oil company, as well as kidnapping several Frenchmen. The latter were released with a communiqué threatening all 100,000 foreigners living in Algeria with "sudden death" if they didn't leave the country within the month. Of the 76,000 French citizens, half are married to Algerians. Also threatened are members of the non-Arab, Berber-speaking minority concentrated in Kabylia, who have traditionally opposed Islamic fundamentalism. In response to initial fundamentalist attacks last month, Kabyle villagers have begun forming self-defense committees. A meeting of 46 committees turned down government offers to provide them with additional arms.

In desperation at the HCE's patent inability to stem the rise of the fundamentalist threat, much of the "modernist" petty bourgeoisie, and even many workers, look to the military to act as "saviors." Last March there were massive demonstrations called by the UGTA trade union federation in which hundreds of thousands of people, shocked by the outbreak of assassinations of prominent intellectuals, marched behind banners such as "The People and the Army Against Terrorism." But, as throughout North Africa, the shaky bonapartist Algerian regime, incapable of confronting the deepening economic crisis, has been unable to stem the rise of the fundamentalists through government terror.

The army has been the real power behind every government since independence, and from the outset the FLN regime has followed policies reinforcing Islamic reaction. While today the news of Algeria is dominated by reports of shootouts between Islamic "holy warriors" and the army and police, it would be dangerous to ignore the ever-present possibility of the Algerian military, or a section of it, making a deal with the fundamentalists, or of the army adopting their reactionary program. Earlier this year, the FLN along with the MDA of former Algerian president Ben Bella, the more "moderate" fundamentalists of

Hamas and Ennahdha, and the pan-Arabist PRA were calling for negotiations with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) to arrive at a national consensus. They were even talking of a march for "national reconciliation" with the Islamic fundamentalists and against "secular communists" (*Le Matin*, 7 April), coming just after (and in response to) the UGTA-organized marches, but this was banned by the regime.

Recently, a "National Dialogue Commission" has been created, including five "civilians" and three generals, to undertake discussions with the fundamentalists. The commission has reportedly already contacted former FIS leader Abdelkader Hachani. The purpose of these efforts is to draw elements of the fractured FIS into the government. The situation can tip at any moment, and the repressive forces could be turned, in particular, against the workers movement.

The considerable class power of the Algerian proletariat was driven home this summer by the strike of Algiers dock workers, which totally shut down the port of the capital for more than a week, preventing goods (including food) from getting in through the country's main port. With this action, the longshoremen demonstrated their social power against the brutal austerity program of the government which is dictated by the starvation-breeders of the IMF. Similar murderous austerity policies provoked the 1988 riots which shook the country. However, the UGTA union leadership, historically part and parcel of the corrupt, anti-working-class FLN apparatus, kept the strike demands strictly limited to narrow defense of the dockers' economic self-interest.

There was a clear potential for the dock strikers to establish themselves as a rallying pole for all the oppressed in opposition to government austerity and the fundamentalists. But this posed the burning need for a revolutionary working-class leadership, opposed to the FLN's nationalist perspective, on an internationalist program of proletarian class struggle against capitalist rule.

Imperialist Oppression and Fundamentalist Reaction

Following the collapse of the Stalinist-ruled degenerated and deformed workers states in East Europe and the USSR, imperialism feels freer to impose its dictates on the neocolonial countries. In the heralded "New World Order," they have devastated Iraq, Yugoslavia has been destroyed, and now Somalia is subjected to colonial occupation under the flag of the UN and in the name of humanitarian aid. Under this phony Pax Americana, the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the South African ANC and the Palestinian PLO sign on to police the oppressed masses for the apartheid and Zionist butchers.

In Algeria, the fundamentalist reactionaries of the FIS feed off the deep economic crisis which is ravaging the country as the FLN's bourgeois nationalism is revealed as utterly bankrupt. But an Islamic fundamentalist regime, despite anti-Western rhetoric, would still be beholden to imperialism—witness the Islamic republic of Pakistan, the Islamic monarchy of Saudi Arabia or Iran's cooperation with the German Fourth Reich. In turn, the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in Algeria bolsters anti-immigrant reaction in France, where workers of North African origin are a key component of the working class. Le Pen's fascist National Front portrays North Africans as backward religious fanatics as it whips up its shock troops in murderous racist attacks. And the regime of "socialist" president Mitterrand cohabiting with the conservative government of Balladur is tightening up its borders to choke off immigration from North Africa and elsewhere. In early November, French authorities rounded up more than 88 people accused of



Port of Algiers was paralyzed during week-long dockers strike last July. *no credit*



Senna/AFP



AFP

Demonstration of "Islamic Salvation Front" in summer of 1991 (left). Today, army "ninja" hit squads target fundamentalists in underground civil war.

supporting the FIS.

The establishment of an Islamic state in Algeria would send shock waves along the southern shores of the Mediterranean. In Egypt it would mean a strengthening for the "Djamaa Isalmiya" (Islamic Group, an umbrella group including almost all the fundamentalist factions) that is waging a reactionary war against Western tourists and secular intellectuals like the writer Faradj Fouda. A FIS victory would also embolden its counterparts in neighboring Tunisia. The fundamentalists have taken advantage of the disarray of the Tunisian working class, as the historically strong union movement was betrayed by its leaders, including the Stalinists, who for decades supported the presidential regime of Bourguiba and could offer no perspective after the brutal crushing of hunger riots in January 1984.

The Islamic reactionary thugs who are now on the loose in Algeria and Egypt were trained in their terrorist tactics in the anti-communist *jihad* (holy war) financed by the "Great Satan," U.S. imperialism, that brought down the Soviet-backed reform regime in Afghanistan. This victory of the forces of counter-revolution—which led to the imposition of a theocratic mullah regime in devastated Kabul and the imprisonment of emancipated Afghan women under the suffocating veil—gave a tremendous impetus to the destruction of the Soviet Union. And as the now-unemployed fundamentalist cutthroats milled around, these dogs of war soon found other battlefields. If the Soviet Army, instead of being withdrawn from Afghanistan by Gorbachev in 1988-89, had been unleashed to settle accounts with the *mujahedin* , these "Afghani" thugs would not be spreading reactionary terror in North Africa today.

Despite the failure of the policy of "industrializing industry" in the 1970s—i.e., of development through heavy industry—Algeria has created a working class which has social power well beyond its numerical weakness. Today these key working-class sectors are directly threatened by "restructuring" imposed by the IMF, represented in Algeria by its lackeys of the HCE/government, which is seeking to privatize much of the public sector. These "reforms" are already being translated into new waves of layoffs and a savage rise in the cost of living. The desperation of large sections of the population as they are crushed in the vise of imperialist exploitation is pushing them into the arms of the FIS, whose populist demagoguery seems to offer a "radical" solution to the crisis.

Meanwhile, the guerrilla war that the fundamentalists are today waging to impose an Islamic state has served as a pretext to intensify the racist anti-immigrant campaign in the former colonial metropole of France. The withdrawal of the colonial army in humiliat-

ing defeat from Algeria spawned a generation of fascists in France, from the OAS (Secret Army Organization) to the National Front. Today French fascists brandish the spectre of a new wave of immigration fleeing an Islamic revolution in Algeria. By slamming the doors to immigration of North African workers, which was an escape valve for the unemployed, French imperialism is only accentuating the crisis and pushing Algeria toward an explosion.

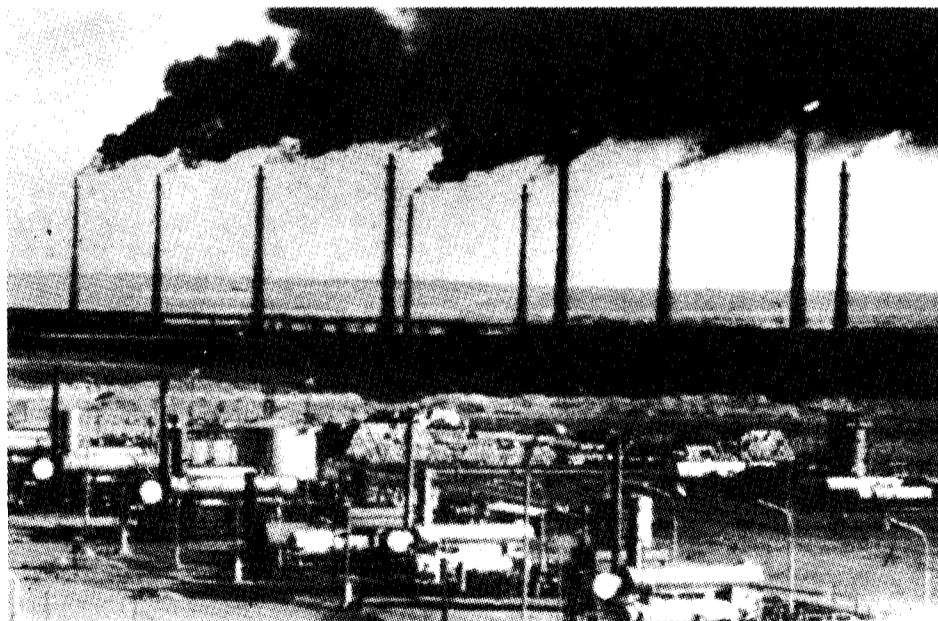
"Immigrant" workers occupy a strategic place in French industry and constitute a veritable bridge to the working class on the other shore of the Mediterranean. In fighting to sweep away the "socialist"-conservative cohabitation regime of Mitterrand/Balladur and interior minister Pasqua, a revolutionary party must firmly champion the cause of so-called "immigrants" (as even those of North African descent who are born in

geoisie and extend the proletarian revolution throughout Europe and across the Mediterranean to Algerian and other North African workers.

For a Trotskyist Party in Algeria!

Only the working class has the social power to defeat the corrupt regime of the HCE and crush the Islamic reactionaries of the FIS. To do this, the working class must not only draw behind it the enormous mass of unemployed youth and poor and landless peasants, but must champion the cause of all the oppressed, defending the rights of Berber speakers and fighting for the liberation of women, enslaved by the patriarchal family and prime targets of Islamic terror.

Muslim fundamentalism was bolstered by the FLN and the Family Code which it put forward in the 1970s. The debates which followed served as



Zebar/Gamma

Workers in economically strategic petroleum industry are bastion of the small but powerful Algerian proletariat.

France are called; they do not automatically get French citizenship). This will require as well sharp struggle against the Islamic fundamentalists who work hand in hand with the French bourgeoisie. After Mitterrand came to power in the early 1980s, he denounced striking North African auto workers at the Renault factory in Flins—who were the first to fight against his austerity measures—as manipulated by Islamic fundamentalists. At the same time, Renault bosses were allowing prayer rooms to be set up in the factories to better "discipline" the workers! And today, the same Pasqua who wants to pack North Africans into special train cars for deportation also officially sponsors an "Imam Training Institute" in Paris!!

The Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF), section of the International Communist League, is fighting in France to build a multi-ethnic vanguard workers party to crush the fascists, expropriate the bour-

a springboard for the fundamentalist groups who attacked their leftist and feminist opponents. And as part of its "Arabization" campaign, the regime even brought in Muslim Brotherhood teachers from the Near East who helped whip up fundamentalist hysteria in the universities. In June 1984, the FLN succeeded in imposing this code, largely inspired by the *sharia* (Koranic law), which allows polygamy and divorce by "repudiation" (depriving the woman of all rights), and relegates women to the status of eternal minors, legally required to obey father and husband. Revolutionaries must win the working class to take up the fight for abolition of the reactionary Family Code and for the separation of religion and the state.

The miserable conditions faced by Algerian women and the proletariat are an utter condemnation of the treacherous left groups such as the former Stalinists of the PAGS—which dissolved in Jan-

uary, with a remnant naming itself Ettahadi (Challenge)—who have tailed all the FLN governments and now support the HCE. The murderous regime and the reactionary fundamentalists are both a deadly threat to the workers movement. Early this year, the minister of religious affairs practically called on the FIS to turn its guns on the left, asking "Why are they killing policemen? They are not all communists." And then-prime minister Belaïd Abdesslam virulently attacked "secular assimilationists" on television. Around this time, Ettahadi leader Hachemi Sherif was injured in an attack on his car. In July, another Ettahadi spokesman barely escaped strangulation by fundamentalist assassins at the entrance to his apartment building, and the next month a party sympathizer and his wife were gunned down as they fled an assault on their home. Now the religious fanatics are systematically murdering leftists.

The shameless social democrats of the PT (Workers Party, followers of Pierre Lambert) criminally supported the June 1991 "strike" of the FIS and seek a bloc with the Islamic fundamentalists against the HCE. And the PST (Socialist Workers Party), in political solidarity with Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (Usec), has abandoned all pretense of building a revolutionary party. These centrists, after their legalization in the political "opening" after the 1988 upsurge, received funding from the FLN regime, with which they obtained an office on the sea front, right next to the Algerian parliament. The program of these opportunists is essentially based on the necessity to "defend democracy," a cover for a policy of alliance with a supposedly "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie, such as the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) of Ait Ahmed.

For years, the pseudo-Trotskyists of the Usec touted a so-called "Arab Revolution," which was nothing but a cover for tailing after nationalist despots in the Near East who spouted anti-imperialist rhetoric while murderously suppressing their own workers and national or religious minorities. In Algeria, this meant direct *political support* to the bourgeois regime. Indeed, Michel Pablo (Raptis), Mandel's mentor who had broken from Trotskyism on a liquidationist program and engineered the political destruction of the Fourth International in 1951-53, became a close lieutenant of Ben Bella and an Algerian government official when the FLN came to power.

In recent years, in order to pursue its opportunist appetites the PST has adopted a reformist minimum program, the Workers and Peoples Front, or "FOP," which opens the door to political blocs with bourgeois forces. A so-called "left opposition" of the PST, which recently published *El Monadhil* (The Militant), proposes that the PST

continued on page 9

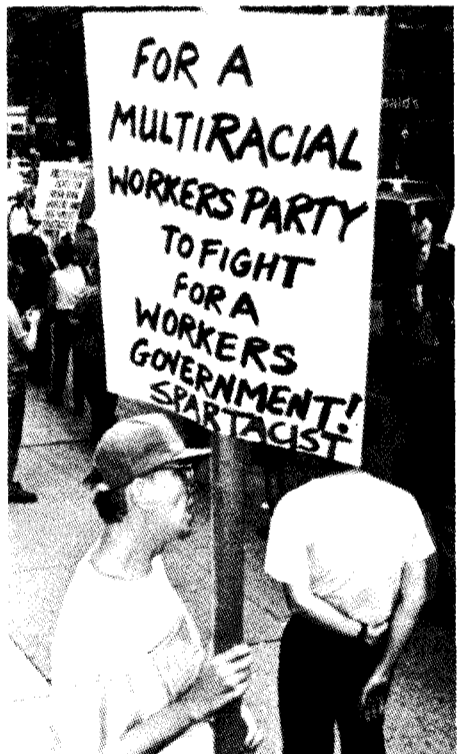
Elections...

(continued from page 1)

November 13 to evoke the memory of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in order to push his scheme to throw more black youth into prison. Echoing Jesse Jackson's "crusade" over black youth violence, Clinton blames the victims for the racist violence and economic devastation that the capitalist class has unleashed on black America. Already aimed at jacking up the numbers of police and prisons at a cost of over \$22 billion while vastly expanding the racist death penalty and gun control, Clinton's bill has been padded with ever more outlandish amendments, targeting everyone from teen offenders to "illegal aliens," all passed with solid support from Democrats and Republicans alike.

The spectacle of bourgeois politicians trying to outbid each other in the racist "anti-crime" auction has become so extreme that Delaware Democratic Senator Joseph Biden, no slouch himself when it comes to "crime-fighting," felt compelled to remark: "if someone came to the floor and said we should barb wire the ankles of anyone who jaywalks, I think it would pass." Under the headline, "The Crime Bill: Worse Every Day," an editorial in the liberal *Washington Post* (10 November) anxiously asked: "Where are the men and women, elected to lead, to stand up and speak out when the crowd is shouting for blood?"

It is the elected "leaders" who are shouting the loudest. The "anti-crime" wave has little to do with crime, and everything to do with race and class.



WV Photo

New York, June 1993 protest against INS deportations.

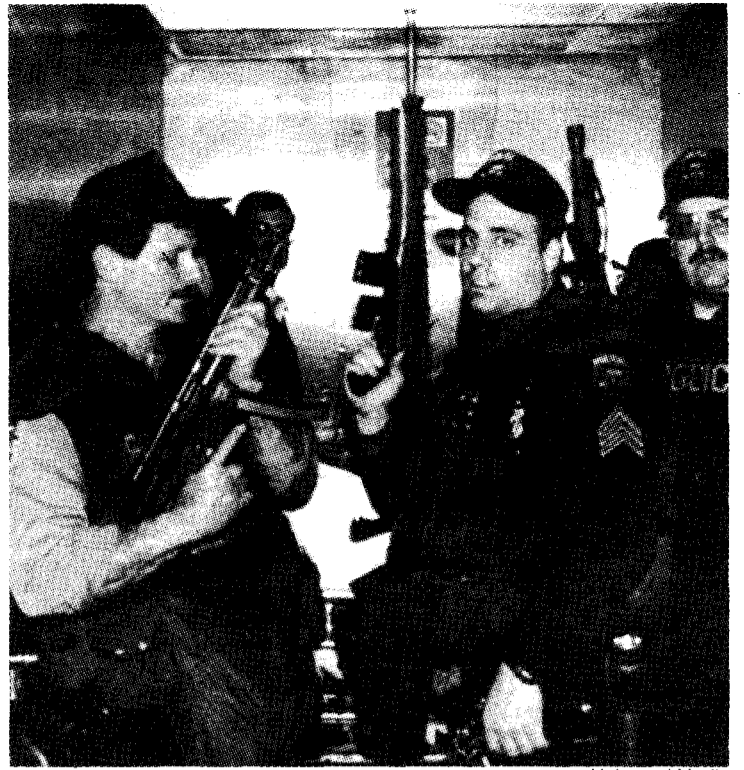
While the rate of violent crimes in major cities has actually *fallen* in the last year or two, the level of immiseration, desperation and unemployment continues to climb. Meanwhile the ruling class seeks to cut a budget deficit fueled by years of extravagant Cold War military spending by shutting down schools and hospitals and throwing people off the welfare rolls. And particularly since the 1992 Los Angeles upheaval sparked by the racist acquittal of Rodney King's cop tormentors, politicians of both property parties have been pushing for more convictions, more prisons, more executions to keep the ghetto and barrio poor in line.

At bottom what the hysteria over "crime" reflects is that crisis-ridden capitalist America, with its closed-down factories and burned-out slums, has neither a place nor a need for the black, Hispanic and other minority sectors who formerly served in the "reserve army of the unemployed." What we wrote about a 1988 "workfare" bill aimed at forcing millions of single mothers off welfare applies with equal force today to the "anti-crime" crusade: "The aim of this legislation is to see to it that layers of the minority population *die*, because this

Cops' candidate Giuliani and his "tactical" attack squads.



Reuters



Universal Media

decrepit capitalist system no longer needs them" ("Genocide U.S.A.," WV No. 463, 21 October 1988).

Big Brother Giuliani: "Nobody Will Escape My Attention"

As in the '89 elections but more so, the Giuliani campaign brought together a racist united front ranging from white Catholic "ethnic" enclaves to JDL-connected Brooklyn Zionist Assemblyman Dov Hikind and Hasidic rabbis. About the only black support Giuliani could garner was Dime Savings Bank CEO Richard Parsons and Roy Innis, promoter of the CIA/South Africa-sponsored UNITA terrorists in Angola. In the upshot, New York City—with a quarter of its population black—now has not a single black in a citywide elected position, and only one at the borough level.

The elections themselves saw blatantly racist dirty tricks. In New Jersey, a major scandal has been brewing ever since Republican gubernatorial winner Christine Whitman's campaign manager Ed Rollins *boasted* that he had bought the narrow electoral victory by handing out half a million dollars in bribes to black preachers and Democratic Party workers to keep blacks from voting. In NYC, off-duty cop provocateurs posted an ostensibly pro-Dinkins leaflet that threatened Hispanics with arrest as undocumented immigrants if they showed up at the polls.

Giuliani was elected on a racist backlash vote, with an 89,000 vote margin in overwhelmingly white Staten Island that was double his total citywide lead. Staten Islanders meanwhile voted for secession from New York City, leading many to term Giuliani the "mayor of Staten Island." But, aside from a more benign personality, Dinkins could offer nothing to the masses other than his record of service to the bankers in laying off city workers and in putting more cops on the streets, and his support from yuppie "Bubba" Clinton. The city has lost 400,000 jobs in the last four years. "We've become the youth unemployment capital of America," observed columnist Bob Fitch in the *Village Voice* (16 November).

In his carefully scripted attempt to "reach out" to nonwhites in his victory speech, Giuliani said: "Nobody, no ethnic, religious or racial group, will escape my care, my concern and my attention." Coming from a former Reaganite federal prosecutor—the man who helped incite a racist police riot on the steps of City Hall last year—this should send chills up the spines of all New Yorkers. Noting that "Giuliani has talked about wanting to build more prisons," one Queens high school student told the *New York Times* (4 November) that after the election "the members of her class on government agreed that under Mr. Giuliani, their chances of going to jail would be greater than of their being successful."

Giuliani announced that one of his first acts as mayor would be to order the cops to reinstitute indiscriminate "drug

sweeps and random arrests of "street dealers." Giuliani calls for uniformed cops to patrol school corridors and entrances (a proposal earlier raised by Dinkins). Already little more than run-down holding pens for youths being "trained" for a future in and out of jail, now the city's schools will come complete with gun-toting racist prison guards. City labor had better watch out, too. The *Wall Street Journal* (4 November) wasted no time in giving the new mayor his marching orders: "A key test for Mr. Giuliani will be his ability to tame" municipal unions. Giuliani wants to slash 34,000 workers from the city payroll and has already threatened to privatize everything from garbage collection to city hospitals.

Death Penalty Democrats

The spearhead of the racist "law and order" campaign is Clinton's "anti-crime" bill, which promises to put 100,000 more cops on the streets and build ten mammoth regional "high security" prisons. What "high security" means to these sadists can be seen at the California state prison in Calipatria, which has just erected a "death fence" (just like in Nazi concentration camps) to electrocute potential escapees. The bill would also extend the federal death penalty to 47 additional crimes while limiting death row inmates to at most one *habeas corpus* appeal with a six-month deadline. This would legally formalize a spate of recent rulings by the Reagan/Bush Supreme Court okaying the racist application of the death penalty, and even denying prisoners a hearing when new evidence proves their innocence.

Clinton's "anti-crime" bill has brought gun control liberals together with death penalty conservatives. Clinton speaks for both. Under this "New Democrat," Congress has just passed the longstanding Brady Bill, which calls for a five-day waiting period for handgun sales and will set up a sinister computer network to do instant "background checks" on all prospective buyers. And New York Democratic Senator Daniel Moynihan now calls for financing the administration's health plan with a punitive tax on handgun ammunition, ranging up to 10,000 percent on "hollow-point" bullets. We say: No to gun control! Down with the racist death penalty!

Meanwhile, amendments to the Senate bill have been flying fast and furious. One, approved with only one vote in opposition, imposes mandatory life sentences on "three-time losers." Another, passed by a whopping 60-38, would make it a federal offense under the notorious RICO conspiracy laws to belong to or recruit to street gangs. Yet another will introduce "star chamber" courts to deport "illegal" immigrants suspected of "terrorism"—they will not be told who their accusers are or even what acts they are alleged to have committed!

At the same time, both parties have seized on the "child abuse" and "kiddie

porn" witchhunt. When the Justice Department failed to oppose a Supreme Court appeal by a graduate student convicted for having videos of fully clothed children who were not engaging in sex, Clinton pushed for new guidelines which could put away any parents who snapped their infant taking a bath. In addition, on election day, all three anti-gay referendums which were up for a vote passed.

Seeking to regain their edge as the hard-nosed racists, the Republicans recently proposed a "tough love" welfare scheme which would deny cash assistance to single mothers who don't finger the fathers as "deadbeat dads," would make unpaid slave labor a condition for a third year on welfare, and throw everybody off the rolls after that. Not to be outdone, Clinton honored his election vow to "end welfare as we know it" by approving a Wisconsin pilot project to force recipients into a sham "training program" in the first year, unpaid work in the second year, and after that...starvation. Meanwhile, the San Diego Board of Supervisors has just voted to cut off funds for emergency medical care to "illegal" immigrants, while San Francisco mayor (and former top cop) Frank Jordan is having summonses issued to the homeless for begging.

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The racist tide has been so overwhelming in recent years that even the black middle-class "talented tenth," whose newfound status is about the only "gain" left over from the civil rights era, overwhelmingly agree that life has gotten worse for black people in the past decade. Following Dinkins' defeat in New York, 100 black political leaders gathered in Harlem to moot the idea of a black party modeled on Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. But this is only a cynical pressure tactic to get more leverage within the racist Democratic Party; the black bourgeois politicians want to impress on their white counterparts that Democratic candidates almost always lose the white vote in big cities and nationwide, and thus are dependent upon black votes to win.

Schemes for a "black party" will meet the same fate as did Jesse Jackson, who after exhausting his usefulness as a front man for the Democratic Party was thrown unceremoniously to the back of the bus. American capitalism is rooted in the bedrock of institutionalized racial oppression. The only possibility for a decent future for black youth today lies in a revolutionary struggle that overturns the entire capitalist system—and that means mobilizing the social power of the integrated working class. "Open shop" Clinton targets the unions, as he pushes the racist death penalty. This underlines that what is needed is a *revolutionary workers party* which fights to expropriate the exploiters and oppressors, who have made life hell for the rest of us. ■

Algeria...

(continued from page 7)

conceive of the "FOP" as an Anti-Imperialist United Front, or "FUA." This is just another set of initials for a class-collaborationist bloc. Appealing to former members of the PAGS to form a "common party" of "all Algerian communists and socialists"—i.e., a social-democratic "party of the whole class"—its reformist program amounts to a bizarre attempt to reproduce British Labourism in Algeria!

This is no accident, for *El Monadhil* is sponsored by Damien Elliott, formerly a pseudo-left oppositionist in the USec who is currently fusing with the British-based Militant tendency, recently emerged from four decades of "deep entristism" in the Labour Party. *El Monadhil's* first issue declares: "The trade-union leaders must call a conference of delegates, elected democratically, in order to set up a workers party" which will have an "action program 'however modest'." Their "modest" (reformist) program—for "renationalizing" the enterprises which the government has sold off, for "real independence" of Algeria, for a "freeze of prices" and "non-payment of the foreign debt"—could be raised by any moderately militant FLN nationalist of a Ben Bella stripe. And not unintentionally, for that is exactly the political profile of the ex-PAGS and UGTA bureaucrats. As for the call for a "workers and peasants government," that is what the Mandel/Pablo USec labeled the Ben Bella government



Susan Slyomovics

Islamic fundamentalism threatens Algerian women. After FIS election victory, secular bourgeois forces organized protests in January 1992 to pressure for army intervention.

to justify their political support to it.

Playing the role of a loyal opposition to the discredited HCE government, as PST leader Chawki Salhi does while building a toothless popular front with the FFS, or acting as a pressure group on the UGTA tops, as Damien Elliott wants to do, provides no answer to the desperate masses whose lot can scarcely be improved without a revolution. Meanwhile, Elliott, in the latest issue of his French paper *L'Egalité* (November 1993), declares that since the FLN is discredited and "the workers movement is nonexistent, it is logical that the fundamentalists of the FIS continue to gain influence." In fact, the cynical maneuvering of these pseudo-Trotskyists will

only serve to convince the masses that the fundamentalists alone offer "radical change," in a situation in which it is obvious that continuation of things as they are is intolerable and in any case impossible.

Many opportunities have been missed (1954 and 1962-63, also 1980 and 1988), but nothing is definitively settled. The fact that the FLN could not achieve real economic development and genuine independence from imperialism, despite the Algerian masses' heroic victory over French colonialism, is a striking confirmation—in the negative—of Trotsky's theory and program of permanent revolution. Summarizing the experience of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Trotsky

insisted that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries under the boot of imperialism, achieving even the most elementary democratic gains requires the taking of power by the working class, led by a Leninist party and standing at the head of all the oppressed sectors, which will accomplish bourgeois-democratic tasks in the course of carrying through socialist revolution.

This underlines the urgent necessity to regroup the cadre for building an authentic Algerian Trotskyist party, which can seize opportunities, such as the recent dockers strike, that arise even in such a period of mounting reaction. The woman question is strategic, and explosive—with the military regime and the fundamentalist opposition sharing the common ground of Islamic law, the liberation of women, and indeed any substantial improvement in their condition, can only come through workers revolution. In a common struggle to bring down the bastions of reaction such as the Moroccan monarchy and the "secular" butchers of Tunisia, a socialist federation of the Maghreb must be forged that will unite the working masses of North Africa while enabling fullest national rights to minorities such as Berber-speakers, including Saharaouis.

Above all, to sweep away the military dictatorship, to crush the fundamentalist danger, to put an end to imperialist exploitation requires international socialist revolution on both sides of the Mediterranean, reaching into the heart of the metropole and abolishing the racist distinction between "French" and "immigrant" as liberty, fraternity and equality become the birthright of all. ■

Nigeria...

(continued from page 5)

and the NRC were almost from the outset busy making deals that would legitimise Babangida's anti-democratic annulment of the June 12 election. While the government was breaking into opposition and union leaders' houses and throwing them into maximum security prisons for interrogation and torture, Chief Abiola was counselling "no violence."

Also speaking at the London meeting was Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian playwright who received the Nobel Prize in literature. Soyinka was one of the few non-Igbos who opposed the war against Biafra, for which he spent years in prison. At the August 14 meeting, he went out of his way to say he had "no problem" with military regimes, so long as they set an exit date: "We can work together for the good of the nation." Indeed, Soyinka read out the speech he wrote for the 1991 OAU summit meeting in Abuja calling to "unite our people under the banner of democratisation," a speech which was delivered by President Ibrahim Babangida! But Soyinka's willingness to work with the ruling powers is not limited to Nigerian generals. This summer he visited Washington, where he spoke with State Department officials, calling for "sanctions, embargos, isolation and quarantine." Such calls for imperialist intervention, also raised by the Campaign for Democracy, are an attack on the Nigerian masses.

After the initial burst of mass outrage over the regime's dictatorial action, support for the "pro-democracy" protests have been generally lukewarm. And no wonder. The working masses have seen for themselves in the three decades since independence from Britain that all the capitalist politicians, civilian or military, have been bloodsucking self-aggrandising rogues. Babangida and Abiola alike denounce corruption, yet feeding off the state apparatus is not some kind of aberration but the basis for the very existence of the nascent bourgeoisie, just as bonapartist rule in the service of racist imperialism is pervasive throughout the continent. In the absence of revolutionary working-class mobilisation,

ethnic, religious and regional divisions have played a greater role so far in the political turmoil in Nigeria.

Industry in Nigeria is limited, with barely 10 per cent of the gross domestic product coming from manufacturing. Petroleum extraction (in joint ventures with Shell, Elf and, until recently, Texaco) is the main industrial activity. It is also the main source of private accumulation, with an estimated 100,000 barrels a day siphoned off into smuggling. The oil industry is concentrated in the delta region in the south, with a few oil refineries scattered all over the country. Indicative of the low level of economic development is the fact that Nigeria has only two railway lines running diagonally across the country and these were constructed during colonial times to transport peanuts and cotton from the north to the Atlantic coast for shipment to Europe. They are not very much used nowadays. Transportation around the country is mainly on the small network of badly maintained killer roads. Nevertheless, unlike much more backward regions of Africa, Nigeria has a significant working class. With revolutionary leadership the working class, supported by the toiling peasants in the countryside, can be mobilised to overthrow the capitalist order and establish a workers and peasants government.

The so-called Marxists of ARIB are obsessed with the concept of "democracy," which they argue requires the alliance of all classes. They maintain that the main task now is to fight for bourgeois democracy in Africa; later—some time in the indefinite future—the workers can fight for socialism. Lenin's Bolsheviks in Russia destroyed the Menshevik notion of revolution in stages. The Bolsheviks were uncompromising in their opposition to alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie. Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian October Revolution, noted that it was an example of permanent revolution: that in the imperialist epoch, in countries whose bourgeois development has been belated, basic democratic tasks such as national emancipation and agrarian revolution require the conquest of power by the proletariat. For this it is necessary to forge a communist party which acts as the tribune of all the oppressed and

fighters for the independent mobilisation of the working class for its own class interests.

In contrast to the fight for a revolutionary workers party, Nigerian supporters of the British Militant tendency in a leaflet on the annulment of the June 12 election called for: "A working people's party with a socialist programme as a step towards a workers and farmers government." In South Africa, where the question of proletarian power is palpable, the reformist Militant tendency opposes the call for a workers party, instead declaring that "Workers must struggle to lead the ANC," the petty-bourgeois nationalists now negotiating to enter the apartheid regime. And when they talk of "socialist programme," Militant mean the British Labour Party's old "Clause Four" call for nationalisations within the framework of bourgeois parliamentarism. Even taken at face value, this was only a leftist fig leaf for administering the capitalist state.

Moreover, in Nigeria Militant's call for "nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under workers democratic control and management" is absurd, for the "commanding heights" are already controlled by the central government (in collaboration with multinational corporations). At its core, Militant's strategy is premised on pressuring the capitalist state to adopt "socialism."

Little wonder that this reformist outfit holds that the police are part of the workers movement! Marxists understand the elementary truth that capitalism cannot be reformed; it must be overthrown. To establish the dictatorship of the proletariat it is necessary to smash the bourgeois state (based on the police and the army) and expropriate the capitalists.

In the late 1970s some intellectuals and trade unionists in Nigeria tried to launch a "Socialist Party" to campaign in the national elections of 1979, which was soon disbanded. If in the course of class struggle some sort of mass workers party were to be formed, communists would intervene to win militant workers and youth to the perspective of workers revolution and to form the nucleus of a Bolshevik party, a core of professional revolutionaries.

Revolutionary mobilisation in Nigeria cannot be conceived in isolation from that of the working masses elsewhere on the African continent. The combative black proletariat of South Africa is key to the perspective of socialist revolution in sub-Saharan Africa. A revolutionary conflagration in Africa could be the spark for workers revolutions in the imperialist heartlands. The International Communist League calls for the forging of a Trotskyist party in Nigeria as a section of a reborn Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

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Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 12)

imperialist war since World War I, but island residents are second-class citizens who are not represented in Congress and cannot vote in presidential elections. The federal tax-free provisions of "commonwealth" status, Section 936 of the U.S. tax code, have encouraged U.S. investment in Puerto Rico and led to substantial industrialization of the country as a low-wage platform for American capital. But as investment has stagnated, conditions on the island are increasingly desperate, with unemployment at 30 percent and over two-thirds of the population receiving food stamps. And now Clinton is threatening to curtail the tax advantages which have been the backbone of the Puerto Rican economy.

President Clinton piously declared in advance that he would "support" the results of the balloting. Republican ex-presidents Bush, Reagan and Ford campaigned for statehood. But what Puerto Ricans can expect from Washington was shown when Bush came out for statehood in his 1989 inaugural address: a storm of "English-only" racism whipped through Congress until the issue was allowed to quietly die in committee two years later. And anyone who thinks that independence will be accompanied by generous financial subsidies is willfully blind to the history of U.S. intervention in the Caribbean.

The reason this vote took place had nothing to do with a supposed respect by the colonialists for the democratic right of self-determination. It was held because the PNP "statehooders," linked to the mainland Republicans, are seeking to consolidate their position after sweeping the November 1992 elections. In that vote, the pro-"commonwealth" PPD, connected with the Democratic Party, lost not only La Fortaleza (the governor's office) but also control of both houses of the legislature and two-thirds of the municipalities. With the PPD splintering and in chaos—its leadership openly split over whether to participate in the referendum—Governor Pedro Rosselló sought to redefine Puerto Rico's status and consolidate the PNP dominance on the island. But even many who voted for him didn't believe the PNP fairy tales and opted for the status quo.

Last November's elections also marked a serious defeat of the bourgeois *independentistas* of the PIP led by the lawyer Rubén Berríos, which only succeeded in electing two candidates to the legislature. But the decline of the PIP, which is part of the social-democratic Second International, did not benefit rad-



Deese Conde/El Vocero

UTIER electrical workers clash with police during one-day general strike to protest privatization of telephone company in 1990.

ical petty-bourgeois nationalists, who are in open crisis. The main "left" nationalist group, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), which used to count thousands of supporters, simply dissolved last month. PSPers were urged to individually join the New Independence Movement (NMI), which was officially founded on October 2-3 as a "multi-class" group including "Marxists, non-Marxist socialists, proponents of Liberation Theology, environmentalists, feminists."

The reason there is so little mass support for the perspective of independence is the widespread perception that under present conditions independence would bring a sharp drop in the standard of living which, while income levels are half those of the poorest state (Mississippi), is the highest in Latin America. An independent Puerto Rico under capitalist rule risks being driven into grinding poverty, which one only has to look next door to the Dominican Republic to visualize. And the masses' fears are hardly assuaged by the reformists of the ex-PSP, which put forward a "two-stage" program of (bourgeois) independence first, and socialism "later." The only road to eliminating neocolonial poverty and breaking imperialist domination is through proletarian revolution in the Caribbean and above all in North America.

Not only do Puerto Rican workers work in branch plants of American corporations, providing a direct link to the working class in the U.S., but in addition to the 3.5 million Puerto Ricans living on the island there are 2.6 million Puerto Ricans on the mainland, concentrated in and around New York City. Likewise, in

the Caribbean, workers from Puerto Rico and all the islands of the region can be found in industrial sites such as the Hess oil refinery at St. Croix, and can play a key role in international class struggle.

As an elementary duty for revolutionary internationalists, the Spartacist League defends the right to self-determination for Puerto Rico. We support struggles against colonial rule, even when led by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces, while fighting for proletarian leadership of anti-imperialist struggle which can only achieve genuine national liberation through workers revolution. Only socialist revolution throughout the hemisphere, laying the basis for international socialist planning with massive assistance from the victorious proletariat in North America, can open the road to genuine economic development for the semi-colonial countries which are today under the imperialist boot.

Colonialism and Police-State Repression

One of the themes in the PNP's campaign for statehood was support for increased militarization of Puerto Rico, which is already the main U.S. military installation in the Caribbean (fully 12 percent of the island's territory is occupied by bases). In the past, attacks have been launched from Puerto Rico against Cuba (1961), the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983) and Central America. Now the Rosselló administration proposes that Puerto Rico become the seat of the U.S. Southern Command when the "lease" on the Panama Canal expires in 1999 and that it replace the Guantánamo naval base in Cuba when that "lease" expires in 1997. We demand: *U.S. military out of the Caribbean!*

Meanwhile, the voting took place as the National Guard has been called out on a permanent basis to reinforce the Puerto Rican Police in carrying out massive "drug raids" in working-class housing projects, literally subjecting them to military occupation. This "experiment," which is being carried out under the supervision of Pentagon representatives, is a sinister harbinger of what racist rulers intend to mete out to American workers.

Puerto Rico has often been a testing ground for U.S. security agencies, as in the case of the FBI's COINTELPRO operation of disruption and harassment of leftists and assassination of leaders of the Black Panther Party. This program was given a test run in Puerto Rico, where the FBI targeted trade unionists, suspected *independentistas* and others. When the Puerto Rico Supreme Court ordered last year that the files of so-called "subversives" be released to those who requested them, it turned out to include an incredible total of 135,000 individuals. An operation in the U.S. of proportional magnitude would target over ten million people! As part of its suit for the "subversives lists," the newspaper *Claridad* also obtained from the

court a list of hundreds of police agents and informants, whose names and code numbers it is now publishing!

The utter cynicism of U.S. rule in Puerto Rico is illustrated by the previous (also non-binding) "referendum" in July 1967 which was called to give a "democratic" cover to the colonial regime (it gave a 60 percent majority in favor of "commonwealth"). To provide a veneer of authority to the vote when all *independentista* groups were calling for a boycott, Washington literally bought a pro-independence "opposition" to participate in the vote. U.S. intelligence services funneled half a million dollars to a leading member of the PIP, Héctor Alvarez Silva, who used his "Fund for the Republic" as the vehicle for campaigning for a vote in favor of independence. Héctor Alvarez was expelled from the PIP, but his close associates stayed, and today the PIP is playing the same political role.

In fact, PIP leader Berríos is closely cooperating with Rosselló's PNP in order to bring the question of Puerto Rico's status before the U.S. Congress. In an interview with the New York Spanish-language daily *El Diario/La Prensa* (10 October), Berríos declared: "We also want to force Congress to confront the colonial problem of Puerto Rico. In doing so, sooner or later it will have to accept decolonization." While the statehooders thought that Congress would support annexation, the PIP is cynically counting on a racist Congressional reaction to force independence against the will of the Puerto Rican population. As the wording of the independence "option" in the referendum makes clear, by accepting the continued presence of U.S. bases and requesting massive aid from Washington, the PIP is offering to become neocolonial satraps of Yankee imperialism.

Petty-Bourgeois Nationalism and the "New World Order"

The dramatic disarray of petty-bourgeois nationalists in Puerto Rico is rooted in the strangling of the Soviet workers state, as they can no longer look for support from Moscow and Soviet-allied Cuba against the imperialists and their agents. The same process is illustrated by the Palestinian PLO and the South African ANC which, despairing of getting a "better deal," have offered themselves to police their respective populations for the Zionist and apartheid butchers. The chilly winds of the "New World Order" are strongly felt in the Caribbean, where the triumphalist Yankee imperialists are squeezing Cuba in the vise of a vicious embargo in order to "roll back" the revolution. The Puerto Rican ex-New Left petty-bourgeois nationalists are collapsing just when defense of the Cuban Revolution, which for years served as their model, has become more imperative than ever!

As throughout Latin America, the victorious counterrevolution in East Europe and the former Soviet Union has led many Puerto Rican leftists to abandon all talk of socialism. In arguing for liquidation of the PSP, a party spokesman cited the "political errors" of "radical" *independentistas* who "believed in the imminent destruction of world imperialism, when what occurred was the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the European socialist camp" (*Claridad*, 20 August). At the same time as they buy the "death of communism" lie, from their nationalist perspective the prospect of a "unipolar" world, leaving them alone before the colossus of the north, is daunting indeed. Despite their "socialist" rhetoric, PSPers were at bottom nationalist social democrats who couldn't conceive of common class struggle together with the North American working class "in the belly of the imperialist beast."

In liquidating into the NMI, the cadres of the PSP are literally turning the clock back to the origins of their party in the 1960s Puerto Rican student movement. The original PSP cadres came mainly out of the Pro-Independence University Fed-

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Airlines...

(continued from page 12)

before the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. American, which is slashing maintenance and pilots' jobs across the country, is going after the flight attendants, demanding a free hand on work rules and staffing levels. The union, which signed a "two-tier" wage contract ten years ago, has seen base wages fall 40 percent. If American defeats the Association of Professional Flight Attendants, the ground crews, mechanics and pilots will be next.

The two biggest airlines, United and American, are preparing all-out war on the workers. IAM Lodge 1781 shop stewards committee chairman Carl Finamore called for a "day of solidarity" on November 18 if American Airlines flight attendants go out. But the bureaucrats' call for a one-day "solidarity" sick-out is designed to blow off steam—and then let the flight attendants hang. And United has announced it is going ahead with the sell-off of the kitchens. The unions at United and American—Machinists, Teamsters, Transport Workers, pilots and flight attendants—have enormous power. The capitalists are heavily dependent on air travel and cargo service. *United and American Airlines workers: strike together to win! Shut down the airports! For one industrywide union in the airline industry! Organize the unorganized!*

Even as their profits rise, the airline bosses plead poverty in order to compete with non-union "short haul" carriers like Southwest Airlines. In addition to the sale of the kitchens, the *Washington Post* (12 November) revealed United has plans (with code names such as "Project Yuletide" and "Project Root Beer") to break up the airline into as many as four smaller carriers, slashing thousands of

jobs and cutting pay to non-union levels. United CEO and takeover shark Steven Wolf is pressing ahead with plans to sell off the turbine engine maintenance shop, presently part of UAL's massive San Francisco Maintenance Operations Center, farming out ramp (ground service) work, and possibly unloading the entire maintenance operation in order to take advantage of non-union maintenance outfits. A large contract maintenance base is currently under construction in Tijuana, Mexico, and already aircraft painting has been sent out to non-union, low-wage firms.

Bosses to Labor: "Buy In—And Get Bashed"

The airlines took on massive debt in leveraged buyouts (LBOs) and the huge expansion of the industry during the 1980s. Now the capitalists are trying to unload the costs on the workforce, driving up the rate of exploitation. This is war, with tens of thousands of jobs and the safety of millions of airline passengers at stake. Airline workers are heavily organized in unions—65 percent of airline workers are unionized, more than five times the rate in the rest of private industry in the U.S. But the bureaucrats of the airline unions are now actively *destroying* union conditions built through years of struggle, trading billions in workers' wages in exchange for a few seats on the company board.

For years the IAM and the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) at United have been pushing one ESOP (employee stock ownership plan) deal after another. As we said when the pilots tried another ESOP fable at United in 1989, "The 'ownership' workers would get out of such a deal would be only the 'right' to exploit themselves for the junk bond holders." The \$5.5 billion in concessions, cash and stock grants in the

last IAM offer is even more than the belly-crawling company cops of the UAW International extracted from auto workers in the early 1980s. But even that wasn't enough for Wolf, who derisively rejected the giveback offers and embarked on an open union-busting, job-slashing campaign.

Business Week (1 November) summed it up in a headline: "The Airlines to Labor: Buy In—Or Get Bashed." The labor fakery tried to buy in...but they only whetted the airlines' union-bashing appetites.

"It's the Debt, Stupid"

In the last year, ESOPs at TWA and Northwest have enabled Wall Street banks to unload hundreds of millions of dollars of debt onto the backs of the workers. The IAM and ALPA offered corporate raider Carl Icahn vast concessions and helped him break the 1986 flight attendants strike when he took over TWA. Last year they forked over \$660 million more to bail him out again! Earlier giveback-for-stock deals by the labor traitors left thousands jobless and their pensions plundered at Pan Am, and set up the 1989 strike betrayal at Eastern.

This summer, Teamsters chief Ron Carey joined the IAM and ALPA bureaucrats in ramming through a \$886 million giveback package for Northwest bosses Gary Wilson and Democratic Party bigwig Alfred Checci. The IAM International threw the entire 26,000-member Lodge 143 into receivership in order to ensure that the concessions went through. Wilson and Checci put up less than \$40 million when they took over Northwest in 1989, loading up the airline with \$3.65 billion in junk bond debt. T-shirts worn by IAM members opposed to the ESOP at Northwest read "It's the Debt, Stupid."

Airline workers have enormous power—but to use it they must break the

straitjacket of ESOPs, corporate campaigns and reliance on Democratic Party capitalist politicians. Any major transportation strike in this country will collide head on with the forces of state repression—injunctions, cops and even bringing in the military as in the 1981 PATCO air traffic controllers strike. It was the Democrats in Congress who rushed through legislation to outlaw the 1991 rail strike. Yet under another Democratic president, airline unions decisively smashed LBJ's wage "guidelines" when they struck five carriers in 1966. The key is forging a class-struggle leadership with the determination and program to win against the bosses and their state.

That means ousting the present labor lieutenants of capital who sit atop the unions and chain them to the bosses. When the 1989 Eastern strike began, United Machinists at JFK voted to strike in solidarity, but the IAM tops ordered them to work. The strike was turned into a long, empty consumer boycott and "corporate campaign" as the union tops capitulated to every court injunction.

The current union-busting offensive comes after a decade of concessions, givebacks and the hated two-tier wage system. This could have been fought by shutting down the airports to win the PATCO strike, betrayed by the bureaucrats. The destruction of the unions can and must be stopped! Hard class struggle by the powerful airline unions would galvanize the working people and oppressed who know they're getting shafted in Clinton's America. It will quickly become a political battle of labor against capital, its parties and its state. The battle to defend the airline unions must be linked to the fight for a workers party and a workers government which will take industry out of the hands of Wolf and his fellow parasites and build an internationally planned socialist economy. ■

eration (FUPI), which was a cross-class movement combining a broad range of political currents. Under the impact of the Cuban Revolution, the FUPI was transformed into the Pro-Independence Movement (MPI) led by Juan Mari Bras, which became in the early 1970s the PSP. Now the generation that was radicalized in the '60s is shedding its leftist pretensions.

The group around *Pensamiento Crítico* magazine, which includes the Puerto Rican followers of Ernest Mandel's fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat, is likewise in crisis. After participating in the "Anti-Electoral Front" together with various nationalist currents, this left-of-the-PSP milieu formed the "Socialist Front." On the "referendum," lamenting that "our movement finds itself weak, as much from an organizational as from a programmatic point of view" (*Claridad*, 11 June), *Pensamiento Crítico* put forward a platform for a boycott campaign that does not mention socialist revolution—or raise any programmatic demands at all. (In a similar vein, the PSP before it dissolved and the NMI at its founding meeting called for abstention in the November 14 poll.)

It is certainly correct for revolutionary socialists to denounce the fraudulent character of the referendum as a cover for colonialist rule. Revolutionaries could not support any of the three options since all specified continued U.S. military occupation of Puerto Rico. As evidenced by the substantial participation in the vote (73 percent of registered voters), a mass boycott was not a real possibility. Quite aside from the election, in the face of the Puerto Rican masses' justified fear that bourgeois independence would mean immiseration, the nationalist politics of these "socialist" *independentistas* means that they have no perspective to offer to the Puerto Rican proletariat. The same despair of achieving mass support has produced futile adventures such as the Jayuya uprising of 1950 by Pedro Albizu Campos' Nationalist Party, and the Puerto Rican nationalists' armed attack on the U.S. Congress in 1954. In



1988 rally in San Juan protesting colonial repression against *independentistas*.

the extreme it can lead to indiscriminate terrorist attacks, such as the 1975 bombing of Fraunces Tavern in NYC.

For Bolshevik Internationalism!

Locked into their narrow horizons and anti-working-class politics, the nationalists cannot imagine a revolutionary internationalist solution to colonial oppression. But unconditional and active support to independence for the colonies was a watchword of the early Communist International, and indeed one of the famous "21 conditions" for membership in the Comintern. As Stalin, with his nationalist program of "socialism in one country" renounced this in favor of a search for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, Trotsky continued the program of Bolshevik internationalism. In the Popular Front period of the mid/late 1930s, when the Stalinists were supporting "democratic" imperialism (and thus turning their backs on independence struggles in the colonies, including Puerto Rico), Trotsky wrote:

"The task of genuine revolutionaries is to get rid of the oppressive colonial regimes. Our slogan: *the right of all nations to self-determination, not in word, but in deed; the full and genuine liberation of all colonies!*"

"The future of humanity is inseparably linked with the destiny of India, China, Indochina, Latin America, and Africa. The active sympathy, friendship, and

support of genuine revolutionaries, socialists, and honest democrats is completely on the side of these peoples—who constitute the majority of humanity—and not on the side of their oppressors, no matter what kind of political masks they appear in. Those who actively or even passively support a colonial regime under the pretext of defending their own 'democracy' are the worst enemies of the working classes and oppressed peoples. We and they are traveling very different roads."

—"Fascism and the Colonial World" (August 1938)

Puerto Rico is a separate geographical, cultural, linguistic and economic entity from the United States. Annexation to the U.S. would pose considerable objective problems. Statehood would create powerful pressures toward a single language, with English tending to displace Spanish, ultimately bringing into question the identity of the Puerto Rican people. As well, a state of Puerto Rico would be the object of nativist racist hostility. The present "commonwealth" is inherently oppressive, keeping Puerto Ricans living on the island in the position of second-class citizens subjected to sharp repression.

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

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

As the principal U.S. colony, Puerto Rico's liberation can only be the product of the closest unity in struggle of the working class in the colony and on the mainland. An internationalist Leninist-Trotskyist party must be built in Puerto Rico—fighting imperialism on a proletarian program and in sharp political combat against the dead end of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism—as part of the struggle of the International Communist League to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

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Colonial Referendum Farce



Diederich/NY Times

AP

San Juan—As the National Guard occupies housing project under guise of “war on drugs” (left), Puerto Rican governor Pedro Rosselló campaigned for statehood.

For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico!

After suffering 95 years under the Yankee boot, Puerto Ricans voted on November 14 by a slim margin (48 percent) in favor of continuing the present thinly disguised colonial status—deceptively termed in Spanish “free associated state,” or in English the meaningless “commonwealth”—rather than statehood (46 percent). A far smaller number, 4 percent, voted for independence. While cynically presented as an exercise in democracy, this “referendum” is being used by U.S. imperialism and its local henchmen to legitimize continued colonialist domination. The vote in any case has no more power of decision than an opinion poll:

all important decisions about Puerto Rico are decided in the U.S. Congress. Far from representing a positive choice by the population, the vote was dominated by fear that each of the choices was worse than the other.

The framers of this referendum hoax were careful to stack the deck. The three alternatives submitted for a vote, drafted by the three main parties, all promised pie in the sky.

- “Statehood” (annexation), supported by the New Progressive Party (PNP), was defined as “including the preservation of our culture” and a “guarantee” of “our two languages.”

- “Commonwealth,” supported by the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), was defined as “ensuring the creation of more and better jobs.”

- “Independence,” according to the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP),

would include a “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” with the U.S. and a “process of transition” including continuation of Social Security benefits, “free access to U.S. markets,” “tax incentives for North American investment” and “federal aid in an amount equal to that received at present for at least a decade.” Tacked onto this wish list was “eventual demilitarization”—in other words, the U.S. bases stay.

Under the present “autonomous” commonwealth, Puerto Ricans have been drafted in disproportionate numbers to serve as front-line troops in every U.S.

continued on page 10

S.F. Machinists Rally: “Shut It Down—Take the Runways!”

Airlines Workers: Bust the Union-Busters!

SAN FRANCISCO—One thousand angry workers rallied at the SF airport November 12 to protest the massive union-busting cuts by United. First on the chopping block are 5,200 jobs held by mostly women and minority workers in the airline’s kitchens. At the rally, called by International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local Lodge 1781, the union tops pushed their “employee ownership” plan involving massive givebacks and work rule changes worth \$5.5 billion! As United rips up union jobs, the IAM tops refuse to strike, only offering more givebacks and a useless, impotent “corporate campaign.”

But angry young Machinists at the rally, taking their lead from Air France strikers whose militant struggle beat back threatened layoffs last month, began chanting “Shut it down!” and “Take the runways!” Airline workers in the U.S. have been inspired by the dramatic scenes of Air France strikers occupying the runways, shutting down Paris airports and beating back the government’s privatization scheme. Scores of copies of *Workers Vanguard* headlined “Air France Strikers Ignite Class Struggle” have been snapped up at Bay Area rallies and union meetings.

At press time, 21,000 flight attendants at American Airlines are preparing to strike on November 18, just

continued on page 11



WV Photo

Angry United Airlines workers protest at SF airport, November 12. Inspired by Air France strike, many chanted “Take the Runways!”