

# Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 10

## STOP THE KLAN! FOR A WORKERS AMERICA!



Workers Vanguard

Springfield, Illinois: January 16, labor/black mobilization against Ku Klux Klan provocation on Martin Luther King holiday.

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## Introduction

The chilling spectacle of the night-riders and crossburners of the Ku Klux Klan holding racist provocations in eight state capitals over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend last January was an ominous sign of the growing boldness of fascists and their supporters across America. The Klan was founded in 1866 as the paramilitary force which spearheaded the wave of counterrevolutionary terror in reaction to the policies Radical Reconstruction imposed on the losing Confederacy following the Civil War. Today, whether in a white hood, a three-piece suit or a shaved head, the Klan and their ilk threaten the very right of black people to exist—and their hate extends to Hispanics, Asians, Jews, Catholics, gays, leftists, union militants.

In every city where the fascists appeared, they were outnumbered by students, workers and others who came out to demonstrate against them—the KKK would probably have gotten well-deserved lessons if it hadn't been protected by overwhelming police force. The focal point of the nationwide battle against the Klan provocations became Springfield, Illinois—capital of the "Land of Lincoln," a bus ride from Chicago, itself home to millions of blacks, Hispanics and union workers. There, on the southern rim of the Midwest "rust bowl," an important struggle was waged to mobilize the social power of organized labor and blacks.

This pamphlet, the eleventh in our series *Black History and the Class Struggle*, documents the Springfield mobilization, as well as reprinting articles from *Workers Vanguard* which deal with the history of and program for the struggle for black freedom, and present a proletarian-centered strategy for smashing fascist terror. "The 1908 Race Riot in Springfield" (WV No. 591, 7 January 1994) examines the Springfield race riot, one of the most vicious of the bloody wave of racist riots against black Americans at the turn of the century.

"Anti-Racist Protesters Confront KKK" (WV No. 592, 21 January 1994) recounts the multi-city demonstrations against the KKK's Martin Luther King Day provocations, focusing on the united-front rally (in sub-zero temperatures!) in Springfield. This Partisan Defense Committee-initiated labor-centered anti-Klan mobilization was built by militants from Chicago and Illinois unions in the face of opposition from both the state government and various labor misleaders of the con-

servative AFL-CIO bureaucracy.

"Build an Interracial Revolutionary Leadership!", a speech to the Springfield anti-fascist demonstration by the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense, exposes the intrinsic racism of American capitalism which spawned the KKK, and makes an impassioned call for an integrated revolutionary party, independent of both Democrats and Republicans, to fight for black liberation through socialist revolution. The WV supplement, "Stop the Klan! For a Workers America!" (16 January 1994) was distributed to participants at the demonstration.

With all the forces of the state arrayed against us, we were unable to stop the KKK. But many of the unionists who participated in the demonstration acquired a consciousness of the social power of the integrated labor movement and began to understand that it's necessary to wage a political fight against the labor lieutenants of capital in order to break the ties binding labor to the capitalist system. "A Proletarian-Centered Strategy to Fight Fascism" (WV No. 593, 4 February 1994) is an in-depth discussion of the role of a revolutionary party in mobilizing the multiracial working class in its own defense, rendering it conscious of its political power and historical role as the motor force of socialist revolution.

Across the country, police holding pens are the new, preferred method of anti-fascist "crowd control." Protesters are searched, forced to give up personal possessions and then trapped inside these makeshift prisons while the fascists spew their filth, some of them mingling with and attacking protesters. At an anti-Klan protest in Lansing, Michigan in April 1994, in a good example of the collusion of the cops with the KKK, cops attacked and maced protesters inside such a pen—then arrested several of them! "Defend Lansing Anti-Fascists!" (WV No. 601, 27 May 1994) counterposes the strategy of labor/black mobilization to the liberal confidence in the police and state preached by various self-proclaimed "socialists" like the International Socialist Organization and the Revolutionary Workers League, which cravenly lead their supporters into these police traps.

The Klan carries out its lynchings under cover of darkness but the racist rulers of this country do it "legally." 2,800 people sit on America's death row.

*continued on page 4*

reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 591, 7 January 1994

# The 1908 Race Riot in Springfield

The January 16 Ku Klux Klan provocation targeting the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday is only the latest in a long filthy history of bigotry and racist attacks in Springfield, Illinois. In 1908, Springfield was part of a wave of racist riots across the U.S. which broke out in Greenwood, South Carolina and Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898; in Statesboro, Georgia and Springfield, Ohio in 1904; in Greensburg, Indiana, Brownsville, Texas and Atlanta in 1906.

Racist terror was the spearhead for reaction down the line. In the post-Civil War South, Jim Crow kept the freed slaves in poverty, disease and ignorance. In Northern industries and Western mines, workers tried to organize against the robber barons' brutal exploitation. By pitting white workers against black and fomenting chauvinist hatred of the millions of non-English-speaking immigrants, the bosses succeeded in crippling the workers movement.

This reactionary period was later, in 1915, to see the rebirth of the modern KKK with the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish businessman in Atlanta framed for the murder of a white girl. Terror against blacks was fomented through white-supremacist propaganda like *The Clansman*, a novel and play by Thomas Dixon ghoulishly celebrating KKK lynching. Dixon's racist trash pushed the lie of the "black rapist," symbolizing the ultimate fear of the result of black equality: "race mixing." The play later became the foundation for *The Birth of a Nation*, D.W. Griffith's racist propaganda film.

In Springfield, the city fathers responded to black citizens' protests against the play by allowing only whites to buy tickets. In 1908, a white woman's false charge of sexual assault against a black workman sparked a two-day racist riot that drove hundreds of blacks from town. "'Lincoln freed you, we'll show you where you belong,' was one of the cries with which the Springfield mob set about to drive the negroes from town," wrote William English Walling in *The Independent* (3 September 1908). "The mob was composed of several thousand of Springfield's white citizens, while other thousands, including many women and children, and even prosperous businessmen in automobiles, calmly looked on, and the rioters proceeded hour after hour and on two days in succession to make deadly assaults on every negro

they could lay their hands on, to sack and plunder their houses and stores, and to burn and murder on favorable occasion." Walling was a socialist who had traveled to Russia during the 1905 Revolution and spent several years there. He arrived in Springfield during the second day of the riot.

In her well-written and informative book, *The Sociogenesis of a Race Riot* (University of Illinois Press, 1990), Roberta Senechal describes Springfield, the riot and its aftermath. On August 15, a mob of 300 to 400 whites gathered at the jail holding the black man falsely accused of sexual assault, George Richardson, and another black man charged in the slaying of a white man. As talk of lynchings sped through town, the Sangamon County sheriff arranged for an armed escort to spirit the prisoners away, afraid the jail might be attacked.

Finding the inmates gone, the mob rushed to the restaurant owned by a well-to-do white businessman who had loaned his car to aid the escape of the black inmates. Rioters smashed and burned the car and the restaurant was looted and set aflame. The mob, now nearly 5,000, moved onto Washington Street, a main thoroughfare in the Levee, a concentration of black businesses and residences. Along Eighth Street, a group of black men armed with shotguns to defend themselves let loose a few rounds, eventually retreating amid "a cannonading which rivaled the battle of Gettysburg," according to one newspaper.

In the residential section known as the Badlands, 56-year-old barber shop-owner Scott Burton was attacked in his yard. Burton fired buckshot to keep the ax-wielding, brick-throwing throng at bay. The white mob then threw a rope around his neck and dragged him through the streets, riddling him with bullets, hanging him from a tree and attempting to set him on fire. Burton was the first black man lynched, with state militiamen and local police standing by as racists rampaged. The second lynching victim, 80-year-old William Donnegan, was one of the city's wealthier blacks who lived with his white wife a block and a half from the state capitol building.

Every black business in the Levee was targeted. Jewish businesses were also singled out for attack. White mobs set upon black homes, beating black men, women and children, setting houses

ablaze and looting businesses, forcing scores to flee for their lives. When firemen arrived to tackle house fires, the racist mob cut their hoses. White people interspersed amid black residences were ordered by rioters to mark their homes with white cloths so that they would not be burned. More than 80 black people were injured and hundreds became refugees, escaping to Chicago and other towns, only to face more murderous assaults often accompanied by shouts of "Give 'em Springfield!"

In reaction to the wave of racist riots, and in particular in response to Walling's article about Springfield, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded in 1909.

While lynch mobs ran riot and the job-trusting leaders of the American Federation of Labor excluded blacks from the lily-white crafts, in sharp working-class struggles interracial unity came to the fore. Black workers in Springfield played a strategic role in Sangamon County's coal mining. Nearly one in ten miners was black and over 150 lived in town. After the coal bosses brought up black miners from Alabama to be used as unwitting strikebreakers and provoked bloody battles during a strike in nearby Virden in 1898, black members of the United Mine Workers from Springfield fought the use of black laborers as strikebreakers. After the 1908 race riot in Springfield, when a number of racist miners demanded that blacks be discharged from the union, John H. Walker, then president of the Illinois UMW, let it be known that "the local that took such action would first be fined, and, if still obstinate, would be expelled from the organization" (Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1973* [1974]).

The fact that today the Klan believes it can rally in Springfield, the capital of the "Land of Lincoln," is testimony to the racist hypocrisy that gives the lie to the promise of equality under capitalism, in the North as well as the ex-slave South. The stark fact is that from 1911, for the next three-quarters of a century no black person was elected to public office in Springfield, even though 11 percent of the city's population was black (Dr. Lawrence C. Golden, *Report on Racial Discrimination in Springfield, Illinois* [November 1986]). Among cities its size, Springfield is one of the most segregated

towns in the United States.

The struggle for black freedom is integrally linked to the fight for social revolution to smash racist capitalism. The 1917 October Revolution in Russia, in which Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks led the working class to power, was a beacon of emancipation for the down-trodden around the globe. Drawing on their own experience in mobilizing the

workers to defeat racist pogroms against the Jews, the Bolsheviks taught American Communists that they must not be "colorblind" but must champion the cause of black people. Among the most oppressed would be found many of the strongest fighters for socialist revolution, and only united working-class struggle against every case of social and racial injustice could lead the way to

freedom for all. Today, powerful action by the integrated labor movement can crush the growing fascist threat, winning a victory for all working people and oppressed minorities.

Join the Partisan Defense Committee in bringing together a powerful body of labor and blacks that can stop the Klan cold on January 16. All out to stop the KKK! ■

## Introduction...

(continued from page 2)

Blacks, while making up 12 percent of the population, make up 48 percent of the prison population. The name of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and MOVE supporter on Pennsylvania's death row, is the rallying cry in the fight against the racist and barbaric death penalty today. "Mobilize to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!" (WV No. 603) is an account of the June 3 speak-out, held in New York City, to break National Public Radio's ban on this award-winning journalist, known as the "voice of the voiceless." Jamal's powerful commentaries, championing the cause of the oppressed, were to have aired on the prestigious program *All Things Considered* but under pressure from the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police and other reactionary forces, Jamal's commentaries were canceled. To illustrate what you're not allowed to hear, we reprint "State of Seizure," Jamal's column exposing the truth behind the "war on drugs."

Thirty years have passed since the lunch-counter sit-ins swept the South in protest of the exclusion of blacks. Yet last summer it was revealed that the Denny's restaurant chain was subjecting black and minority customers to classic "Jim Crow" abuse. "Denny's Dirty Trail of Racism: Fact Sheet," (WV No. 579, 2 July 1993) details the extent of Denny's outrageous racism. Demanding "Down with Jim Crow at Denny's!" the Spartacist League and Labor Black Leagues mounted a campaign of united-front protests, picketing restaurants in cities across the country. Indicative of the change in political climate since the civil rights era, it took our small organization of "reds" to launch this protest campaign—the NAACP and the Urban League sought "empowerment" by demanding black representation on Denny's board of directors, a move that would do nothing to change the restaurants' degrading abuse of thousands of black customers.

The undisguised hostility of the ruling class and the increasingly desperate con-

ditions of black life have generated a renewed nationalist mood among black youth. In periods of political reaction and racist rollback, black separatism has historically grown in this country, a reflection of despair and hopelessness. With the attenuation of class struggle in the past period, it is not surprising that today we see the most right-wing expression of black separatism since Booker T. Washington. In a July 27 speech to "women only" in Boston, Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, after stressing the importance of cooking and cleaning, proclaimed, "your professional lives can't satisfy your soul like a good, loving man."

The Spartacist League's fight for revolutionary integrationism, establishing a socialist society through smashing the racist capitalist system, is anathema to nationalist hustlers like Farrakhan, who blames the victims of racism for their own oppression, railing against "black on black" crime and the "underclass" that "brings down the race." "Farrakhan Is Bad News for Black People," (WV No. 600, 13 May 1994) exposes this anti-Semitic demagogue's longtime collaboration with the white racist state, while noting the hypocrisy of bourgeois politicians who denounce Farrakhan while embracing racists such as Jesse Helms.

In the '60s, the Black Panthers and Malcolm X defined themselves in opposition to the liberal-led civil rights movement. For their militancy, the capitalist state targeted the Black Panthers for destruction through the murderous COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program). Even those black leaders who preached reliance on the racist capitalist state to enforce equality were targeted by government spies and agents provocateurs. "Massive Army Spy Operation Stalked Martin Luther King" (WV No. 582, 13 August 1993) documents the lengths to which this racist state will go to wipe out black leadership.

Under Clinton's "New Democrats," the vocabulary of American politics today has come to consist of generally recognized code words for intensified racist oppression. "Getting tough on crime" and "the war on drugs" mean

untrammled police repression in the ghettos. "Welfare reform" means starving and freezing the poor. We're told there's no money for welfare, but under Clinton's new racist "anti-crime" bill there are millions for high-tech prisons, 100,000 more cops and the electric chair. The ruling class proposes to combat the social problems of the ghettos with boot camps, prisons, capital punishment, and the promise to "end welfare as we know it." "Clinton's Welfare 'Reform': Blacks, Poor Will Starve" (WV No. 590, 17 December 1993), sums up the bipartisan nature of this genocidal war on the poor.

We conclude with "Clinton Whips Up Hysteria Over 'Assault Weapons'" (WV No. 601, 27 May 1994), which examines the sneak-attack on the Second Amendment spearheaded by liberals, currently threatening to criminalize millions of citizens. These laws would strip the population of the right to effective weapons, while the government simultaneously stockpiles arms for its murderous police agencies like the BATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms), which set up the Waco massacre of 1993. Orchestrated by Clinton and his top cop Janet Reno, federal police agencies massacred 86 people, including 24 children, for the "crime" of exercising their right to bear arms, and for being a racially-integrated religious sect outside the mainstream.

The way out of the all-sided desperation, union-busting, poverty, homelessness and racist genocide that is today's America is through sharp and hard-fought working-class struggle. In the words of Karl Marx, "labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." Working people created all the wealth of this country. To claim the fruits of their labor and employ it to the benefit of the majority requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie. The multiracial working class has the numbers, the organization and the power to do this. What's needed is revolutionary leadership. We need a workers party that will fight as a tribune of all the oppressed, organizing the power of labor in its own interests and for its own rule through socialist revolution.

—August 1994

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## M.L. King Day: Klan Provocations in 8 States

# Anti-Racist Protesters Confront KKK



WV Photo

**January 16: Black workers, students braved arctic weather to confront KKK in Springfield.**

CHICAGO—Aided, abetted and protected by a massive show of armed police force, the Ku Klux Klan staged racist provocations in eight state capitals on the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. But despite the cop mobilizations, and major efforts by liberals to “ignore the Klan,” wherever the cowardly night-riders came out into the daylight, they were confronted by outraged anti-fascists. In Austin, Texas, some 2,000 people took to the streets, drowning out the racist filth being spewed by 33 KKKers and delivering the message loud and clear: “Hey Sheehead, Go Home!” In Denver, Little Rock, Montgomery, Tallahassee, Columbus and Topeka, hundreds came out to oppose the murderous white supremacists.

The focal point of the battle against the Klan provocations became Springfield, Illinois, where uniquely a struggle was waged to mobilize the social power of organized labor and the black com-

munity. This was met by a frenzied response from the government and those who sought to sabotage any effective response to the fascist terrorists, ranging from federal agencies and the highest levels of the state administration to the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and so-called “Anti”-Defamation League. The organizing efforts against the Klan provocation had a sharp polarizing effect throughout the labor movement.

On Sunday, January 16, some 500 people braved arctic temperatures and a blinding snowstorm to prevent a provocation against Martin Luther King Day. This significant event was forged by the Partisan Defense Committee, the legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League. The PDC issued the call, “All Out to Stop the KKK!” just before New Year’s Day and then waged the political and legal battles necessary to realize it. Late on in the mobilizing effort, the PDC had to

wage a battle in the federal courts against Illinois Secretary of State George Ryan’s move to effectively rescind a permit the PDC had already been granted to demonstrate within view of the Klan provocation.

As support for this anti-Klan effort grew wider and deeper, particularly among black workers who fought to bring the unity of the multiracial labor movement to bear against the KKK scabherders and racist terrorists, all the resources of bourgeois state power—the cops, the courts, the bourgeois press (and of course the “lieutenants of capital” in the union movement)—were cranked up to knife this urgent labor/black action. But we had struck a responsive vein of anger and discontent among wide sectors of the population, from the factories to the ghettos and college campuses. More than 100,000 leaflets building this anti-racist action were distributed. The well-spring of support wouldn’t be stopped,

and the mobilization went ahead.

What prevailed in Springfield on January 16 was a labor-centered mobilization in defense of black people and all intended victims of Ku Klux Klan terror. Initiated and organized by the PDC, it was enthusiastically taken up by determined working-class fighters who showed that labor is a formidable force when organized to consciously fight for its own class interests. "Those of us who are here, we are the hard core of the union. We are the hard core of this movement," said John Hill, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer of Chicago's Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308, which endorsed the demonstration and chartered a bus for ATU members to be there.

Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis took a very forward position in the battle against the Klan and the forces of state repression. At a January 12 press conference in Chicago, Davis motivated the necessity for people to act and join the "All Out to Stop the KKK" mobilization:

"The father of the civil rights movement in this country was Frederick Douglass. Douglass told us that 'He who is whipped the easiest is whipped the most often.' 'If the Klan is marching in Springfield on Sunday, unchecked and unchallenged, they will be in Chicago next Monday. They will be all over America and before we know it we will be back at a point in our history that I'm sure none of us ever want to see again. Let's let the Klan and any Klan sympathizers know that, no, we will not stand back. We will go forward.'"

This demonstration represented a diverse social and political spectrum united in struggle against the Ku Klux Klan—



**Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis at January 12 press conference in Chicago.**

blacks and unionists from Springfield and as far away as Chicago and St. Louis, contingents of students from Chicago State and the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Jews, Catholics, gays and leftists. Rudy Davenport, president of the Springfield NAACP, brought people out with him in the frigid cold Sunday morning and told the *Chicago Defender* (17 January): "We are here to show the Klan that there is one unified group against racism in the United States of America."

Black residents of Springfield already have direct experience of the fascists, with "former" Klansman Tom Metzger's skinhead "WAR" (White Aryan Resistance) organizing racist thugs in the high schools to attack black youth. On Sunday these Nazi creeps showed up to proclaim that, as opposed to the white supremacists of the Klan, they were "white separatists," in other words that they seek complete genocide of the black people rather than subjugating them to slavery.

For nearly two hours before the Klan showed up, anti-fascist forces gathered on the Northeast side of the Capitol and fired up the frigid air with chants like "KKK—No Way! You Ain't Gonna Ride Today!" The big student contingent from Champaign-Urbana marched in behind their banner. Demonstrators went in shifts to a nearby restaurant to warm up.

Faced with a multiracial crowd determined to stop the race haters, Secretary of State Ryan deployed his special police to sneak the Klan like rats through underground tunnels into the Capitol building and then behind a maze of barricades and hundreds of riot cops in front of the East steps. Ryan's top cop "Jack" Pecoraro said that his "best piece of luck Sunday was simply the weather," with a wind chill of 16 degrees below zero, because otherwise "it could have been a larger crowd." Indeed, much larger.

The despicable and outrageous sight of the Confederate flag of slavery waving from the Statehouse in the "land of Lincoln" was the opening act of the Klan provocation, stage-managed by the police. The 50-odd Klansmen on the East steps of the Capitol gave Hitler salutes and played the "Ride of the Valkyries," by the Nazi *Führer's* favorite composer Wagner. So if you take off the KKK's white sheets, underneath you find some weird would-be Nazis! Anti-Klan demonstrators moved toward the East side of the Capitol and showed their defiant opposition to the murderous KKK. Riot-equipped cops fired mace into the crowd and tried pushing anti-Klan protesters around. Several people were arrested.

Various left groups—the International

Socialist Organization (ISO), the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and its all-purpose front group NWROC, and Progressive Labor Party (PL)—came with small groups of supporters, refusing to act in coordination with each other, much less with us. The PDC had invited—early on, in writing, and again on site—various anti-Klan forces to join in a unified opposition to the Klan in which the diversity of political views and strategies of all participating groups would be represented.

But sectarianism and arrogant petty-bourgeois opposition to a disciplined working-class mobilization unfortunately was paramount for them. These "left" fakers have no political strategy to mobilize the working class because they don't think it can be done. In place of a revolutionary program they substitute the often losing tactics of individual confrontation, and liberal confidence in the police. Only the day before in Columbus, Ohio, these same groups allowed themselves to be engaged by the police, passing individually through metal detectors, as they had previously done last fall in Columbus and Indianapolis.

In Springfield, the sectarianism of the fake-leftists dovetailed with the cops' desires to fragment the demonstration and facilitated provocations by fascist skinheads. As demonstrators drifted over to the barricades around the East side of the Capitol directly facing the Klan, the leaderless milling crowd was vulnerable to the repeated incursions by cops and violent provocations by skinheads, who kicked one woman in the stomach while shouting anti-Semitic slurs.

Despite the fragmented aspect of the demonstration at this point, the PDC organizers took action to reduce the vulnerability of and danger to the anti-Klan forces on the East lawn by sending union marshals into the crowd. We joined in tossing out some of the *pro-Klan elements* and WAR skinheads that the RWL, PL and ISO were rubbing shoulders (and sometimes knuckles) with while surrounded by the cops. From our podium, a powerful trio of transit workers led by ATU international vice president Jackie Breckenridge, an early endorser and defender of the demonstration, pumped up the volume and led chants of "Smash the Klan, this is the hour! Labor and blacks have got the power!" and "KKK—Nazis in bedsheets!" to drown out the fascists.

Barely 45 minutes into their pathetic performance, the drowned-out Klansmen crawled back into their holes with their cop escorts. The ISO and PL left before the KKK did, and the RWL hit the road

as soon as the Klan was gone. The triumphant labor/black mobilization reassembled those hard-core forces that had stuck through the bitter cold and held their ground until the Klan had left town. The labor/black mobilization formed up and marched away from the Capitol chanting, "KKK—No way! We stopped your march today!" and "Springfield—Too hot for the KKK!" Before buses left town, over 200 anti-fascist fighters packed into the restaurant hall where they cheered speakers and engaged in wide-ranging political discussion.

### A Labor-Centered Mobilization

With the issuing of the PDC's December 30 call, "No Racist Provocation Against Martin Luther King Holiday!" supporters of the PDC, the SL and Spartacus Youth Clubs fanned out. Within a few days endorsements began to pour in from across the country—and around the world.

The impressive support shown by organized labor early on showed the appetite for powerful mobilization to stop the Klan. Endorsers included the presidents of heavily black union locals representing tens of thousands of Chicago-area workers, as well as the regional offices of the United Auto Workers (UAW), the United Electrical Workers (UE) and the United Rubber Workers (URW). Significant early endorsements included Robert Clark, head of UE District 11, and Johnnie Jackson, head of the Chicago Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Unionists in the heart of Illinois labor's "war zone"—centered in Decatur, where Staley, Caterpillar and Electrical workers have been under



WV Photo

**Police squads repeatedly swept through demonstration, attempting to provoke incidents.**

attack—understood the threat posed by the anti-union Klan. In Springfield, representatives of Local 73 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) endorsed and helped build the rally.

The work of Chicago transit workers in Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Locals 241 and 308 was crucial. They brought out integrated rail and bus workers, men and women, who formed the heart of the union marshals, insuring the anti-Klan demonstration was militant, disciplined and democratic from beginning to end.

Frightened that significant ranks of organized labor might actually engage in some class struggle against the racist

poison of the KKK, the conservative, job-trusting, mainly white AFL-CIO bureaucracy got busy—knifing the anti-Klan effort. Even earlier, Communist Party supporters began calling trade-union leaders in an attempt to get them to back off their endorsements.

In the week before the Klan provocation the heavy hand of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy came down—*hard*—on union locals and officers who had lent their support to the anti-KKK action. Taking their orders from the Illinois state officials who were violence-baiting and red-baiting the PDC rally, on January 12 Illinois AFL-CIO president Donald Johnson sent out a letter to union locals across the state ordering unionists, "in the interest of good public relations," to "please stay away from the Capitol on Sunday, January 16." Springfield labor federation head Mike Hade held a press conference to declare that "labor" would do nothing to stop this Klan provocation.

Threatened by the way that organized labor in Illinois was getting organized for action, these sellout misleaders followed in the footsteps of longtime AFL-CIO chief George Meany, who boasted of never having walked a picket line. His successor, Lane Kirkland, supports the counterrevolutionary Yeltsin in Russia while knifing labor struggles at home. These partners of the bosses and their government, who spread anti-communism and counter-revolution abroad while allowing the destruction of union conditions in the U.S., feed the growth of Klan terror.



WV Photo

**KKK/Nazi thugs on East steps of Capitol, protected by riot cops. State used black prisoners to set up barricades.**

Wide sections of the union memberships, including some local officials, deeply resented the attempts by the AFL-CIO bureaucrats to stop the anti-Klan mobilization. Resisting great pressure, some Springfield unionists defied the labor fakery like Johnson and Hade and took their places at the rally. The fight to mobilize the workers in struggle over concrete issues like stopping the Klan by mobilizing the mass labor organizations they belong to is the struggle for revolutionary leadership. The Springfield mobilization, like others in Detroit, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Philadelphia and Atlanta initiated and built by the PDC and Spartacist League, give a glimpse of the future workers party that will mobilize and lead the working class and all the oppressed in struggle against their enemies.

### Capitalist State Connives with the Klan

As support mushroomed for the mobilization, Secretary of State Ryan stepped up his campaign to abrogate the civil and Constitutional rights of opponents of Klan terror by severely restricting the terms of the permit secured by the PDC on December 30. As PDC spokesman Al Spanfelner said when a lawsuit was filed against Ryan on January 13, "These police state tactics effectively put the state of Illinois in a bloc with the fascists against the labor and black opponents of the KKK."

The courts in lock step with the police kept us from having our speakers platform where we wanted it to be—in direct sight of the Klan—the better to acquaint them with the social power of the integrated labor movement mobilized in its own defense and on behalf of all the fascists' intended victims. As the PDC explained in a press release issued January 15:

"Secretary of State Ryan's aim from the beginning has been to create a leaderless and chaotic situation—the exact opposite of our intent.... A rally without centrally located sound and leadership is like a car without a steering wheel! The responsibility for any problems that may develop during this demonstration rests squarely with the Secretary of State's Office and his police forces."

Ryan was a public supporter of "Project Lemonade," an obscene initiative by the Zionist ADL to raise money off fascist KKK recruitment rallies and instruct outraged anti-fascists to stay home! Their stated aim was to raise more money, the longer the Klan provocation lasted! The ADL is literally putting price tags on the corpses of victims of fascist terror! This follows in the Zionist tradi-

tion of sacrificing poor Jews to the Nazis in the 1930s and '40s in exchange for allowing Jewish capital to flow in to create the future state of Israel. Racist murder and pogroms are the results of KKK/Nazi recruitment rallies that "Project Lemonade" wants to serve as the taxi meter for! The sinister ADL is far more interested in stopping blacks and "reds" than stopping anti-Semitic fascists who target the Jewish people they claim to speak for.

Also aligned with the KKK and the forces of state repression was the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU... or is that "AKLU" now?). On January 14 the Partisan Defense Committee hand-delivered to the Illinois ACLU chapter a letter which read in part, "Given the ACLU's actions in assuring that the Klan rally proceed unimpeded on the day in question, we would hope that the ACLU will be equally scrupulous in defending our right to protest the Klan presence." These legal eagles for the KKK couldn't even bring themselves to reply.

But eloquent letters of protest poured into Ryan's office from labor unions and civil rights activists all over this country and internationally. David Richardson, a black Democratic member of the Pennsylvania state legislature, wrote to Ryan's office: "Your decision to oppress the Anti-Klan demonstrators by denying them a podium & sound equipment is

despicable. Additionally, I am very concerned about the deployment of your police agents, which are serving to advance Klan activity in this Country."

While the state's attempt to repress the anti-Klan forces scared off some, it stiffened the resolve of many to *be there* in Springfield on January 16. For many who recalled the old FBI lie that Martin Luther King Jr. was a "commie dupe," which is echoed by the Klan in opposing a federal holiday in commemoration of him, our chant "Cops and Klan go hand in hand!" rang true.

The state was so intent on sealing Springfield under a white hood that two black women state legislators, Alice Palmer and Lou Jones, who had the courage to stand by their convictions and join the labor/black mobilization on January 16, were denied access to their offices in the State Capitol by riot-equipped police officers. Palmer and Jones denounced Ryan's action, saying "They wouldn't let elected officials in the building, but they escorted and protected the KKK." Even the press complained about the outrageous machinations of the state on behalf of the fascists, which included a five-man press pool with the rest of the reporters penned in like hogs. The editor of the Decatur *Herald & Review* said: "The KKK rally is not the Gulf War and George Ryan is not Norman Schwarzkopf or Colin Powell."

## SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. LOCAL DIRECTORY

### National Office:

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(212) 732-7860

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Box 4012  
Atlanta, GA 30302  
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On the morning of January 16 there was a more sinister provocation by the state against the labor/black mobilization. Federal agents from the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) were found prowling around our rally site. Dressed in jump suits and ski masks, they claimed to be on site for a "bomb check." Except they had no explosives-sniffing dogs and when closely followed by our union marshals who insured these agents weren't *planting* anything, the BATF agents abruptly ended their "investigation" and left! As a PDC spokesman told demonstrators:

"Forces from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, known to all as the BATF, have been sent here. These are very vicious and dangerous paramilitary forces. They have been sent here by the Clinton White House to protect the Ku Klux Klan. If you didn't know, now you know that the state and the U.S. government stands with the racist killers of the KKK."

The BATF was up to its eyeballs in the bloody KKK massacre of five leftists and union organizers in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979. And we will not forget the massacre of 86 men, women and children in the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, Texas by Janet Reno's "Justice" Department and the BATF. While much of the left sneered, we organized protest demonstrations in cities across America.

The meaning of the state's overt and aggressive collusion with the fascists in Springfield is clear and ominous: First Amendment "rights" to free speech and assembly for *anti-Klan* activists can effectively be wiped out in the name of "security" while the KKK gets a green light to insult and terrorize black America on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. As Al Spanfeller told WICS TV in Springfield, "If they're not stopped, next year there will be [Klan rallies in] 16 capitals and then 24 capitals and then you're not going to have Martin Luther King Day, you're going to be talking about KKK day." That is why the mobilization of labor/black power on the streets was so important. Like every other gain that working people and minorities have secured in this country, our democratic rights are precious to us and must be wrested and defended through hard class struggle.

### Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The state's concerted efforts to prevent anti-Klan protests in Springfield and elsewhere are part and parcel of yuppie racist Clinton's America. After the 1988 elections, to woo back the "Reagan Dem-

ocrats" the right wing of the Democratic Party—led by Arkansas governor Bill Clinton—moved hard to push blacks to the back of the party bus. In the 1992 presidential elections, Jesse Jackson—the most prominent black political spokesman in this country for over a decade—was turned into an invisible man in the Democratic Party. Clinton came to office by deliberately insulting blacks. Since this "new" Democrat entered the White House, black Democratic mayors in the country's two largest cities—New York and Los Angeles—have been replaced by right-wing white Republicans. Over NAFTA, Clinton kicked organized labor in the teeth. Today all the Democrats have to offer blacks is more prisons and boot camps for youth.

Grotesquely conjuring up the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. in a November 13 speech to a black congregation in Memphis, where King was assassinated by a white racist, Clinton pushed the theme that "black people...murder other black people with reckless abandon." This is blaming the victims for their victimization. The outcry over "black on black crime" has been taken up by black liberals like Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson, as well as Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. Indeed, the theme of official M.L. King Day celebrations was "stop the violence" in the inner cities. In New York, Governor Cuomo called a special session of the state legislature on King Day to consider his new "crime" bill. And in Springfield, the KKK "blamed Blacks for the nation's drug and crime problems" (*Chicago Defender*, 17 January).

Many black Democrats and union officials were shocked that the KKK launched an aggressive campaign to defile Martin Luther King Day, the commemoration of the civil rights movement. But the Democratic Party and AFL-CIO bureaucracy is in large measure responsible for the *political climate* in which these racist terrorists feel they have the wind in their sails. The legal gains of the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s came at a time when the American capitalist economy began a long downward slide marked by deindustrialization, union-busting and "give-back" contracts. Today, the National Urban League estimates that 60 percent of black teenage males and 20 percent of all black men are unemployed. Most of those lucky enough to have jobs are forced to work at poverty-level wages.

The AFL-CIO bureaucracy has given up the gains won through decades of



WV Photo

**Two of the student demonstrators who turned out from a dozen area colleges and universities.**

hard-fought labor battles. Instead of channeling the anger of workers and unemployed youth against the Fortune 500 corporations and Wall Street banks, the union tops are engaging in flag-waving attacks on Japan and recently on Mexico over the NAFTA agreement. Racist protectionism, wrapped in the American flag, feeds into the political climate which favors the Klan and Nazis, who hate Hispanics and Asians just as much as they hate blacks. The racist, chauvinist traitors who now run the American labor movement have to be ousted by the workers and replaced by a leadership committed to militant class struggle.

This fight is international in scope. The growing boldness of the KKK is matched by the rise of fascist terror in Europe. The outpouring of support from trade unionists from as far away as Italy and Japan shows the recognition that the fascist threat is for real. In a solidarity statement to the Springfield rally, the chairman of the German League of Anti-Fascists in Leipzig said "Right-wing terror is on the rise! Here in Germany it is mainly directed against foreigners, especially—but by no means only—against refugees from countries of the Third World, also against leftists, gays and Jews. And, as in your country, the police usually are blind in the right eye." To organize the workers and oppressed in their own class interests requires an international revolutionary party, with the program to defeat the fascists once and for all by destroying the capitalist system which breeds them. ■

# Build an Interracial Revolutionary Leadership!



Jeff Higgins at microphone. Early support from Illinois unionists was key to building labor/black mobilization against the Ku Klux Klan. WV Photo

*We reprint here a speech by Jeff Higgins, from the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense, Oakland, California, at the January 16 mobilization to stop the KKK in Springfield. The remarks printed below, which have been edited for publication, were made at the rally site and were originally published in abridged form in Workers Vanguard No. 592, 21 January 1994.*

When the militarily defeated slavocracy's own General Nathan Bedford Forrest led the organizing of the Ku Klux Klan in 1865 in Tennessee, even double-talkin' Bill Clinton could have figured out what he had in mind. Certainly ol' General Forrest and his band of ex-Confederate officers—routed on the battlefield, their commands destroyed by a Union Army including some of their ex-slaves *armed*—didn't intend to become a group of mild gentlemen conversationalists. Chattel slavery had been obliterated at bayonet point, the slaveowners' social power completely broken. Only a liar or a fool would believe these used-to-be masters, dealers in human flesh, could talk their armed former slaves away from their weapons, their Union uniforms, and back under the over-

seer's lash. No, Nathan Bedford Forrest was a slaveowner, a direct representative of his class. He may have gotten the likes of vile Quantrill, along with Frank and Jesse James, to do the dirty work, but it was dirty work in the interest of his militarily defeated class, the slaveowners, who wanted slavery back. This racist ex-Confederate general's association's bedrock consisted not of discussion, but of violent, murderous action against the victorious Union, its supporters and the freed slaves.

The Ku Klux Klan, coming out of its Confederate uniforms yesterday, was a paramilitary organization from the beginning. And so it is today. No matter in a one-piece hood or a three-piece suit, the Klan, after the Civil War and now, deals in cowardly, racist, dynamite-induced death—not debate.

If you can't get this right, you can't get much right about the modern version of these historically racist killers. You can't understand the Klan's methods or their purpose. You miss the capitalist rulers' shadow in front of which the racist KKK killers stand. You displace the threads of protective coloration offered them by the capitalist state and Demo-

cratic/Republican politicians. And for sure you can't have an idea about how to fight homegrown American fascism, to nip it in the bud.

In 1877 with the defeat of Reconstruction and the pulling of Union troops out of the South, the young American capitalist class made a deal with remnants of the defeated slaveowners, and through it, its paramilitary arm—the Ku Klux Klan. The surging American capitalists, largely responding to a growing, organizing labor movement, were abandoning any perspective for a socially-founded black freedom. Instead of the Freedmen's Bureau's 40 acres and a mule, the black masses got Jim Crow, institutionalized segregation as an elemental pillar of American capitalism. The Ku Klux Klan was employed as the primary paramilitary force, the armed battering ram, which *forcibly* drove the former slaves to the bottom of American industrial capitalist society. It is not status as an oppressed nation, but *this* condition, determined on the one hand by fundamental integration into America's capitalist economic fabric, while on the other, forcibly segregated at its bottom as a race-color caste, which is at the foundation of the sordid,

horrible, wretched, agonizing living conditions for Afro-Americans today.

Jim Crow policy permeates American capitalist society's every institution. Jim Crow policy is a primary weapon in keeping capitalist America's integrated working class splintered and atomized. One can *want* the capitalist to do the "right" thing; one can *hope* the capitalist Democrat and Republican politicians enact the "right" laws; one can wish the Klan would replace dynamite with a conference table; and one can fantasize about working-class unity under the bigoted capitalist bosses' boot. But for such people, I've got roosters that lay eggs. America's slippery-handed, money-grabbing capitalist rulers will never shed what is so elemental to their profits' bottom line—racist Jim Crow.

The capitalists are class-conscious. They don't buy this mumbo-jumbo about equality before the law. They don't embrace notions of fair play. They have no desire to promote black/white working-class unity in the workplace, the only place where integration in American capitalist society is real. And what frightens America's capitalist rulers most is militant, integrated working-class struggle, black and white together, organized and disciplined, independent of the bosses' political machine and their waterboys in the trade-union bureaucracy.

The only road open to real black freedom is in the building of a workers state—the organization of an egalitarian socialist society where workers of all races directly share in, and determine to what use is put, the wealth which their sweat and their sacrifices create!

The American capitalists know black and white workers are getting mighty tired of taking this shit. Workers of all colors are tired of layoffs, we're tired of speedup, tired of murderous strikebreaking, tired of struggling to pay the rent and buy food. Life in capitalist America demands that the integrated working class be linked with an integrated revolutionary Trotskyist leadership and revolutionary program. Then we will struggle for power, set up our egalitarian working-class state and ship what's left of the capitalists to Caribou, Maine, where they can play Monopoly with old worthless stock certificates.

The key to working-class unity, to working-class victory, is independence from all forces linked to the bourgeoisie. Working-class schoolchildren today grow up knowing that the Republican Party has represented big money interests for a long time, that the Reagan/Bush safety net was in fact a hangman's noose. But it must also be learned that the Democrats too are tied to big money going back to the days when the Democratic Party served as the political tool for the slaveowners. Malcolm X was right: A Democrat is nothing but a Dixiecrat!

In its revolutionary days, the Republican Party gave America Abraham Lincoln, who rose to the occasion to lead the successful fight against the slaveowners, their "peculiar institution," and their rebellious Democratic Party. The Democratic Party had its heroes too: they were Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Stephen Douglas!

The capitalist police, many of whom

are Klansmen by night, the capitalist courts, and certainly the former slaveowners' Democratic Party, cannot protect, cannot assist, cannot relieve, cannot make better, cannot mediate the growing deplorable living circumstances of American workers in black skin or white! Asking the cops and courts to ban the Klan or address black special oppression is indeed like Rodney King asking the L.A. police for protection. The American capitalists coddle the KKK fascist scum. To keep its power, to maintain its social privileges, to continue as the sole owners of the basic means of production, the capitalists will unleash these genocidal homophobes to quash militant, integrated working-class struggle.

This racist KKK fascist provocation on the Martin Luther King holiday, decent American workers will not tolerate! Although King's pro-Democratic Party civil rights policy could not help but lead the struggle for Afro-American democratic rights into a dead end, the Labor Black Struggle League, as part of the Trotskyist Spartacist League's program to build an integrated revolutionary Trotskyist leadership for the American working class, defends the limited gains of King's civil rights era. Out of militant, integrated working-class actions like today's against the racist, bomb-throwing KKK, we will assist in building this integrated revolutionary Trotskyist leadership. A revolutionary American workers party will keep its feet on these racist killers' necks, their face in the mud, the racist KKK fascist menace, nipped in the bud! Join the Labor Black Struggle League! ■

## Prometheus Research Series No. 3

A memorial to comrade Richard S. Fraser (1913-1988), who pioneered the Trotskyist understanding of the black question in the United States.

After joining the Trotskyist movement in 1934, Fraser was an organizer and union activist for close to 30 years and a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee for 25 years. During internal debates in the SWP in the 1950s he developed and fought for the programmatic perspective of Revolutionary Integration, while the majority, with George Breitman as its spokesman, tailed the liberal pacifist/Democratic Party leadership of the civil rights movement and soon capitulated to black nationalism.

The bulletin contains material reflecting the entire span of Fraser's political life, including his seminal 1953 lectures, "The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution."

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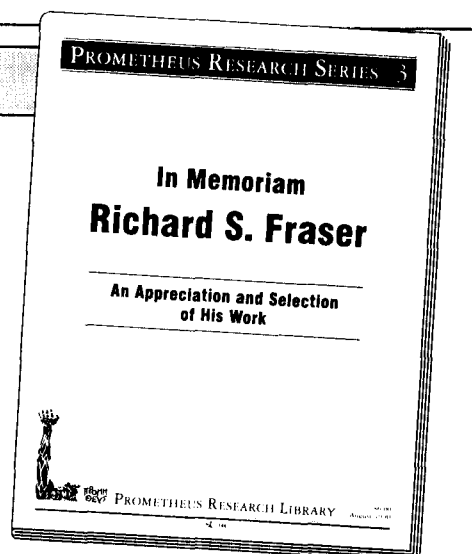
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# Stop the Klan! For a Workers America!

The following WV supplement was distributed to participants in the labor/black mobilization to stop the KKK provocation against the Martin Luther King Holiday in Springfield, Illinois on January 16.

Some people say the Klan should be ignored. But will it ignore you? Look no further than the murder of Cathy Long of South Bend, Indiana, a black mother of two who was killed by white-supremacists in the aftermath of recent Klan mobilizations in the Midwest. Find the answer written in the blood of five blacks, labor organizers and leftists murdered in cold blood and in broad daylight in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979 by KKK/Nazi gunmen.

All of us who are here today know that it is a dangerous illusion to think that if you look the other way the lynchers will disappear. We say: **The power of labor and minorities must be mobilized to sweep away these racist killers, now!**

When the Ku Klux Klan spews its poison at Martin Luther King Day, this is a deadly insult. They are challenging the right of every black man, woman and child to a place in American society, threatening the very right of black people to live. Their racist hatred is not directed solely against blacks, but against Hispanics, Asians, Jews, Catholics, atheists, gays, leftists, union militants, women. The bullets which struck down Dr. David Gunn—a courageous man dedicated to

providing abortion services for women in the Deep South—were fired from the gun of a member of "Rescue America" which is headed by a "former" Klansman.

Ignore the fascist Klan? Hitler's Nazi gangs should have been crushed in the egg. But the powerful German workers movement failed to act, and in 1933 the German ruling class handed power to Hitler. The result was the Holocaust, the mass murder of Jews, Gypsies, Slavs and homosexuals. Today, in the wake of capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe, the fascists are growing, and growing bolder. In Germany, Nazi skinheads assault dark-skinned immigrants, fire-bomb Turkish families, deface Jewish cemeteries.

The rise of fascist provocations in Illinois is fueled by the economic devastation of the Midwest. What was once the industrial heartland of this country, the bastion of multiracial union power, was turned into the "rust bowl" of America. Whole unions have been destroyed, strikes smashed, wages slashed, welfare benefits chopped. Young workers are condemned to two-tier wages—no "American dream" for them. The inner cities have become vast urban wastelands of poverty, disease and death, youth with two-bit jobs or no jobs at all, with no education, and a future without hope. This devastation—the product of a profit-crazed system based on the exploitation of the many by the few—nourishes the Klan in its quest for a "racially pure" society where trade unions do not exist.

**The Klan must be stopped!** Liberal appeals to the government to "ban the Klan" are a dangerous dead end—you can see what side the state is on from the way they've tried to stop this militant anti-Klan mobilization! The multiracial working class united in its own defense, allied with and defending all the oppressed and exploited in this society, has the power to keep the streets safe from fascist terror. The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle legal and



WV Photo

Labor/black power is key to stopping fascist nightriders. Spartacist-initiated mobilization in Chicago, June 1982, brought out 3,000 to stop Nazi provocation against Gay Pride march.



Strikes by Greyhound bus drivers (left) in 1990 and Caterpillar workers in '92 sold out by AFL-CIO tops beholden to capitalist Democratic Party. Fight for a workers party!

social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League/U.S., initiated this demonstration to bring together and give voice to the just outrage felt by thousands. The call to stop the KKK killers has united a broad range of unions, organizations and individuals in common action in our own self-defense.

The Ku Klux Klan was born out of the bloody reaction in the South following the defeat of the slavocracy in the American Civil War. These were the hooded-and-robed agents of the former Confederacy, who carried out a campaign of terror, intimidation, mutilation and murder aimed at strangling the political rights that were granted to the freed slaves during Reconstruction. The KKK spearheaded the restoration of white supremacy, in the form of the system of Jim Crow segregation that held sway for nearly a century. Today the KKK is the lowlife expression of a ruling class which believes that those who are not among the tiny minority that owns the real wealth have no rights which America's rich white man's government is bound to respect.

After 12 years of racist reaction and union-busting under Republicans Reagan and Bush, Democrat Clinton rode into the White House on the votes of blacks and labor, while going out of his way to kick them in the teeth. The Klan is the violent, extremist fringe of bipartisan racist reaction under the decaying rule of American capitalism. For Wall Street and Washington, the ghetto population has become "surplus." Clinton proclaims the "end of welfare as we know it." Democratic and Republican mayors alike have no program except killer cutbacks of basic social services and a vast increase of

cops to shoot down minority youth in the name of "fighting crime." This program adds up to genocide—and the Klan openly proclaims it.

The Klan carries out its lynchings under cover of night. The rulers of this country do it openly and legally. Clinton made a public display of returning to Arkansas during the campaign to personally oversee the execution of a retarded black man. Everywhere—from Los Angeles to Berlin—the rulers blame immigrants for the bankruptcy of the capitalist social order. The fascists are the cutting edge of racist hatred and violence against "foreigners"—Hispanics, Asians, Haitians. The Klan racists ride against anyone who doesn't fit their model of a white Aryan "100 percent American." And from Reagan's terror bombing of the black MOVE commune in 1985 (carried out by Philadelphia's black Democratic Party mayor Wilson Goode) to Clinton's massacre of an integrated non-conformist religious sect

near Waco, Texas last April, the rulers bring home the same message in state-sponsored blood and fire.

Mass unemployment, hunger, the lack of health care and the erosion of universal public education are simply the slower methods of destroying the bodies and spirits of the working and poor people. What is to be done? Take a look around you at this demonstration. We are here—people of diverse backgrounds and convictions—united behind the central power of organized labor, brought together by the efforts of an avowedly class-struggle, socialist organization, to stop fascist terror. Here we get a sense of the power that can bring down this whole system of human misery, racism and exploitation which breeds scum like the KKK. That is the power of the organized, multiracial working class.

Yet, even the idea that organized labor has any power, that it can be mobilized in defense of its own interests, much less anybody else's, is an alien one in today's

**Fascists target women's right to abortion. KKK terrorist brandishes coat hanger outside Dallas clinic.**



America, in particular to a generation of youth who have seen little, if any, social struggle. It is not that the ranks of labor have not fought and fought hard. But from PATCO to Greyhound to Hormel to Eastern Airlines to Caterpillar, every working-class battle has been isolated, dissipated, stabbed in the back by the AFL-CIO tops. Incapable of leading labor in struggle, they act as labor cops for the bosses, who have shackled the power of the unions to the Democratic Party.

Clinton "thanked" his AFL-CIO supporters by shoving NAFTA down their throats. The North American Free Trade Agreement is designed to increase the power of the U.S. imperialist rulers through the deepening impoverishment of the American working class and the rape of Mexico. The recent "Zapatista" peasant rebellion in the face of insurmountable odds is a measure of the desperate straits of the Mexican masses. The AFL-CIO bureaucrats' answer to NAFTA was to push racist America-first protectionism and join in blaming immigrants, truly the most powerless sector of the population, for the bankruptcy of the capitalist order. A fighting labor movement must organize on both sides of the border against the bosses and their "free trade" swindle, raising the call for full citizenship rights for immigrants. It must oppose the vicious imperialism which starves the masses of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and today brings closer the menace of trade war and world war.

We say: Labor's gotta play hardball to win! The mass industrial unions of this country were built through hard-fought and "illegal" class struggle in the 1930s: the sitdown strike, mass pickets,

"hot carging" of scab products. But it wasn't simply trade-union militancy. The mass CIO organizing drives had to break down racism and the Jim Crow segregation of blacks in industry. Now the power of the strike, of the mass picket, of factory occupations has been replaced by diversionary and losing "consumer boycott" campaigns. Why? Because the labor bureaucrats play by the bosses' rules and the bosses' laws—and they have a law against every weapon labor needs to defend itself.

During the 1930s, blacks came to identify with the labor movement when the unions fought for them. The forcible segregation of blacks at the bottom of this society has always been a fundamental prop to the rule of American capitalism. Racial divisions are wielded by the bosses and their "labor lieutenants" to retard working-class struggle. Today, the devastation of industry in the North threatens the very existence of the trade unions, as the bosses move their operations to the "open shop" South. To organize the South will require pitched battles with the union-hating Klan, who are up to their hoods in the scabherding private "security" outfits that violently attack strikers. Can anyone imagine the AFL-CIO tops involved in, much less leading, this kind of fight?

This mobilization here today, which brings to bear the power of labor and blacks in struggle against the Klan, heralds the kind of fighting leadership the labor movement needs. The same power that can stop the fascist nightriders in the North can crack open the open shop South, can organize the unorganized and unemployed, can mobilize in defense of the masses in the ghettos and barrios.

The working class has the numbers,

the organization and the power to win all those things that the ruling class appropriates for itself—health care, education, jobs, decent housing, abortion rights. What is lacking is the kind of leadership that is necessary to do this—a leadership of the unions that doesn't bow to the bosses' laws, a workers party that doesn't respect the property "rights" of the capitalist rulers, that understands that there will be no victories for labor and no freedom for blacks without integrated class struggle which champions black rights. That is the kind of party that we communists of the Spartacist League are fighting to build.

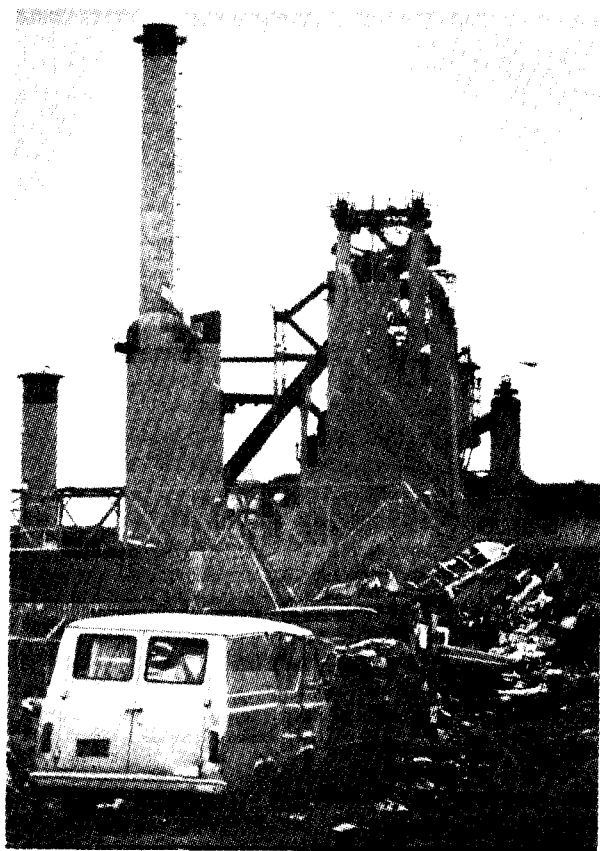
Communism is not "dead"—it is the program that expresses the class interests of the workers and oppressed, growing out of their aspirations and struggles for a society of genuine equality and social justice. However bureaucratically deformed, the collectivized economies of the former Soviet bloc provided to all their citizens jobs, education, health care, housing—basic rights that have now been wiped out. The forces of racist and nationalist reaction now sweeping these countries are only further testimony to the fact that fascist terror is the product of capitalism.

The destruction of these workers states is the legacy of the Stalinist bureaucratic rulers who sold out hard-won gains. Like the trade unions in this country, the Soviet Union was the product of class struggle, the most momentous in history—the 1917 October Revolution. But like the labor tops in this country, the program of the Stalinist bureaucracy which hijacked political power from the workers was one of class collaboration, not internationalist class struggle. Ultimately this defeatist program proved a



AP photos

Chicago, 1966: liberal civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. (left photo) came to a dead end in the North when confronted by racist mobs and the racial oppression embedded in the capitalist economic system.



WV Photo

**Remnants of U.S. Steel plant in Cleveland. Capitalist decay turned industrialized Midwest into "rust bowl."**

mortal danger to the survival of the Soviet Union itself, just as the AFL-CIO bureaucracy is a threat to the existence of the unions as fighting organizations of workers self-defense.

The words of Karl Marx, the founder of modern communism, that "labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded," are driven home more brutally than ever in this country. Thirty years have passed since the lunch counter sit-ins swept the South in protest against the exclusion of blacks. It is a measure of today's "leaders" of labor and blacks that it took our small organization of "reds" to launch a coast-to-coast protest campaign against Jim Crow racism practiced by the nationwide Denny's restaurant chain. The national NAACP leadership was more interested in "integrating" Denny's board of directors.

The civil rights movement fought against the legal segregation and discrimination against blacks in the American South. But that movement was shattered in Chicago [in 1966], where it came up against the segregation and discrimination against blacks in the North, who for years had lived with "equality under the law." Tied to the Democratic Party, Martin Luther King Jr. could not fight the root cause of black oppression—the rule of American capitalism.

Today over half of young blacks are unemployed, decrepit inner-city schools are like concentration camps, despair is rampant. But everyone from U.S. Senator Moynihan to Farrakhan blames black youth and the black family for their victimization by this racist system. The racist rhetoric of the capitalist rulers who condemn ghetto youth as an immoral and criminal drain on society, who should pull themselves up by their own (non-existent) "bootstraps," is echoed by the black bourgeois politicians. "We've lost more to dope than we have to the rope," preaches the Rev. Jesse Jackson, suggesting that black people have no interest in stopping the Klan.

Yet widespread drug addiction in the inner cities is the direct result of the despair of people thrown on the scrap heap by a society that doesn't care if they live or die. The "war on drugs" is really a war on the black community. Legalization of drugs would take the profit and correspondingly much of the violent crime out of dealing. But the rulers want to keep drugs illegal because it provides the rationale for building up their machinery of death and repression aimed at keeping the working class cowed.

Repression and regimentation is this system's answer to everything. An army of cops and troops occupied Los Angeles, and police ran wild in cities across

the country in response to the mass outrage over the racist acquittal of the cops who beat Rodney King. The omnibus crime bill being rammed through Congress is a frontal assault on our liberties: imposing the racist death penalty for scores of crimes, boot camps for jobless youth, instant deportation for unwanted immigrants. Gun control means that only cops, criminals and the Klan will have guns, while black people and the working class are to be left defenseless. The AIDS plague was allowed to ravage the gay community and is now devastating the ghettos. Witchhunts against teen-sexuality, porn and rap music, harassment of smokers, persecution of gays, "English-only" discrimination against Hispanics, "right-to-life" bombings and killings against abortion rights—this is the ugly face of American society today.

How can we break out of this vicious circle? The Spartacist League is a small organization, but our program is based on the lessons of the struggles of the past. Our strategy for labor/black mobilizations against Klan terror has met with a broad response and has succeeded in stopping the fascist vermin from staging their provocations in numerous cities, from Chicago and Washington, D.C. in 1982 to Philadelphia in 1988. But such victories can only be temporary so long as capitalism continues to exist and to generate the social decay and racism on which the Klan and Nazis feed. These shock troops of capitalist reaction must be put out of business once and for all by a victorious revolutionary workers government.

It took a second American revolution to smash the chains of chattel slavery, but the promise of black freedom was denied. The forces that have come out today to stop the Klan give a taste of the power that can open the road to a third American revolution which will make it possible for all of us here to have an equal and enhanced chance for a decent life. The Democrats and Republicans represent their class, the bourgeoisie. A workers party, built on an internationalist perspective, is needed to fight for the workers and oppressed, to galvanize the struggles against racism and exploitation and lead them toward the fight for working-class power. That means a socialist revolution, which will break the rule of the few and liberate the many—the working people and their allies, who will employ the wealth of this country created by their labor for the benefit of the majority of society.

Spartacist League,  
16 January 1994

# Springfield, Illinois

# A Proletarian-Centered Strategy to Fight Fascism

## Revolutionary Consciousness Is Key

*Over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend, the Ku Klux Klan staged racist provocations in eight state capitals. Wherever these fascists reared their heads, they were outnumbered by anti-racist protesters. But the anti-Klan protest in Springfield, Illinois was different because here, uniquely, in response to a call by the Partisan Defense Committee, a struggle was waged to mobilize the social power of labor to defend all intended victims of KKK terror. Over 500 people braved arctic cold to stop the KKK on January 16. (The previous issue of *Workers Vanguard* features full coverage of the Springfield demonstration.) We reprint here a presentation by comrade Al Nelson, slightly edited for publication, to a meeting of the Bay Area membership of the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club on the political significance of the Springfield labor/black mobilization.*

It's been a little over five years since the Philadelphia labor/black mobilization prevented the Nazi skinheads from carrying out a provocation on November 5, 1988. Since that time, we've acquired a number of new members whose only knowledge of that mobilization and other previous party actions comes mainly from a couple of videos and possibly prowling through the bound volumes of *WV*. Looking at a video, you can come away with the impression that the whole process is pretty seamless: you issue a call, unions endorse, leaflets are mass distributed, several thousand people show up, and the Klan and Nazis are routed.

The reality is much more complex and difficult, involving very intense political struggle on three or four or five fronts simultaneously—with the capitalist state, both federal and local; with the reactionary top labor bureaucracy; with

the reformist opponents, inside and outside of the labor movement; with the churches, the Anti-Defamation League, the ostensibly revolutionary organizations and their particular competing coalitions; with the bourgeois press, and so on. The struggles become more furious the closer you get to the day of the demonstration itself, with the last 12 to 24 hours being the time of the really dirty tricks. In Philadelphia, for instance, after being constantly jerked around by the police, we had comrades camping in tents overnight at the site down by Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. At midnight they heard clanking noises and discovered the cops cutting up our area with barricades. Our general counsel roared down there, yelled at the cops, then woke up the head of the Parks Department—I think it was about 2 o'clock in the morning—screamed at him, and they removed the barricades. But this was just hours before we were to do our actual setup.

Then on the day itself it shifts over to a semi-military situation which involves the relationship of forces between demonstrators, cops and the fascists—which itself has many, many variations that can only be partially anticipated and requires a great deal of tactical flexibility and judgment with steady communications from the site to the party center. In any case, you never know what actually is going to show up until the day itself.

There have been, since 1979, about six or seven of these. There have been tactical errors, small and large, partial collapse of key cadre, and on at least one occasion a very serious political distortion taking place within the demonstration and the preparation itself. After each one the Political Bureau usually has a post-mortem, attempting with our customary brutal honesty to assess and characterize the particular shortcomings. My

own personal final checklist is kind of a mental scorecard of all the previous screw-ups—great and small—to at least minimize the chances of committing the same mistakes again.

In this way the party as a whole has acquired considerable experience in these labor/black mobilizations since November 1979 in Detroit, the first one of these that we did. In that demonstration, the PB passed a motion on Wednesday, the demo was Saturday—try that one on! We got out 85,000 leaflets. That was when another hard core, a *really* hard core, of black workers and youth, showed up. I think there were about 500 there. The “youth,” by the way, was a euphemism for gang members—there were some tough characters out there. At that time the Klan said they were going to celebrate the killings in Greensboro which had taken place just about two weeks before that. Then, in Detroit, the black Democratic mayor, Coleman Young, viciously violence-baited the demonstration on the 11 o'clock news the night before the demo was to take place, and we worked the phones all night calling major endorsers all over the country and calling Washington, using the Justice Department as a wedge against the city of Detroit.

### **A Strategy and Tactics Inherited from the Bolsheviks**

We didn't invent either the principles or the tactics that we use in these actions. Rather they are concrete applications of the experience of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party through the Russian Revolution, and particularly of comrade Leon Trotsky whose writings provide us with a broad Marxist analysis of fascism, under what conditions it arises, its class base, and the tactics required to mobilize the working class to smash it. I urge the comrades to read or reread the



collections of these writings on fascism. There's two volumes in particular—*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* and also *Whither France?*—as a basic course. When you read some of these articles you will see that many of the basic tactics derive from the Bolshevik defense of Kerensky's government from General Kornilov in order to more systematically prepare for the overthrow of Kerensky himself and with him the provisional government. So a lot of the tactics we use come from that.

We are really talking about the party question in action, the subjective factor necessary for the political mobilization of the proletariat in its own defense, the relationship between the leadership, the party and the class. Therefore, there's a lot more involved in these actions than just playing a number game. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that with milder weather we would have had a turnout of 1,500 minimum, despite the logistical difficulty of mobilizing main forces and a command center in Chicago, and then traveling three hours to Springfield. Larger forces turned out in Austin, Texas—2,000 demonstrators against 33 Klansmen, much better odds than in Columbus where it was several hundred to 40, and in Denver where it was reported by the cops it was 95 to 30, roughly.

I wish that 2,000 had also turned out in all the other states where the Klan had their rallies. But there's another important criteria. Of all the protests that weekend, which action rendered the proletariat more conscious of its social power and historical tasks? In 1939, when the Red Army went into eastern Poland following

the Stalin-Hitler pact, capitalist private property was abolished, since Stalinism was a parasitic caste based on collectivized, state-owned property relations. Trotsky said that while the transformation of property relations was progressive and defensible, the primary political question for us, the Fourth Internationalists, was whether these transformations of property relations resulted in raising the consciousness and organization of the proletariat. Given the bureaucratic military methods used by Stalin, the answer in 1939 was negative; Stalinism remained a reactionary obstacle to revolutionary consciousness. Did the Springfield mobilization raise the consciousness of the proletariat and increase their awareness of their potential social power? The answer to that has to be an emphatic "yes."

### Revolutionary Leadership Is the Key

This mobilization went very, very deep into the Chicago and Illinois-area labor movement and had a political impact far beyond the numerical size of that hard core that left their homes that morning in temperatures of -10 or -12 degrees and a windchill factor of -30 to -40. (That's what it was at 7 o'clock in the morning in Springfield. The figure in the last issue of *Workers Vanguard* of 16 degrees below zero with windchill factor, that was the *high*, that was when it warmed up and started to snow.) This mobilization caused reverberations and polarizations in the Chicago and Illinois labor movement, among black politicians, students, the whole social spec-

trum. And what the workers in the unions saw were people who knew what they were doing, who fought like hell in the courts and in the streets and never yielded an inch until we were absolutely forced to by the police power of the capitalist state.

This reminded me of a similar point that comrade Cannon made in his *History of American Trotskyism*, in the chapter on the great Minneapolis strike. He said, following a section describing the first strike in May:

"When they saw the performances in the May strike in Minneapolis, that same sentiment was expressed again: 'These Trotskyists mean business. When they undertake anything, they go through with it!'"

That caught my eye, but here's a more important point:

"There was no essential difference, in fact I don't think there was any serious difference at all between the strikers in Minneapolis and the workers involved in a hundred other strikes throughout the land in that period. Nearly all the strikes were fought with the greatest militancy by the workers. The difference was in the leadership and the policy. In practically all the other strikes the militancy of the rank and file workers was restrained from the top. The leaders were overawed by the government, the newspapers, the clergy and one thing and another. They tried to shift the conflict from the streets and the picket lines to the conference chambers. In Minneapolis the militancy was not restrained but organized and directed from the top."

And he continues later:

"The modern labor movement must be politically directed because it is confronted by the government at every turn. Our people were prepared for that since



Anti-fascist militants chanted: "Smash the Klan, this is the hour! Labor and blacks have got the power!"

WV Photo



WV Photos

**Labor/black mobilizations against the Klan (above, left to right): Detroit, November 1979; Washington, D.C., November 1982; (opposite, left to right) Philadelphia, November 1988; Atlanta, January 1989.**

they were political people, inspired by political conceptions. The policy of the class struggle guided our comrades; they couldn't be deceived and outmaneuvered, as so many strike leaders of that period were, by this mechanism of sabotage and destruction known as the National Labor Board and all its auxiliary setups."

That is, all the accoutrements of Roosevelt's New Deal.

Coming from an entirely different situation, that characterized what we did in Chicago and other mobilizations. We had no illusions in the capitalist courts either, even though we have generally been successful in previous mobilizations and related libel suits. Some party leaders were concerned that our earlier successes in the courts might blunt some comrades' understanding of the basic lessons contained in Lenin's *State and Revolution*. Well, we lost this one in three different courts, fast!

But we also managed to impress a lot of people with the aggressiveness and tenacity of our efforts. We went through Federal District Court in Chicago and then later that same day in Springfield and then the following day in the Federal Court of Appeals back in Chicago—all in about 30 hours. Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis said at one point, "Boy, you guys work fast!" Our lawyers carried the legal fight, and other comrades kept the press and our main endorsers informed at every step. But we did lose in the courts, and based on that concluded that we had no choice but to comply with the restrictions placed on us by the Illinois state authorities.

Restricting our command center to the

north steps created a vulnerable and dangerous situation, and placed a heavy burden on our leadership and security setup, the union marshals with its party core. Our main guy in charge of security had about seven or eight captains, and then each of them had a squad of union marshals working with them. We promised those who supported our call a disciplined, militant and democratic demonstration. Our purpose was not to mobilize to fight the cops but to stop the Klan.

Trotsky taught us that there are often differences between the existing state and its police, and the fascist bands. Cops and Klan may go hand in hand, as the slogan says, but they are not the same. And bearing in mind the Bolshevik approach to the Kerensky-Kornilov situation, we prefer to have a different tactical approach to each. If the relationship of forces is overwhelming, say 5,000 demonstrators to those purported 285 cops they had in Springfield (holding aside speculations as to what was hidden inside and how many BATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms] forces were there), the cops might not be so eager to act as bodyguards for the fascists. Given an opening in any situation that we are in, in any of these mobilizations, we will and have stopped the fascists.

### **Labor and Blacks Show the Way**

This demonstration had a polarizing impact on the labor movement. Two Chicago ATU locals played a pivotal role in the fight for this mobilization and during the demonstration itself, providing many of the critical union marshals. Local 308

endorsed this demonstration and chartered a bus to get ATU members there. ATU International Vice President Jackie Breckenridge was an early endorser and active fighter for the demonstration.

The WV article refers to the heavy intervention against our mobilization by the state AFL-CIO. It really pissed a lot of the labor guys off, younger local presidents who perceived the fascist danger and wanted to mobilize against it. They said to us, "Look, we can't do anything more; they're really leaning on us. But we're not going to pull our endorsement, and we feel sure that some of our guys are going to be out there." That was just about the uniform response. Others, like the multistate Region 4 Rubber Workers endorsement, came in after the AFL-CIO sent out its "stay away" message to all the area locals. It was an act of defiance.

Another comrade made a useful point in a Chicago local meeting before the mobilization: For a whole layer in the labor movement, like this middle layer of union officers, we gave them a lesson in how to mobilize the power of labor. Even though they were willing, they had never done this before, having come into office in a prolonged period of near-zero class struggle. What they were good at was sending out faxes and sitting on dead strikes. The labor component of this mobilization was heavily black, and many of these labor guys drew on and were motivated by their previous experiences in the civil rights movement, often in the South.

This mobilization went deeper into the black population than anything we have ever done before, reflecting also



WV Photos

the changed political climate we have been talking about since last year. In America the biggest impact of the collapse of the USSR is on the most vulnerable layers in society, which means that black people are being hit really hard, not just economically but with Clinton's "war on crime" and the "end of welfare as we know it" and all that. Even the black Democratic politicians in Chicago, who in 40 percent black Chicago were an important part of the old patronage machine under the former mayor Richard Daley—Harold Washington, for instance, was a product of that—realize that in this new Democratic Party they mean nothing, they're out.

A liberal writer, Joan Didion, in her article "Eye on the Prize" (published in the *New York Review of Books*, 24 September 1992) which I urge comrades to read, observed that Clinton's public insult of Jesse Jackson over the "Sister Souljah" incident had in a substantial way been calculated for four years. It was a conscious effort to go for the white racist vote, the so-called Reagan Democrats, in order to reverse the Dukakis disaster of 1988 where Bush played very effectively the race card, the Willy Horton ploy.

The role played in this mobilization by black Democrats, especially by Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis but also the other black politicians, both in Chicago and in the state legislature, was really unusual. Davis himself came to the first press conference—which was not hostile, by the way. In Chicago the press was not hostile; in Springfield it was all being orchestrated out of the Secretary of State's office. At that press conference, when there was a little hint of hostility, he just stepped forward and

said, "If the Klan isn't stopped in Springfield on Sunday, they'll be in Chicago on Monday. And I fully support the efforts of the Partisan Defense Committee." That carried a lot of authority. He and others didn't flinch in the face of the red-baiting and violence-baiting and "stay away" campaign that was coming out of Springfield. If anything, their support increased, and Davis led a car caravan down from Chicago.

Historically speaking, we are a tiny vanguard formation, but yet we had such a great impact. Imagine what larger forces could do. These Democrats who want to struggle have a very big contradiction:

black people need a party that will fight for their interests. It is currently abundantly clear that that cannot happen within the Democratic Party. If a workers party with some social weight existed, some of the more serious of these black Democrats would very likely come over to such a party. And in fact in this instance, this microcosm of that equation, that's what happened. In this one- or two-week period, they did join forces with this small vanguard formation.

In reality the whole Chicago operation pivoted on our slender industrial presence. Imagine the greater impact on the whole area if we had groups of

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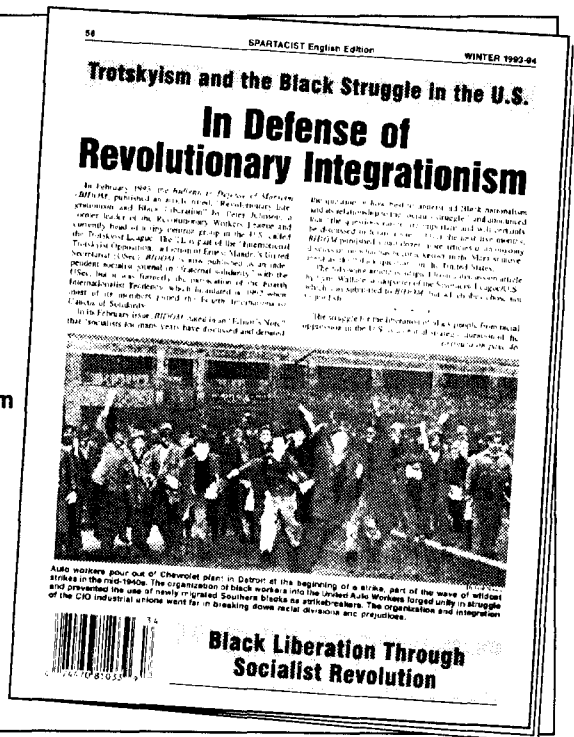
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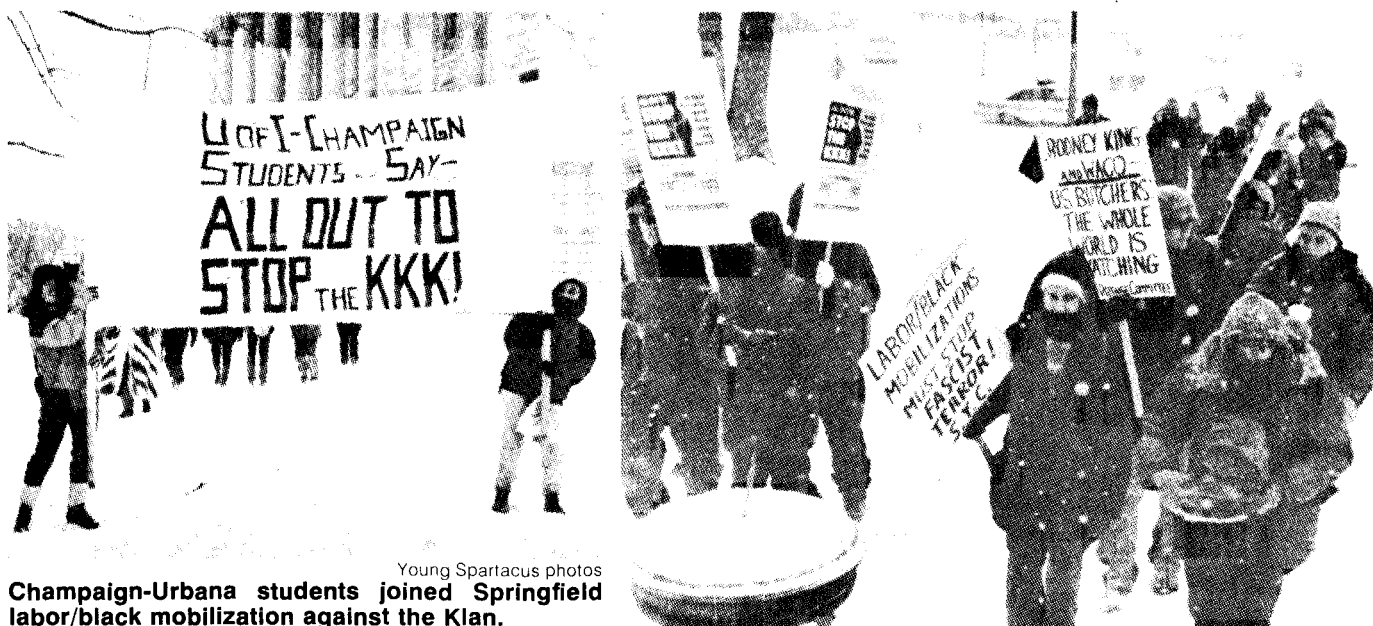
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Young Spartacus photos  
**Champaign-Urbana students joined Springfield labor/black mobilization against the Klan.**

supporters playing a similar role in a number of other industrial unions. When the UAW presidents slacked off, for instance, we didn't have the capacity to substitute for their efforts. If we had groups of supporters, we would have been on the inside and would have been able to form an ad hoc committee or carry the ball just as independents working within the union. With recruitment, we can make that a reality.

### **Fake Leftists Lack Confidence in the Working Class**

If our mobilization taught the workers something about the class nature and role of the state and increased their consciousness of the role of leadership and organization and mobilizing the social power of the working class, how does the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL)—along with Progressive Labor (PL) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO)—stack up in this regard? The RWL treated this mobilization with contempt *because* of its labor-centered basis. These people are basically petty-bourgeois radicals with a micro-thin veneer of Trotskyism. Fundamentally they personify Lenin's observation that the source of all opportunism is an underestimation of the revolutionary capacity of the working class. The old New Left, because of its overwhelming petty-bourgeois social composition, was hostile to the working class. The RWL's "founder-leaders" brought with them this fundamental alien class bias and world outlook, which also explains their grotesque anti-working-class defense of scabbing. They live in some Alice in Wonderland world where the BATF and FBI fight "fascism" in Waco.

By the way, there was an illustration at the demonstration in Springfield of the intersection of class and race with social reality and their different responses. We addressed the demonstration very seriously in the beginning regarding the danger of the setup engineered by the state and called for increased vigilance. When the Klan did appear on the east steps, about 200 of our demonstrators drifted over to the area directly in front of the Klan at Second and Capitol where there was a mixed crowd—it turned out—of RWL, PL, ISO, Klan supporters who came to hear the Klan speak, and undercover cops as well as a lot of uniformed police. Those that drifted away were mainly young and white. Those that remained in our perimeter, where we had the union marshals, were heavily black and union. They had a better grasp of social reality and knew better the danger of the situation for them. Black students we met in Albany, New York had a similar reaction to the confrontation last fall with the Klan in Auburn, New York. They told us they were glad the KKK was run out, but they also knew that the cops would not be so permissive toward any black youths who tried some of the same stunts some RWLers and white college kids got away with.

Lacking a proletarian revolutionary perspective, politics for the RWL is just a game of personal confrontation, with the cops or the Klan, that someday is going to get somebody seriously hurt. For them the struggle for leadership of the working class is meaningless. Despite the fragmented aspect of this demonstration, arranged and maneuvered by the state, the formidable com-

position and disciplined character of our demonstration extended an umbrella of protection to the RWL as well. There would have been a hell of a lot more arrests if our strong force had not been present there.

### **Genocide Is Not Debatable!**

I was asked to address the point of "no free speech for fascists." That particular phrase or slogan poses the question incorrectly. Free speech is not an issue in these appearances by the Klan. The Klan (or the Nazis) is not a right-wing political organization like, for example, the John Birch Society, which holds and propagates conservative political views in print or public speeches and whose right to free speech we might defend in certain circumstances where a principle is being invoked. The Klan is a paramilitary *action* group whose public rallies are used to incite racist violence and to recruit to their ranks.

In this period, the state invariably acts to protect the Klan or Nazis while suppressing the ostensible rights of free speech and assembly of anti-Klan demonstrators. The liberals bow down to the trappings of bourgeois democracy, the social democrats and reformists capitulate to the liberals, and the centrists tail the reformists. Thus in most, if not all, of our mobilizations to stop the Klan, the liberals, typically the mayors and the churches, say "ignore the Klan and stay home," while the centrists and pop-front types, like the Marcyites (Workers World Party), have an explicit or de facto position of "ban the Klan"—usually holding a diversionary demonstration at some distance from the Klan site. The Socialist Workers Party in past years

has carried this position to obscene lengths, conducting public "debates"—so-called—with Klansmen or Nazis to demonstrate to the bourgeois state that they are utterly toothless and completely stupid, "peaceful-legal" socialists.

### A New Political Period

Regarding the military aspect of these mobilizations, they have varied quite a bit in reality. While the political impact may be more important than the military aspect, if you blow it militarily, that could affect and diminish the political impact. In Detroit the Klan never showed up; in San Francisco they never showed up. In Philly they canceled out and then some skinheads tried to get through our line and were lucky to have been able to walk away because the cops were there. In D.C. a very small number of the promised 30 showed up and then were just literally trembling—you could see them in the newsreel shaking, and they had their Klan outfits in a brown paper bag, and they were taken away. In Ann Arbor they showed up at another location and were run out of the area by the demonstrators, who chased them down the street. In Chicago the Nazis were on the other side of a cyclone fence from us. Still, they couldn't be heard because we just overpowered them, 3,000 people against their 30. In Atlanta the Klan marched protected by a tremendous phalanx of police, the vanguard of which were the special squads from the state prisons who are sent in to break up riots, real hard-core psycho killers; these are the ones that just go in to beat up and kill people.

In Washington, D.C. it was really a wonderful thing: we stopped the Klan. These guys didn't *dare* walk down that short hill to start their march; there were 5,000 people waiting for them. But what was different in Springfield from D.C. and these 5,000—which we characterized as a classical mass action of the intersection of the vanguard party and the labor and black masses—was a different political period with different polarization. At that time Reagan was in office; it was understood to be an indicator of the Reagan Republican administration that the Klan was given permission to march, as they had in 1925 when 45,000 hooded members paraded from the Capitol to the White House. By the way, the Klan demo was to be against immigration, and D.C. is 80 percent black, and that was a big factor.

A couple of comrades have said that in D.C. and other places there were "paper" endorsements for the mobilization. Yes and no. In most cases the

endorsements didn't mean the union tops actively sought to turn out their members. But what it did provide was an official "okay," that it was all right to be out there. Union members treat their unions with a certain respect—not because of the hidebound bureaucrats that run them, but because that's the organization they are in. If the tops say "no," you have to have a little more going for you to say "well, to hell with them, I'm going to be out there anyhow"—which happens, if the perceived threat is great enough to defy the leadership. Whereas if the unions endorse, that means it's all right and there will be no problem; if you get arrested or something, you won't necessarily get fired because the union will probably stick up for you. That factor showed up in Philly where there was an extreme polarization, mainly against us, on the labor side. Opposing us was the Central Labor Council, which turned out to be run by an old Irishman in his eighties who had been in office since the 1950s, the ILGWU and the president of the Transport Workers Union who was a younger, rad-lib type who was an active anti-Spartacist. The turnout came mainly from the endorsing unions.

For the mobilization in November 1982 in Washington, Reagan was the president. In 1994 Clinton is the president. The world has changed dramatically: the Soviet Union is no more; there were expectations about the Democrats which are being fairly instantly dashed. The debates and the depth of the response in Chicago went a whole lot deeper than they did in D.C. in 1982 where it was against Reagan. But even then the Democrats—Marion Barry was the mayor of D.C.—stayed away. In most

of these demonstrations the black Democrats have always been very hostile. In Philly, Wilson Goode was the mayor and he publicly opposed our mobilization. David Richardson, a black state assemblyman, withstood the political pressure and endorsed.

The country and the world have changed very dramatically, and therein lies the real significance of this Springfield mobilization. For a lot of the people that came out in Washington in 1982, that was an important event in their lives. When we later set up a local there, we found out that a lot of people kept their "Stop the Klan" placards, had them on their walls. It was a real, historic event. But as broad as that was, the response, the polarization, didn't go as deep because the society was different. It was easier to go against the Republicans. Now the thrust of it, objectively and perhaps consciously, is against the Democratic administration in Washington. There's a sense that this society is getting really bad and really dangerous.

The Klan's natural habitat is the rural and semirural areas, and they are being smart focusing on the state capitals because they are symbolic and that's where statues of Martin Luther King Jr. are, yet with the exception of Boston, every state capital is some Podunk town. We were successful in the early '80s in preventing fascist forays under the cover of the Reagan administration from establishing a substantial base in a number of urban centers. The area they are currently operating in, which these state capitals represent, is still the rural constituencies that tend to be more Republican compared to the big cities with their heavy black and labor constituencies

## What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism

(Marxist Bulletin No. 5 Revised)

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Selected documents and articles on the black question in the U.S., 1955-1978

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which tend to be Democratic. Of course, every action we've initiated against the fascists in a major urban center has required a political fight against a Democratic Party mayor.

**Building the Revolutionary Party**

Given the broad political impact of this mobilization and the changed political climate in this country, the Springfield demonstration puts us in a very good position to be able to enhance our capacity and recruit additional forces, to the party, to the Labor Black Leagues and to the youth clubs, not just in Chicago but all over the U.S. And the fact that so many of our party and youth members made it to Chicago on their own steam to assist with this mobilization says a whole lot about the commitment and morale of the Spartacist League/U.S.

There's a big political vacuum in this country, and our little organization in this instance filled it in a particular struggle. It really does anticipate what role a mass-based workers party would have. That was one key lesson of this mobilization. If this country has 230 million people, probably 50 million of them consider themselves racists. But normally they don't do anything about it, because most times there is nothing pushing them—until their lives are disturbed. And their lives are being disturbed now by a lot of things.

You should read the material in Trot-

sky's writings where he analyzes what social motion takes place when the petty bourgeoisie becomes frenzied. There are only two major classes in society, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie attaches its wagon to the bourgeoisie but then the economy sours and they start getting ruined. And if the proletariat is not able to demonstrate that they are the way out of ruin and despair through workers revolution, the loyalties of the petty bourgeoisie will shift, and then you have a mass base for the fascists, which Trotsky described as the party of white-hot reaction.

In this country the ruling class has been working on driving down the wages, increasing the rate of exploitation, using the black population as a scapegoat, using crime and welfare as a cover. There's a very bad potential here unless the working class mobilizes as a political social force. And the latitude that the Klan feels now, in very boldly organizing their demonstrations, is in the absence of the working class as even a force on the economic plane. Strikes have been statistically zero since around 1982. So this underscores for us the importance of this particular demonstration, but in the context of a very changed international and national situation.

The state and the cops in this mobilization were maximally malicious and repetitive liars and they were looking for trouble, all the way. And I don't know what the BATF was doing there—that's big time. How did they come to be in

Springfield? There are splits in the government, and the BATF is scrambling to stay in the budget, but who called them in? Those Springfield cops clearly had never been taught a lesson by serious strikes. We keep saying in *Workers Vanguard* that we could really use a big, victorious strike. Well, this demonstration didn't have the kind of clout a big strike would, like if the Caterpillar guys in Peoria had won instead of being hung out to dry for months and months. But this demonstration, on a somewhat different scale, will have those kinds of reverberations or ripple effect.

It would have been more demonstrative if the weather had been better and the labor mass that was represented by that hard core had been there. But I think even with the smaller forces that turned out, we really shook up the political structure in Illinois and Chicago, which itself reflects the different national and international political context. It forced everyone to have to take a position. Even for the people in Decatur and Peoria that didn't show up, that we knew about, this effort of our little party made a big impact. That is just a fact. The impact of the Springfield mobilization may very well manifest itself the next strike around. We showed that something *can* be done, and the workers may think, those guys stood up against everything, and they did it because they had good leadership and good organization. Maybe with good leadership and good organization, we can win too. ■

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reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 601, 27 May 1994

# Defend Lansing Anti-Fascists!

Hundreds of anti-fascists are herded into fenced-in enclosures, stripped of their personal belongings and then set upon by an army of black-booted, uniformed thugs. Germany, 1933? No, it's the American Midwest in 1994.

On April 23 in Lansing, Michigan, more than 500 cops in riot gear unleashed a violent assault on anti-fascist militants protesting a Klan recruitment rally. As a score of KKK scum waved Confederate flags on the steps of the state Capitol, the police prepared a trap for the 800 counterdemonstrators. Anti-racists seeking to protest the Klan were herded through two metal detectors into a chain-link pen surrounded by the cops. "Snipers positioned themselves on downtown rooftops while 18 mounted deputies patrolled the area," according to the *State News* (25 April), the student newspaper at Michigan State University. Cops maced anti-fascist protesters *inside the pen*.

After escorting the white-supremacists away under heavy police protection, the cops went after the anti-Klan demonstrators with a vengeance. Volleys of CS tear gas were shot off "to hurry the crowd's departure," in the words of a police department spokesman. Those who didn't run fast enough were attacked by cops wielding nightsticks and riot shields. The police arrested anyone they got their hands on. "Cops placed automatic rifles in their backs while they searched the demonstrators. Rows of police carried out sweeping maneuvers of streets and plazas. In one case a police line racked shells into their pump shot-guns" (*Workers World Service*, 9 May).

Eight anti-fascists were arrested. One victim of this cop riot faces a trumped-up felony charge of "assault with intent to inflict great bodily harm." We demand: *Drop all charges against the anti-Klan demonstrators!*

The Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee have consistently warned anti-fascist protesters that *police pens are a deadly trap!* These pens are the new, preferred method of anti-fascist "crowd control" by police agencies across the Midwest. Anyone who enters these traps is searched and stripped of any possible means of self-defense. At a demonstration against the Klan in Dayton, Ohio on March 19, cops confiscated

## Police Pens Are a Trap



Darrell Taunt

**Lansing, Michigan, April 23—Cops herded hundreds of anti-Klan protesters into chain-link pen. They maced the trapped crowd and arrested eight protesters, one of whom faces a trumped-up felony charge of "assault."**

not only weapons but cameras, cellular phones, hair picks, jewelry, and excluded people wearing steel-tipped boots. Anti-racist youth who go into these pens are completely at the mercy of the racist cops, with their guns, their gas, their nightsticks and their horses.

The police, armed defenders of the racist profit system, are interpenetrated with fascist groups like the KKK, capitalism's extralegal dogs of race war. When a handful of KKKers blew away five anti-Klan demonstrators in broad daylight in Greensboro, North Carolina in November 1979, the killers were aided by the capitalist state: an FBI agent led them to the site, an agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) gave them firearms training, the local cops "disappeared" just in time for the massacre—and the courts let the fascist murderers go free! For anti-Klan demonstrators to place their fate in the hands of such forces is suicidal.

In the new "copspeak," police pens are called "public observation areas"

where anti-fascists are permitted to bear impotent moral witness of the deadly Ku Klux Klan and Nazi scum. These pens are a law-and-order "success" only because *anti-racist demonstrators voluntarily enter them*. Here the cops are getting invaluable assistance from an array of "left" groups that herd their supporters into these traps to "protest" the Klan under the thumb of the cops. To ensure that a KKK rally could proceed unimpeded on May 7 in Springfield, Illinois, the state built a costly, high-tech fence over the Capitol grounds, complete with airport-style metal detectors at the cop-controlled points of entrance and egress. Pathetically, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) requested permission to enter the cops' pen *hours before the Klan arrived!*

Among the ISO's "pen pals" are the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and its front group, the National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition (NWROC). Back in March, NWROC members who hesitated entering the

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Dayton pen were quickly shepherded in by RWL leaders. Like the reformist ISO, the RWL pushes the fraud that shouting at Klansmen while under the thumb of the cops equals militancy because *they have no real strategy to stop the KKK*.

Playing at "struggle" inside cop pens does nothing to combat the growing fascist threat. In *wilfully* submitting to the forces of the racist capitalist state and in displaying their weakness before the fascists and their police escorts, these pseudo-socialists show that their "anti-fascist" strategy is nothing but impotent moralism and ultimate faith in the *capitalist state* to "arbitrate" and "regulate" the struggle between these opposing forces. The ISO and RWL *posture* to the left, but in practice their actions are no better than the reformist Communist Party's appeals to the government to "ban" the Klan—all of them rely on and foster illusions in the nonexistent "benevolence" of the bourgeois state and its bodies of armed men, the racist cops.

Refuting this class treachery, the American Trotskyists in the 1930s argued:

"...the best of the workers must be organized into Workers Defense Guards, prepared and trained to smash the fascist gangs. There is no other way. The fascist gangs do not believe in abiding by the results of the ballot-box, or by any other peaceful procedure. On the contrary, the fascists plan to come to power by physical violence against the labor movement and anti-fascists generally. To appeal to 'democracy' against the fascists is like trying to stop bullets with the biblical edict 'Thou Shalt Not Kill'."

—*Socialist Appeal*,  
14 March 1939

Two weeks earlier, the Trotskyists' initiative brought out 50,000 anti-fascists in New York City, who besieged a fascist rally in Madison Square Garden.

This is the program that has guided the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee in our *successful* mass labor/black mobilizations to stop the fascists. From Detroit in 1979 to

Philadelphia in 1988, our focus on mobilizing the power of labor as an independent political force enabled us to build united-front actions, bringing together all intended victims of the fascist scum to defeat the racist terrorists and defend themselves based on the social power of the working class.

Notably, the one recent anti-fascist protest in the Midwest that did not allow itself to be herded into a police pen like lambs to a slaughter was the labor/black mobilization against the KKK initiated by the PDC in Springfield, Illinois on January 16. With the entire force of the state of Illinois arrayed against us, we were unable to stop the KKK from rallying. But a mass and defiant show of opposition to them was organized—

under the protection of trade-union defense guards—and it was the Klan that slunk out of town with their heads down that day. Our *labor-centered mobilization*—and fight against every attempt by the state to push the overwhelmingly black, anti-fascist protesters back—meant that there was no pen in Springfield. While the RWL/NWROC and the ISO refused to join this mobilization, they demonstrated that day under the more favorable conditions won by the labor/black mobilization.

The crass opportunism toward the capitalist state of groups like the RWL and ISO is an expression of their profound petty-bourgeois despair in the revolutionary capacity of the working class. Herding anti-fascist fighters into police pens objectively helps the capitalist state set such young radicals and other anti-fascist fighters up for defeat. Those who are interested in building a working-class party that can win against the fascists and the capitalists they serve should contact the Spartacus Youth Club and learn how to put revolutionary strategy into action.

**We urge our readers to send donations for the defense of the victims of the police attack in Lansing on April 23 to: Lansing Anti-Klan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 6746, East Lansing, MI 48826. ■**

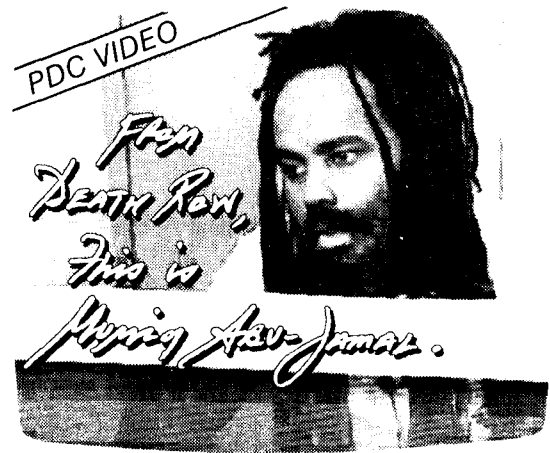
## You Can Help Save Jamal!

**Join the campaign to save Jamal! Organize protest! Bring the force of labor, minorities, death penalty abolitionists, human rights organizations into the struggle to save his life. Pass motions in your unions, campus, church and community organizations. Publicize his case in your union or organization's newsletter.**

**The name of Mumia Abu-Jamal is today the rallying cry in the fight against the racist and barbaric death penalty.**

#### Materials available from the PDC:

- PDC 25-minute video, "From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal." Features excerpts of an interview with Jamal from death row. \$30 (including postage and handling).
- Four issues of *CSDN* are available with extensive coverage of the campaign to save Jamal (see ad page 26).
- Posters, leaflets and petitions.



For more information contact the PDC. Send your contributions for the campaign to the PDC at P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013.



reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 603, 8 July 1994

## Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

# Mobilize to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!



Jennifer Beach

"Mumia is somebody that we need desperately. At a time like this, we cannot afford to let them take such a voice from us without putting up a struggle of gigantic proportions."

With these words, veteran actor and civil rights fighter Ossie Davis kicked off a speak-out for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal on June 3 in New York City. Over 250 unionists, students, community activists and socialists filled the Ethical Culture Society's auditorium to break National Public Radio's ban on award-winning journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, known as the "voice of the voiceless" for his powerful commentary championing the cause of the oppressed. Davis was speaking on behalf of the Com-

mittee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, which sponsored and organized the rally, along with the Partisan Defense Committee, to protest NPR's May 15 cancellation of a series of commentaries by Jamal, the former Black Panther Party member and MOVE supporter who has been targeted for death by the Philadelphia police.

Jamal's commentaries were to have been aired on the prestigious *All Things Considered* show, but NPR caved in and canceled under pressure from the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) and other reactionary forces. They want to silence Jamal to make it easier to kill him. The NPR controversy put a national spotlight on Jamal's case and the fight

against racist legal lynchings. Senate Republican leader Robert Dole railed on the Senate floor against NPR's plans to air Jamal's commentaries and threatened to cut off their federal funding. The "message" Dole so opposes is that of an articulate, compassionate black man describing the horrors of this barbaric system of injustice, where 2,800 people wait on death row.

NPR's cancellation of Jamal's broadcasts in response to a sinister cop campaign makes breaking the ban "a life-and-death issue of free speech." In the last few years, the American assembly line of death has vastly speeded up. Jamal's case is what the death penalty



WV Photo

At New York speakout, Judge Bruce Wright, WBAI's Bernard White and actor Ossie Davis read from works by Mumia Abu-Jamal, censored by National Public Radio. Other speakers included: Jamal's lead counsel, Leonard I. Weinglass, Elombe Brath, Paul Cooperstein of the PDC and Mumia's wife, Wadiya. In addition to those listed in the article, greetings were sent by trade union officials Jacob Ecclestone and Ray Martinez.

in America is all about, the attempt to terrorize the minority population, part and parcel of the extralegal terror of the KKK and summary executions by the cops on the streets. Our fight for the abolition of the death penalty and to free Mumia Abu-Jamal is an inseparable part of our struggle for black equality in a socialist America.

The June 3 speak-out attracted a diverse audience and featured a wide array of presentations centered on Jamal's words portraying his own life. The highlight of the evening was a dramatic reading from Jamal's commentaries by Ossie Davis; Judge Bruce Wright, author of *Black Robes, White Justice*; and Bernard White of WBAI radio. On stage, their alternating voices imparted Jamal's searing portrayal of black life on death row.

Michael G. Haskins of WBAI radio also read powerfully from Jamal's writings. A videotaped statement was sent by actor Mike Farrell, co-chairman of the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal. Other speakers included Fred Horstmann, administrator of the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Dr. Alan Berkman, a former political prisoner who served eight years in the frame-up "Resistance Conspiracy" case. James Frazier, a black NYC transit worker who was shot by the police and is now fighting frame-up charges, also spoke.

Greetings were read to the rally from actor Ed Asner, adviser to the Committee. Amnesty International released a state-



WV Photo

### Wadiya Abu-Jamal, wife of Mumia.

ment saying it is working against Jamal's execution, and noting: "The National Conference of Black Lawyers and the ACLU have pointed out that Mumia's political views are his right to hold."

### The Philadelphia Story

For over 25 years Jamal has been in the cross hairs of the Philadelphia police and their unbridled racist state terror. As seen in the PDC video *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*, Jamal was among the journalists covering Mayor Frank Rizzo's 8 August 1978 press

conference following the siege of the Powelton Village MOVE home by hundreds of heavily armed cops. Rizzo blamed the "new breed of journalism" for the death of one cop during the police assault and threatened, "They believe what you write, what you say. And it's got to stop. And one day, and I hope it's in my career, that you're going to have to be held responsible and accountable for what you do." Three years later, Jamal was shot in the chest and railroaded to death row.

Capital punishment is front and center in American politics this election year. Talk show host Phil Donahue wants to broadcast a live execution. Racist TV/radio "shock jock" Howard Stern is running for governor of New York for the express purpose of bringing the death penalty back to the Empire State. Feeding off the crime hysteria drummed up in Washington and the media, Democrats and Republicans have found a common theme: "Kill 'em all and let god sort 'em out."

The urgency of the speak-out for Jamal was magnified the following week when the Pennsylvania House of Representatives voted to override Governor Casey's veto of a bill ordering executions. An ACLU official stated that if the bill were to go into effect, "nearly 100 executions would be scheduled in Pennsylvania over the next six months." The bill's sponsor, Rep. Michael McGeehan, said of Jamal that he was "specifically interested in this case. We're going to see him die." On June 14 the state Senate fell two votes short of an override. But Casey has already signed more death warrants than the four previous governors combined. With Pennsylvania's gubernatorial race heating up this year, the FOP is pushing to make the legal murder of Mumia Abu-Jamal a key issue, bombarding the media with demands for his immediate execution.

Phone calls protesting NPR's censorship should be directed to Vice President Bill Buzenberg or Marty Morgan at (800) 235-1212, or fax to (202) 414-3045. If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM 8335, 1100 Pike Street, Huntingdon, PA 16652-1112.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, of the voice of the voiceless that the police want to silence, can and must become the focus of the fight against the racist death penalty. Raise *your* voice and *organize*, in your unions, community, youth and church groups, to demand that Jamal must not die. Join the campaign! Save Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the death penalty! ■

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### CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

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November 1990



### Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!



Partisan Defense Committee rally in New York City - support of Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die

## Worldwide Campaign to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal

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In his powerful taped message of greetings to a New York City rally to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal organized by the Partisan Defense Committee last October, Jamal said, "I speak from one of the largest and fastest-growing black communities in central Pennsylvania—death row.... There's never a 'good' time to be on death row, but the present must be one of the worst. In the midst of a Democratic administration, born in the blood of executions and bent on out-Republicanizing the Republicans, this is truly an *era* of death."

Jamal's columns, frequently printed in *Workers Vanguard* and other publications across the country, passionately and ar-

ticularly give voice to the desperate pain of millions—from the 2,800 others on death row to the homeless huddled over subway gratings for a hint of warmth. His biting analysis reveals a brilliant mind struggling to fight injustice behind and beyond prison walls: "War in Babylon," a scathing indictment of the U.S. in the gulf war; "Outrage in Rostock," the rise of fascism in Europe; "Government of the rich knows no homelessness," "Winter of Discontent" and "Human Waste Camps," bitter observations of homelessness in the U.S.

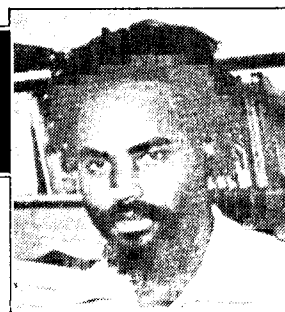
The column printed here exposes the truth behind the "war on drugs": it is a government racket to justify massive cop

invasion of the inner-city ghettos and barrios, criminalize the activities of millions of victims of this oppressive and racist system, and further increase the government's power to ride roughshod over all our rights.

The fight to save Jamal is reaching a critical stage; he has exhausted his automatic appeals and could, under law, be executed at any moment. To get involved in the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the death penalty, contact the Partisan Defense Committee (see box on page 24). If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, 1100 Pike St., Huntingdon, PA 16652-1112.

## From Death Row, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal

# State of Seizure



Here is a brief quiz of sorts; between the amount of property stolen by burglars in the U.S., and the amount taken (called "confiscated" in legal jargon) by the U.S. federal government from the American people, which would you think is the largest amount?

With news reports blaring hourly of the wave of crimes washing over the nation, wouldn't one think there would be an outcry against whichever one was the greater?

Consider this: In 1992, an estimated \$3.8 billion was stolen by burglars in the U.S.; private property and monies amounting to \$4.1 billion was "confiscated" from U.S. citizens by the federal government as part of their drug forfeiture program.

People from all walks of life have had the misfortune of having their goods seized by their government, only to never see their stuff again.

Consider these real-life cases:

U.S. Army Col. Melvin Hanberg (Ret.) owned and rented houses in California. One of his tenants was a drug dealer, so the government seized his rental properties.

Charter pilot Billy Munnery had his Learjet seized by the government when it was learned one of his passengers was a convicted cocaine dealer (unbeknownst to him) with \$3 million cash in his luggage.

Nashville landscaper Willie Jones, on a trip to Houston to purchase new seed stock, violated the state's unwritten rules by paying for his roundtrip ticket in cash. This act, coupled with his blackness, placed him in perfect fit for the so-called "drug carrier profile."

Once tagged, he was stopped, searched, and \$9,600—money he was going to use to re-stock his business—was seized, confiscated, taken—stolen. No drugs, of any

kind, were found.

These 3 cases could be multiplied by the tens of thousands, where the property and profits of the people are plundered by "their" government, in the name of a "War on Drugs."

As the government has failed to even make a dent in America's humongous drug intake, it has, in frustration, embarked on an insidious, dirty war on the people's few remaining civil liberties, feeding and fueling itself on the people's wealth, via a "tax" that takes all, once they are labeled "suspect."

For so long, average, everyday, law-abiding Americans have either silently sat by or quietly ignored the bogus "War on Drugs" that was a War on Blacks in actuality, while police rode roughshod over people's rights, and while courts, too, looked the other way.

Now people of means are tasting the bitterness of injustice, where the state strips them of their rights to property, of association, of the means to conduct lawful commerce, of the fundamental right to be free from unlawful search or seizure of their persons and property, all with the blessings of a right-wing, Tory judiciary, who grant the state any license, in the name of the "War on Drugs."

Each of the three people named here are among the "law-abiding Americans," whose lives and businesses are forever transformed, because of a "policy" of forfeiture that is but a hair's breadth away from robbery.

Now the government is hungry, and like a junkie, needs your money to feed its fix.

Your government at work.

5 November 1993

# Protest Jim Crow Racism at Denny's

## FACT SHEET

In 1960, the sit-ins at Woolworth's segregated lunch counters symbolized the growing movement against Jim Crow racism in America. Three decades later, Denny's restaurant chain has become synonymous with the rampant racist discrimination that persists despite formal civil rights. On July 3, the Labor Black Leagues and the Spartacist League will picket Denny's restaurants around the country to demand "Down with Jim Crow at Denny's!" and to demand "equal treatment, good service, and food for *all!*"

In the 1980s, Denny's rapidly expanded, including by buying up a large number of "Sambo's" restaurants—a chain whose name alone was a racist provocation to black America. Headquartered in Spartanburg, South Carolina—in the heart of the old slaveholding Confederacy—Denny's parent company, "Flagstar" (formerly "TW Services") controls more than 1,400 Denny's restaurants which are concentrated on major

highways and freeway exits and open 24 hours a day. These restaurants are supposed to be public service facilities, but Denny's racist management wants to keep black people "in their place."

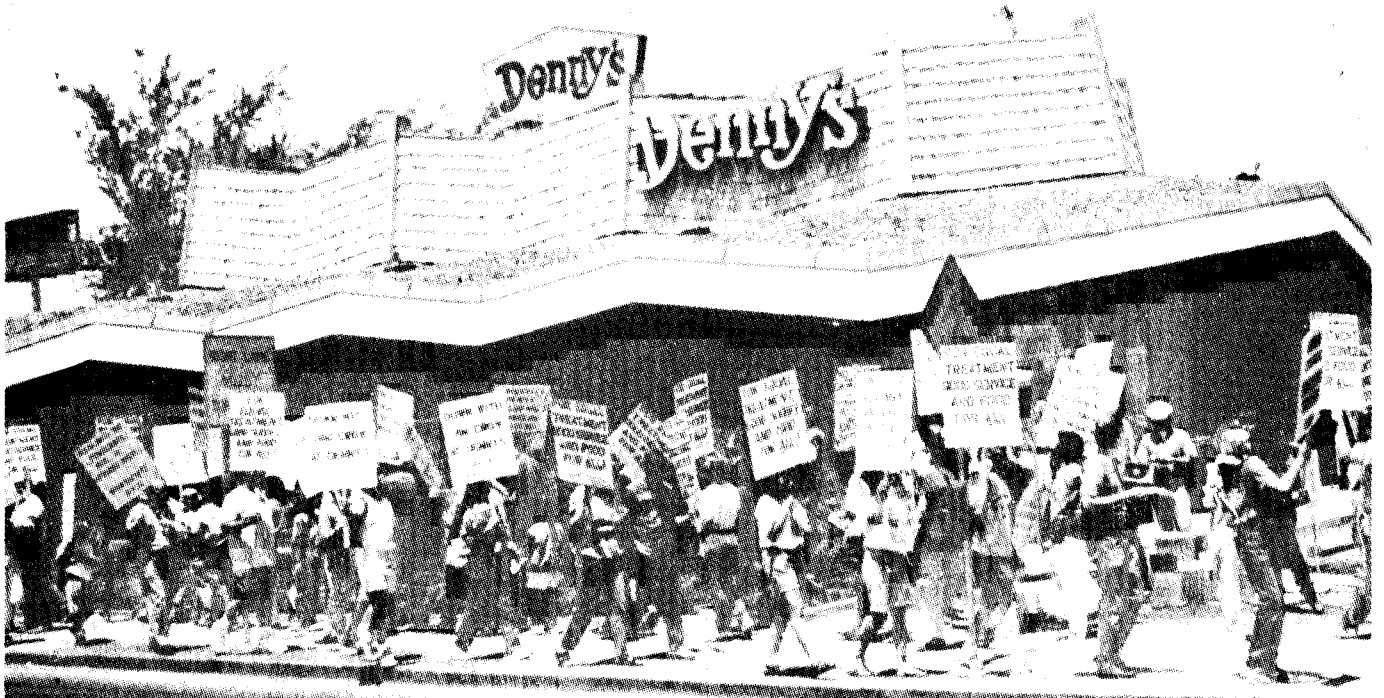
Despite Denny's PR campaign denying discrimination, the incidents keep mounting in this coast-to-coast chain of racism.

• **Racist "pre-pay" policy:** Denny's randomly slaps minorities—black youth in particular—with a "pre-pay" policy which is calculated to drive them away. In a class-action lawsuit against Denny's in California, more than 20 black customers signed affidavits testifying that they were not seated and were denied service unless they agreed to pay a "cover charge" and pre-pay for their meals in full! White teenagers were served at the same restaurant at the same times and were not asked to pre-pay for their meals or assessed a "cover charge." Denise Perryman, a waitress at Denny's

in Champaign, Illinois, told management that she objected to the restaurant's policy of pre-payment for black and Hispanic patrons and she refused to discriminate against her customers. Denise Perryman was fired.

• **Police harassment of black customers:** Meling Harrison, Catrena Law and Navjot Nijjar (two black Americans and an East Indian woman), were eating at a Denny's in San Jose, California. The restaurant manager screeched, "there are too many of you here!" Police arrived and were escorted through the restaurant by the manager who directed the cops to eject black patrons, including the Harrison party. The cops forced this group out of the restaurant—and insisted they pay for the meals they weren't even permitted to eat!

• **No happy birthdays for black children:** Denny's advertises complimentary birthday meals. But 13-year-old Rachel Thompson got nothing but humiliation



Emeryville, California, July 3: One of six locations around the country where Labor Black Leagues and Spartacist League initiated demonstrations which brought out hundreds to protest Jim Crow discrimination at Denny's.

WV Photo



Picket line at Woodbridge, Virginia (left). Chicago (right): Transit workers, students join the line. Democratic rights are indivisible—the fight against the open shop and the lynch rope go hand in hand.

on her birthday on 11 December 1991. The restaurant was almost empty, yet Rachel and her family were made to wait an inordinate time before anyone would even take their order. Despite presentation of a baptismal certificate which verified Rachel's date of birth, she was denied Denny's advertised birthday meal.

- **Racist "blackout" policy:** A former manager of a Northern California Denny's restaurant has acknowledged that during weekly district meetings the term "blackout" was used to describe the scene when "too many" black customers were in any particular restaurant. Denny's district managers instructed store managers to "start cracking down and get rid of some of those blackouts."

- **The "back of the bus" treatment:** Across the country, black people have been made to stand and wait and denied service while white customers who arrive after them are promptly seated and courteously served. A recent case in Annapolis, Maryland involved six black Secret Service agents who were denied service on April 1, the very day that Denny's signed a consent decree with the Justice Department promising an end to their now infamous pattern of discrimination. On May 29 the black agents filed a lawsuit against Denny's for blatant racism.

- **The "stay on your bus" treatment:** Also after Denny's reached agreement

with the U.S. Justice Department, 125 black schoolchildren in the Martin Luther King Children's Choir were refused entry at Denny's in Woodbridge, Virginia. The manager told them he had no room for them and directed them to another Denny's 40 miles down the highway. By the time the busloads of children arrived there, the manager was waiting for them in the parking lot insisting his restaurant had "no room" for the black children either.

- **Lousy food, dirty dishes:** Across the country black customers have been forced to pay extra for food—like dinner rolls—that are included in the price of the meal for whites. Black customers have testified that they were served inedible food on dirty and broken dishes while white customers at nearby tables were clearly given better food and service. An affidavit by a former Denny's employee attests to the fact that his manager would respond to customer complaints of bad food and service depending on race.

- **Anti-Hispanic prejudice:** Six Hispanic college students were refused service at a Santa Cruz, California Denny's on June 14. After waiting for over one-and-a-half hours for service, the group of youths finally walked out.

- **Anti-gay bigotry:** In May, in Kansas City, Missouri, a gay men's support group went out to eat at Denny's. The restaurant manager proclaimed, "we

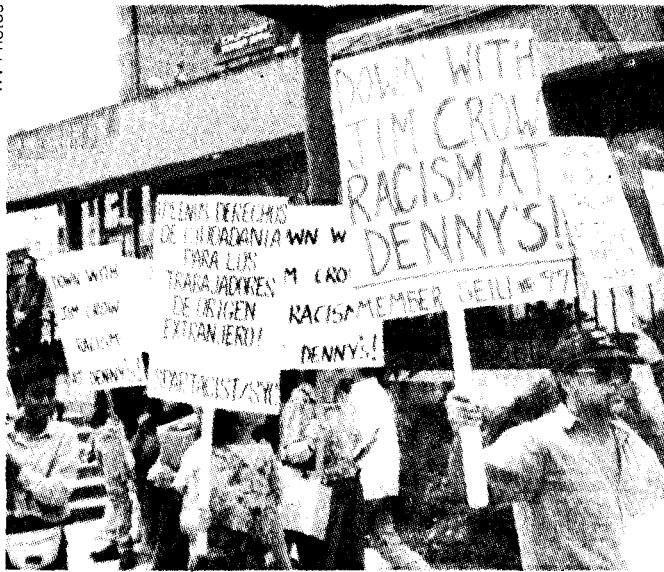
don't serve your kind of people here."

- **Denny's threatens customers who demand equal service:** Anthony C. Johnson, a deputy sheriff in Raleigh, North Carolina was denied service at Denny's, even as he and his wife kept their hands raised to get attention from a waitress who ignored them while serving others. Mr. Johnson and his wife are black, the other customers were white. After receiving several complaints by phone and in writing, TW Services sent Mr. Johnson two checks for \$3.00! When Mr. Johnson phoned back to say that Denny's had "a race problem" he was told that if he contacted a lawyer or sued Denny's he would be "opening a can of worms" that he would regret and he "would be in for a surprise."

- **Denny's discriminates against employees too:** Five former and current employees of a Denny's located in North Randall, Ohio (Cleveland) filed a lawsuit on June 15 against Denny's for racist discrimination. This former "Sambo's" restaurant was called a "zoo" by Denny's, Inc. because of the large black clientele and workforce. The restaurant's black manager (the only black manager of the 14 Denny's in the Cleveland area) was driven out. The new white managers referred to black women workers as "wenches" and black men as "boys." Employees who complained of this systematic racist abuse were fired or had their work hours drastically reduced.

WV Photos

**Los Angeles:**  
After spirited  
demo, protesters  
assert right to  
equal treatment,  
good service at  
public facilities.



Management prevented a black waitress they had fired from gaining new employment by spreading a lie that she had been fired for stealing.

• **White supremacy and union-busting:** Denny's bought out a former "Big Boy" restaurant in Winchester, Virginia last November just as employees were in the midst of a union organizing drive. A Jewish woman active in the organizing drive was subjected to relentless anti-Semitic abuse by management. One day she arrived at work to find a huge swastika posted on the front of the restaurant. Despite complaints, the managers left it hanging for six days! When the conversion from "Big Boy" to Denny's was completed, workers who supported the union organizing drive were fired. The racist, anti-Semitic managers were kept on by Denny's.

Jim Crow racism and union-busting go hand in hand. All of Denny's restaurants are *non-union*. In the South, the "open shop" has been a key prop to maintaining a whole system of racist discrimination and Klan terror. The strength of the labor movement lies in the unity of

the multiracial working class against the racist bosses. The union movement has been saddled with a leadership that refuses to fight for black rights just as it seeks "labor peace" with the capitalists and their government. A class-struggle leadership must be forged in the union movement to organize the South by fighting against black oppression, understanding the common class interest of all workers.

• **The NAACP has made a "Fair Share" agreement with Denny's:** Denny's CEO Jerome Richardson struck a deal with the NAACP to chill out protest and negative publicity in exchange for a few more black faces in high places. According to *Business Week* (28 June) this deal would include putting a token black onto Denny's all-white board of directors, boost purchases from minority-owned suppliers, and sell more franchises to blacks.

But there is no "fair share" for blacks under capitalism. We can't buy black freedom in the marketplace, whose rules are laid down by the racist capitalists who have the power and have no inten-

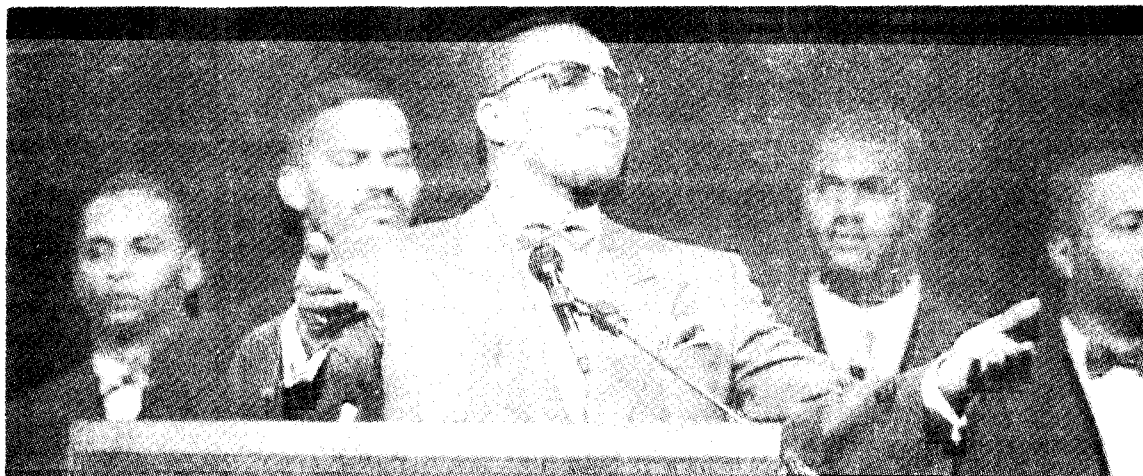
tion of giving it up. Racial oppression permeates capitalist society and is built into its every institution: the job market, schools, military, courts, media. For the mass of the black population to escape poverty and oppression, the multiracial working class must fight for power and rewrite the rulebook.

• **You can't get justice through the "Justice" Department:** The government is the *bosses'* government. The Rodney King beating and whitewash trial proved that there is no justice in racist America. The whole legal system is based on subjugating the black population in order to protect the interests of the racist ruling class. U.S. attorney general Janet Reno put law enforcement on full-scale alert as a warning to minorities and youth during the second trial of the cops who beat Rodney King. Then she ordered the holocaust in Waco that incinerated 86 people from an integrated religious sect. The Justice Department's FBI has been implicated in every infamous crime that has become synonymous with racist KKK terror—from the 1963 Birmingham, Alabama bombing that killed four little girls in Sunday school to the 1979 Greensboro massacre of five leftists and labor organizers.

A generation after the lunch counter sit-ins, racist attacks are on the rise again. The liberal civil rights movement had no answer for the economic oppression of black people and institutionalized racism of America's ghettos and barrios. Mass struggle forced an end to *de jure* segregation and the Jim Crow laws of the South. But no new civil rights law can redress the *de facto* segregation and exploitation inherent in the racist capitalist system. Racial inequality—by every index from infant mortality to income—is growing. The mass of black youth are viewed as a "surplus" population that this government doesn't even want to educate because it has no jobs to offer them. That's why prisons are the "growth industry" of this sick society.

To defeat the race-haters and union-busters, we need mass struggle led by a party with a revolutionary program linking the ghettos and barrios to the social power of the multiracial working class in the factories. The bosses have their party—the property party—which has two wings: Democrat and Republican. Working people and minorities need their own party, a revolutionary workers party that will fight for a socialist egalitarian society where Jim Crow racism and the pain and suffering that's "business as usual" in American life is a thing of the past. *Black liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

## Anti-Semitic Bigot and Preacher of Black Capitalism



Cummins/Newsday

# Farrakhan Is Bad News for Black People

When the nightriders and cross-burners of the Ku Klux Klan staged racist provocations against Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday in eight state capitols last January, the Partisan Defense Committee and Spartacist League went into action to mobilize the power of the labor movement and blacks to stop the KKK in Springfield, Illinois. Despite the combined forces of the capitalist state, some 500 people, primarily blacks and unionists, braved arctic weather and turned out to stop the Klan/Nazis. The cops and courts, state authorities and various federal agencies went all out to protect the KKK as they spewed their racist filth. Speaking on the steps of the state capitol, a Klan leader denounced racial integration...and praised Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, as a "real leader for the Black man" (*Chicago Defender*, 17 January).

In recent months, the media has been filled with a barrage of articles denouncing the Nation of Islam (NOI), particularly focusing on the grotesque anti-Semitic ravings of Farrakhan spokesman Khallid Abdul Muhammad in a speech last November 29 at New Jersey's Kean College. In the halls of Congress, the parliament of the U.S. ruling class, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly (with some opposition

and abstentions from the Congressional Black Caucus) and the Senate unanimously for special resolutions condemning Khallid's speech, and the New Jersey State Assembly went into special session to denounce him. Among the racist critics were Senator Jesse Helms, who denounces affirmative action for black people as sucking the blood of whites, and Senator Al D'Amato, who referred to the minority poor of New York City as "animals."

The blatantly hypocritical attacks by America's racist rulers on the Nation of Islam don't stop with words. In January, New York City police, given a green light by newly elected mayor Giuliani, launched an assault on Harlem's NOI Temple No. 7-A (see "NYC Cop Vendetta Against Black Muslims," *WV* No. 592, 21 January). More recently, on April 30, Canadian immigration authorities used their "hate crime" laws to ban Khallid Muhammad from visiting Toronto to speak before a black student group. We oppose all such bans on free speech, whether they are imposed directly by the racist capitalist state or through college administrations.

Make no mistake, the anti-Semitic ravings of Khallid and his ilk are poison, adding to the climate of bigotry and reaction whipped up by the Rush Limbaughs

and other right-wing zealots who spew their filth from the airwaves daily. And in this racist country, blacks will be the main victims. The struggle for black liberation requires politically combatting ominous demagogues like Khallid and Farrakhan and exposing them as the *tools of white racist reaction* that they are. The NOI leader literally yearns for a return to Jim Crow segregation. For all his rhetoric about "power," Farrakhan seeks to carve out a profitable niche for black capitalism in exploiting the ghetto market. He peddles his services to the bourgeoisie to head off class consciousness across racial lines and as a guarantor to keep the black masses down.

It is a measure of the extreme crisis of black leadership, reflecting the isolation of the oppressed black population, that such figures are getting a hearing beyond the narrow limits of the Nation of Islam. Farrakhan has drawn thousands of participants to "black men only" rallies in several cities. Many black youth are attracted to his "in your face" denunciations of the white establishment, seeing him as a black leader who confronts the white power structure. In particular, Farrakhan appeals to many black university students who find their hopes for advancement frustrated as the openings for the black middle class—

which was greatly expanded during the 1970s as the government promoted a "talented tenth" as a buffer against black unrest—slam shut in their faces.

But as the praise from the Illinois Klansman underlines, Louis Farrakhan is in league with some of the most reactionary forces in this country. Farrakhan is praised by fascists, he colludes with them, accepts money from them: in 1985, he invited California Klan leader Tom Metzger to an NOI rally in L.A. and received a \$100 donation from this racist terrorist. Farrakhan's real appetites are to be a power broker in and around the Democratic Party: he not only campaigned for Jesse Jackson but even praised yuppie racist Clinton's plan to "end welfare as we know it." Lately, Farrakhan has promoted himself as a *cop* for this racist ruling class against impoverished black youth, joining in the chorus blaming them for ghetto crime.

Farrakhan's message to the capitalists is that the dreadful conditions being imposed on the black population can be more efficiently (and cheaply) enforced by the NOI than by the despised cops and discredited politicians. Farrakhan writes that if the NOI were given "unhindered" reign, "we could effect a change in the lifestyle of our people that would allow us to do more with less wages." He even proposed to America's rulers that "helping us to make a new beginning on the continent of Africa, first with the inmate population"—i.e., to set up a *penal colony* run by the NOI—would be a good way to get rid of many of the black "permanent underclass." This would, he claimed, "gain for America a strong foothold on that strategically important continent" (Louis Farrakhan, *A Torchlight for America* [1993]). In support of this cynical plan, Farrakhan cited Australia, where penal colonies of



Muhammad/NY Times

**Louis Farrakhan aspires to be capitalist exploiter of black working people. Nation of Islam rent-a-cops police housing projects on behalf of racist rulers.**

Europeans grew into a modern nation (after murdering the Aboriginal population or driving them from their land).

Farrakhan's appetite to crack the whip over the ghetto population is shown in his government contracts to police public housing. The NOI used its "Fruit of Islam" security squads in 1988 when it began patrolling Mayfair Mansions and another apartment complex in Washington, D.C. The "NOI Security Agency" then won contracts to guard federally subsidized apartment complexes in Pittsburgh in 1991, in Philadelphia and Los Angeles in 1992, and in Chicago and Baltimore in 1993. The latter two contracts are still in operation, with the Baltimore contract alone expected to bring in \$2.8 million. The NOI is part of a joint venture in Chicago currently negotiating a \$5 million contract to guard another project on Chicago's West Side. Farrakhan has also contracted to provide low-cost security for such companies as Federal Express and the Ramada Renaissance Hotel in Washington.

We warn: repression of black youth by NOI rent-a-cops serves the racist rulers no less than that carried out by white (and black) official cops. Remember, *Louis Farrakhan is the man who declared that courageous black militant leader Malcolm X was "worthy of death."*

### **ADL Zionists: Bad for Blacks, Bad for Jews**

So why the furor from the racist powers that be against Farrakhan, and why now? The Nation of Islam has been purveying anti-Semitic filth for years. But of late, Farrakhan & Co. have made a big push to go "respectable"—and they have been getting some response. Last September, Maryland Democratic Representative Kweisi Mfume, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, announced a "sacred covenant" with the NOI to support the "war on drugs" and fight "black-on-black crime." It was this official acceptance by mainstream black Democrats that lay behind the frenzied outcry against Farrakhan in the bourgeois media.

The publication of Khallid's speech provoked a cynical uproar by the racist bourgeoisie. It is truly obscene to see the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant rulers of this country delivering pious lectures against racism.

Running point for these big-time racists were the Zionists of the "Anti"-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith. The outcry over Khallid's speech surged following publication of excerpts in a full-page ad in the *New York Times* last January by the ADL. But while they are perennially up in arms against *black* anti-Semites like Farrakhan, the Zionists work hand in glove not only with America's racist rulers but even with ultrarightist Christian fundamentalist Moral Majority bigots. For years the



**Clinton's racist tirades against "black-on-black" crime in 1993 Memphis speech are echoed by Farrakhan's Nation of Islam.**



ADL ran a massive spy operation in collaboration with local police, the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, targeting leftists, Arab Americans and anti-apartheid militants and passing the information on to Israel and South Africa. The Zionists feel right at home with their apartheid allies, whose treatment of the black masses parallels Israel's murderous repression of the Palestinian Arabs. It doesn't bother the ADL that their Afrikaner partners openly supported Hitler as he was carrying out the Holocaust against Europe's Jews.

Indeed, these self-described spokesmen for the Jewish people have a long and sordid history of *working against* militant struggle against anti-Semitism, from opposing mass protests in the U.S. against Hitler's *Kristallnacht* pogrom in 1938 to denouncing anti-fascist mobilizations today. When 2,500 Jews, many of them Holocaust survivors, took to the streets of Evanston, Illinois in 1980 to sweep away a gang of Nazis, the ADL opposed this defense against a fascist provocation. And when the Partisan Defense Committee initiated a successful anti-KKK/Nazi demonstration in Philadelphia in November 1988, the ADL tried to sabotage it by launching a vicious campaign to defame the anti-fascist forces as "violent." While condemning integrated anti-fascist struggle, the Zionists are whipping up racist hysteria in an effort to produce a police crackdown against blacks, as they have done for the past two years in New York with their incendiary racist propaganda over Crown Heights.

### The Genocidal Logic of Nationalism

Farrakhan and his followers certainly give plenty of ammunition to the Zionists and Congressional bigots. In his despicable racist tirade at Kean College last November, Khallid Muhammad railed against Jews as the "blood suckers of the black nation" who "crucified Jesus in a kangaroo court." He sounded like a Nazi apologist for Adolf Hitler, claiming the Jews brought the Holocaust on themselves: "You see everybody always talk about Hitler exterminating six million Jews. But don't nobody ever ask, 'What did *they* do to Hitler?' They went in there in Germany, the way they do everywhere, and they supplanted, they usurped, and a German in his own country would almost have to go to a Jew to get money." This is an obscene provocation, not only to Jews *but also to black people*, who would have been herded into the Third Reich's gas chambers along with Gypsies, Slavs and others



Francolon/Gamma-Liaison



AP

**Anti-Semitic Farrakhan spokesman Khallid Muhammad (above) earlier worked for Idi Amin (left), bloody dictator of Uganda.**

deemed *Untermenschen* (subhuman) by the Nazis.

In this same speech, Khallid urged black South Africans to kill all whites: "We kill the women. We kill the babies, we kill the blind. We kill the cripples. We kill them all. We kill the faggot. We kill the lesbian.... Kill the old ones too. Goddamn it, if they're in a wheelchair, push them off a cliff in Cape Town.... When you get through killing them all, go to the goddamn graveyard and dig up the grave and kill them a-goddamn-gain because they didn't die hard enough." In his vicious rantings, Khallid takes the reactionary and ultimately genocidal logic of nationalism to a hideous conclusion. Not only are these sick fantasies an assault on elementary humanity, but calls to race war in South Africa, where the racists have the overwhelming preponderance of firepower, would force all whites into the apartheid *laager* and could only lead to a bloody defeat for blacks.

Khallid Muhammad has reportedly emerged as the spokesman for "hard-core" elements in the NOI resisting Farrakhan's turn toward (relative) "respectability." His pronouncements are featured on records by "gangsta rapper" Ice Cube. But it's not just fantasies. Khallid boasts that he once worked for the grisly dictator Idi Amin in the mid-1970s, saying he "was in Kampala, Uganda, ready to kill some white folks" when Farrakhan called him to ask him to rejoin his movement (*New York Newsday*, 28 February). The Nation of Islam leader and his lieutenant vituperate against Jews in this WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) dominated country. In Uganda, Amin launched a murderous pogrom against Asian merchants. Tens

of thousands were driven into emigration, and their businesses were taken over by Amin's cronies. Like boycotts of Korean grocers in American ghettos, this cynical chauvinism is typical of nationalists of an oppressed group who are the would-be exploiters of their "own" people.

Under pressure from the media and politicians, Farrakhan distanced himself from Khallid, calling his statements "repugnant" and "mean-spirited"; at the same time the NOI leader defended the "truths" spoken by his aide. And what were these "truths"? Farrakhan explicitly endorsed Khallid's absurd claim that 75 percent of slaves in the antebellum South were owned by Jews. (In reality, the not very numerous Jews in the South in 1860 owned a tiny fraction of the four million slaves, and only a tiny proportion of the Atlantic slave trade involved Jewish merchants.) Farrakhan cited the NOI's book *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, a pseudo-academic hate-mongering tract which tries to give the impression that Jews dominated the slave trade by stringing together seemingly endless examples of Jewish slavers, lists of ships owned by Jews, etc. This racist trash recalls the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (also occasionally distributed by the NOI), a Russian tsarist forgery used historically to "prove" a worldwide Jewish conspiracy.

Farrakhan's lieutenant Khallid is just a little cruder in presenting the same nationalist poison that Farrakhan has spewed for years. A decade ago, the NOI leader declared "Hitler was a very great man." Farrakhan has claimed he was misquoted. The transcript of the radio address shows that Farrakhan indeed said it, word for word. He also said, "I'm

**Apostles of the myth  
of liberation through  
"black capitalism":  
(from left to right)  
Elijah Muhammad,  
Marcus Garvey,  
Booker T. Washington.**



UPI photos

Historical Pictures Service

not proud of Hitler's evil against Jewish people," and "don't compare me with your wicked killers." But while saying "He wasn't great for me as a black person," Farrakhan added: "he was a great German." Farrakhan recognized in Hitler a fellow nationalist demagogue, and emphasized: "He rose Germany up from nothing. Well, in a sense you could say there's similarity in that we are rising our people up from nothing." If Nazis ever come to power in this country, they would try to do to black people what Hitler did to the Jews: genocide. As we wrote in "The Sinister Farrakhan" (*WV* No. 355, 25 May 1984), "Anyone who calls Hitler 'a great man' should be reviled by every black person."

Khallid Muhammad has gone on to continue his anti-Semitic diatribes in a number of other speeches recently, including at Howard University on April 19 (together with anti-Semitic academic Leonard Jeffries). In his rantings, Khallid said of the demented random slaughter on a New York commuter line last December, that he "loves Colin Ferguson, who killed all those white folks on the Long Island train." Khallid's appearances have thrown Howard into turmoil. Last fall, the student newspaper, *The Hilltop* (19 November 1993) headlined, "Muslim Leader Brings Bold Message to University." While the number of hard-core Farrakhanites on campus is limited, and the rabid anti-Semitism and anti-white rhetoric are not broadly popular, the NOI leader is viewed by a significant part of the student body as someone who gives the finger to the system and who's trying to "uplift the race." On the contrary, if this poison triumphs, it will bring black people down—no one will profit but the purveyors of this filth and the white racists themselves.

The NOI seeks to isolate black youth from the possibility of social strug-

gle by diverting the justified outrage against their dreadful oppression into poisonous bigotry. Pushing the fraud of "black capitalism" as the answer to racism, unemployment and police brutality—all inherent in the capitalist system—these pseudo-nationalists want to have exclusive rights to rip off the black population. That's why, behind talk of "self-pride," they do everything to reinforce a defeatist, pessimistic outlook which accepts—even extols—racial segregation. Farrakhan's reactionary perspective has nothing to do with fighting against the ruling class which holds the real wealth and power in this country. Anti-Semitism is sucker-bait and it lets the racist bourgeoisie off the hook. It is capitalism which forcibly keeps black people at the bottom of a vicious racist system of exploitation and oppression. By seeking to set black people against Jews and other vulnerable groups, the racist demagogues of the NOI are stoking the flames of right-wing reaction whose first targets will be black people.

### **Farrakhan's Reactionary Program for Black Youth**

Today as the U.S. gears up to confront its imperialist competitors in the New World Disorder of trade wars and war on the living standards of poor and working people at home, the liberal Democrats have united with right-wing Republicans to reduce "overhead costs" by slashing the minimal social welfare measures that exist in this country. Intent on cutting the budget deficit fueled by years of Cold War military spending, the ruling class is closing down schools and trying to cut health care costs. The hellish conditions in America's black and Hispanic ghettos are getting more and more inhuman as unemployment, poverty and desperation continue to

grow. The capitalist rulers' "answer" to these conditions is to ax welfare and ban guns in the hands of the people. Particularly since the 1992 Los Angeles upheaval touched off by the racist acquittal of Rodney King's cop tormentors, there is a bipartisan campaign for more arrests, more prisons and more executions to keep the ghetto and barrio poor in line.

Conditions for black youth have gotten much *worse* today than at the time of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. During World War II, millions of blacks migrated from the South to the booming war industries in the North and West. By the '60s increasing numbers were in unionized, relatively well-paying jobs in heavy industry. When millions were thrown out of work in the mid-1970s recession that turned much of the Midwest into a "rust bowl," black workers were hit the hardest. Many became permanently unemployed. Subsequently many U.S. manufacturing operations were shifted to low-wage plants overseas. Since they're not needed as wage slaves, ghetto youth are today considered by the ruling class to be an expendable "surplus" population. The capitalists see no need for them to be educated or—for the most impoverished and desperate—even to be *alive*.

The bourgeoisie has been introducing cost-cutting "reforms" whose effect would be for layers of the minority population to literally *perish*. President Clinton promises to "end welfare as we know it" for *14 million* people—three-quarters of them children—who live on the brink of survival. The most vulnerable are black youth in the inner cities. Meanwhile, the AIDS epidemic and deadly diseases of poverty like TB ravage the people of the ghettos and barrios while the bourgeoisie closes hospitals in



Brent Jones

**NOI leader Louis Farrakhan displays his "empowerment"-for-profit wares: plugging "POWER" line of soap and cosmetics products in the mid-1980s.**

minority communities. And on top of this there is deadly racist repression and regimentation, as Clinton's "anti-crime" bill proposes putting 100,000 more cops on the streets and building ten mammoth regional high-security prisons. The nation's death rows are crammed to capacity, its inmates mostly black and Hispanic. With the dramatic worsening of life in the ghettos, over the decade of the 1980s the death rate for black youth aged 15 to 24 years increased by a staggering 24 percent.

But while the black poor were being ravaged, a dependent layer of black yuppies, fostered by the policies of both capitalist parties, was able to move out of the ghettos—only to confront vicious segregation in the suburbs. Seeing themselves as the social elite of the black community, they are receptive to the fraud of black-owned business and "empowerment" as the "solution" to ghetto poverty. Today, almost half of all black income is earned by only 20 percent of black families, a degree of inequality which is greater than among the white population. (This fact alone explodes the nationalist myth that the fundamental division in society is race and not class.) The children of this black petty bourgeoisie, facing the daily humiliations of enduring racism and desperately conscious that the opportunities which were available to their parents are largely closing up for them, are turning in despair

from the goal of integration and some have provided an audience for Farrakhan's demagoguery.

When Farrakhan talks of gaining "power," he's really trying to get influence with the capitalist politicians, today in the Democratic Party. Farrakhan gained national attention in 1984 when he hustled votes for Jesse Jackson's campaign in the Democratic presidential primaries. When Clinton was elected president, Farrakhan called on him to convene the country's "spiritual leadership to spearhead a moral rejuvenation among the American people." Farrakhan also hailed Clinton's plans for welfare "reform" and called on the president to "galvanize America to make a great sacrifice" and "summon great courage" to "cut federal spending" and "raise taxes across the board" (*A Torchlight for America*).

Farrakhan's program sounds like something dreamed up by the far-right John Birch Society. It reflects petty-bourgeois contempt for the masses of black poor and working people. He joins the chorus calling for a get-tough policy to fight "black-on-black" crime, opposes abortion, calls to "change homosexual behavior," and calls for schools segregated by sex. His attitude toward the rights of women can be seen by the fact that women are excluded from many of his meetings (along with the white "devil"). He holds up Saudi Arabia, where people accused of theft have their hands cut off, as a model of fighting crime. But his current angle is to sell his services as enforcer for the bourgeoisie in the ghettos, policing the black population as the ruling class carries out across-the-board attacks on the minority population.

### **Black Nationalism and Despair**

Farrakhan's growing hearing among black youth is reminiscent, on a smaller scale, of Marcus Garvey's "back to Africa" movement of the 1920s. As with Farrakhan, Garvey's mass appeal was born of despair and social disorganization in a period of rising Klan terror, police repression and racial segregation. In the North, blacks brought into industry during the First World War were kept out of the trade unions by the narrow, racist craft leaders of the AFL and in many places were kicked out of their jobs. Garvey offered a dream of a reactionary black utopia in Africa, but like the NOI ultimately looked to black-owned small businesses, preaching "self-reliance" and black capitalism.

Garvey's basic ideas were taken up by the Nation of Islam, which began in

1930 when Elijah Muhammad was won to the teachings of a Detroit salesman named Wallace Fard, who he said was the incarnation of Allah. But the accommodationism at the heart of this doctrine was made explicit by Farrakhan, who renounced Elijah Muhammad's call for American blacks to be given a separate state or returned to Africa, instead proposing a program to segregate and exploit the black population within this country. In a 1985 speech, Farrakhan declared:

"So Elijah Muhammad advocated separation in a state or territory of our own either here or elsewhere....

"If you say we must return to Africa, what nation in Africa is willing to receive 40 million of us in the condition that we are in? Let's be reasonable....

"America is not willing to give us eight or ten states, or even one state. Let's be reasonable."

—Louis Farrakhan, *Back Where We Belong* (1989)

Instead, Farrakhan launched "People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth" (P.O.W.E.R.) which marketed the ill-fated "Clean 'N Fresh" line of cosmetics. The NOI's "black capitalism" schemes are in the tradition of Booker T. Washington, the apostle of black "emancipation" through self-help and private enterprise. And in the same way that Washington's National Negro Business League was financed by the white Scottish-born multimillionaire Andrew Carnegie, Farrakhan's perspective is premised on the benevolent acquiescence of the white power structure. In fact, *he advertises himself as an alternative to revolution:*

"I say to you, it is in America's best interest to permit us to do this. For right now blacks are becoming increasingly disenfranchised, and we are a social tinderbox. And if black people rise up in an evil manner, we could foment revolution inside this country, and so weaken America that she could not entertain war with her enemies on the outside."

—*Back Where We Belong*

Black people need jobs, housing, schools, health care and a fight to smash all forms of discrimination and oppression. What Farrakhan offers blacks instead is to become cockroach capitalists or their victims.

The idea that a sizable black capitalist class can develop in this profoundly racist society is, in the words of black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, a "social myth" (*Black Bourgeoisie* [1957]). While some black yuppies may dream of growing rich by setting up high-tech companies, and a few minority contractors are kept in business by government set-aside programs, there can never be a sizable black bourgeoisie in this coun-

try. Black-owned businesses account for a mere 1 percent of the country's gross receipts. According to *Black Enterprise*, five out of the top nine black-owned businesses are car dealerships! Systematically denied loans, blacks start fewer businesses than any other ethnic group in the U.S. And if a black-owned company gets large and profitable, it is simply bought out (as happened last summer to the Johnson Products cosmetics company, a leading symbol of black enterprise).

Even at the upper end, the status of middle-class American blacks is permanently threatened. Race, not economic earnings, is the overriding factor that determines where black people can live, what clubs they can join, and whether they can make it home late at night without being harassed (or worse) by the police. While generations of immigrants of various national and ethnic groups were able, at least partially, to dissolve into the "melting pot" and begin to climb the social ladder in the U.S., black people remain forcibly segregated at the bottom. This is the racist legacy of the fact that, while the Civil War destroyed slavery in the U.S., the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the bourgeoisie in the Compromise of 1877. It will take socialist revolution through integrated working-class struggle to finish the Civil War!

**Why the Nation of Islam Wanted to See Malcolm X Dead**

When Farrakhan appeared on Arsenio Hall's TV talk show on February 15,

Hall said his research department had determined that the "question that comes out of the neighborhood most often is 'Who killed Malcolm X?' Since the movie, there are a lot of people who feel, 'Minister Farrakhan had something to do with that.'" Farrakhan replied: "Because of the fact that I wrote an article in the *Muhammad Speaks* saying that Malcolm was 'worthy of death,' and several months later Malcolm was assassinated, the press would like for black people to believe that Farrakhan had something to do with the assassination.... I don't know who murdered Malcolm."

Shortly afterward, Jack Newfield wrote a column in the *New York Post* (1 March) quoting Rev. Charles 37X Kenyatta of Harlem saying that "former Fruit of Islam leader Capt. Yusef Shah (Joseph Gravitt) admitted to him that 'Farrakhan was personally involved in the planning of Malcolm's assassination.'" The NOI filed a lawsuit against the paper and Newfield seeking a \$4.4 billion award for defamation.

Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, has also accused NOI leader Farrakhan of complicity in the assassination of her husband. Shabazz made the accusation on a March 13 WNBC-TV television program in which reporter Gabe Pressman asked her, "Do you think that Louis Farrakhan had anything to do with the death of your husband?" Shabazz replied: "Of course. Yes.... Nobody kept it a secret. It was a badge of honor. Everybody talked about it. Yes."

Pressman also aired an excerpt from

Farrakhan's 1993 "Savior's Day" speech shortly after the release of Spike Lee's film *Malcolm X*, which suggested NOI complicity in the assassination. Farrakhan is seen violently thundering in response to his accusers:

"Did you teach Malcolm? Did you clean up Malcolm? Was Malcolm your traitor, or ours? And if we dealt with him like a nation deals with a traitor, what the hell business is it of yours?"

Previously published excerpts of that speech quote Farrakhan declaring:

"Every prophet had a community of zealots that when you rose up against the prophet the people would rise up and kill you. When you hurt the prophet, the people say, you must die! The Messenger don't have to give no order to kill you. We were already ordered to kill by the love that we had for the man that gave us life!... I'm not no killer! But you messing with that man and I become that because that man gave me life! If you wanna live, leave that man alone where we are concerned. When Malcolm stepped across that line, death was inevitable."

—Baba Kondo, *Conspiracys: Unravelling the Assassination of Malcolm X* (1993)

Whoever pulled the trigger, Farrakhan and the rest of the NOI wanted to see Malcolm X destroyed for *political* reasons. Malcolm did more than simply break with Elijah Muhammad's personal cultism. Malcolm was, in a confused and incomplete way, breaking with the bigotry and prejudice inherent in *all* nationalism (for example, he publicly repudiated his earlier opposition to interracial marriage). When Malcolm was cut down by assassins' bullets in February 1965,

**Farrakhan: The Man Who Wanted Malcolm X Dead**

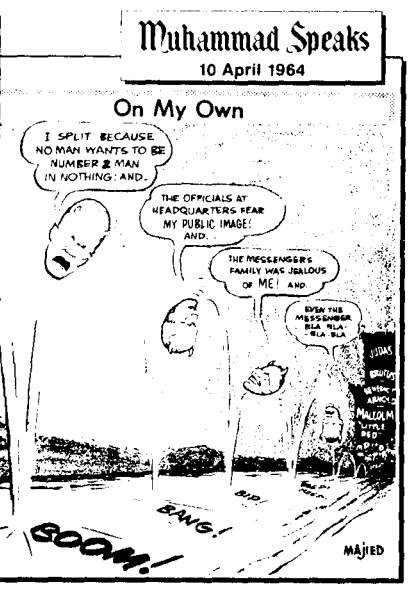


Robert L. Haggins  
Harlem, 1963: Malcolm X appeared with Farrakhan (far right) at his side. Farrakhan (Louis X) and Nation of Islam newspaper later denounced Malcolm as a traitor and pronounced him "worthy of death." (*Muhammad Speaks*, 4 December 1964)

By Minister Louis X  
(Boston, Mass.)

**"TO FOLLOW MALCOLM IS TO BE DOOMED"**

If any Muslim—whether he be an Imam or just a rich man—backed a fool like Malcolm in building a Mosque, he would be a fool himself. Only those who wish to be led to hell, or to their doom will follow Malcolm. The die is set, and Malcolm shall not escape, especially after such evil, foolish talk about his benefactor (Elijah Muhammad) in trying to rob him of the divine glory which Allah has bestowed upon him. Such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death and would have met with death if it had not been for Muhammad's confidence in Allah for victory over the enemies



he had become an *enemy* of the kind of nationalist demagoguery and bigotry which is Farrakhan's stock in trade. Malcolm X split from the Black Muslims because he wanted to fight the racist rulers of this country. As he wrote in his *Autobiography*:

"It could be heard increasingly in the Negro communities: 'Those Muslims talk tough, but they never do anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims'."

Malcolm let it be known that he wanted to see the Muslims abandon their abstentionism in the face of the historic struggles for black rights that were shaking the country: "I felt that, wherever black people committed themselves, in the Little Rocks and Birmingham and other places, militantly disciplined Muslims should also be there." In contrast, Farrakhan teaches that the mass civil rights struggles of the 1960s were a *mistake*. He recalls with nostalgia the era of Jim Crow segregation, when there was a greater margin for the development of small, black-owned businesses because white-owned corporations scarcely tried to attract black consumers:

"When civil rights broke down the desegregation laws we began to lose black businesses and spend our money with white businesses. So throughout the South the economic advancement that we gained under Jim Crow is literally dead."

—interview in *Emerge*  
(August 1990)

The contrast could not be greater with Malcolm X who, by the time of his assassination, had begun to perceive the roots of oppression in capitalism: "You can't operate a capitalistic system unless you are vulturistic; you have to have someone else's blood to suck to be a capitalist. You show me a capitalist, I'll show you a bloodsucker."

### White Nightriders and Black Separatists

The fact that Farrakhan's principles are directly opposed to those of Malcolm X is clearly demonstrated by his policy toward the racist terrorists of the KKK. The NOI invited Tom Metzger—former Grand Dragon of the California Ku Klux Klan and now the force behind W.A.R. (White Aryan Resistance), a nationwide network of racist skinhead thugs—to its September 1985 forum in Inglewood, California and accepted a \$100 contribution from this notorious fascist. According to the right-wing *Washington Times* (30 September 1985), Metzger declared that his tie to the NOI was a "logical one": "They want their own government and their own territory and that's exactly what we want for them and for ourselves. They speak out

against the Jews and the oppressors in Washington."

Historically, there has been a tendency for the black nationalists and the KKK to intersect, since they both stand for maintaining hard racial separation. Marcus Garvey met with Klansmen in the 1920s. But the Nation of Islam has had longstanding links with far-right groups. In particular, the NOI got funding, starting in 1960, from Texas oil millionaire H.L. Hunt, who financed such ultra-right movements as the Minutemen and the John Birch Society (Karl Evanzz, *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* [1992]).

In 1961 George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party, attended with his followers a Nation of Islam rally in Washington addressed by Elijah Muhammad, as well as other NOI functions. In 1962 Rockwell was invited to address the NOI's Savior's Day Convention in Chicago. Rockwell, dressed in full Nazi regalia, cried: "Elijah Muhammad is to the so-called Negro what Adolph Hitler was to the German people. He is the most powerful black man in the country. Heil Hitler!" (*The Judas Factor*). Rockwell even wrote a letter to his followers about Elijah Muhammad and the NOI:

"I was amazed to learn how much they and I agree on things; they think that blacks should get out of this country and go back to Africa or to some other place and so do we. They want to get black men to leave white women alone, and

white men to leave black women alone, and so do we.

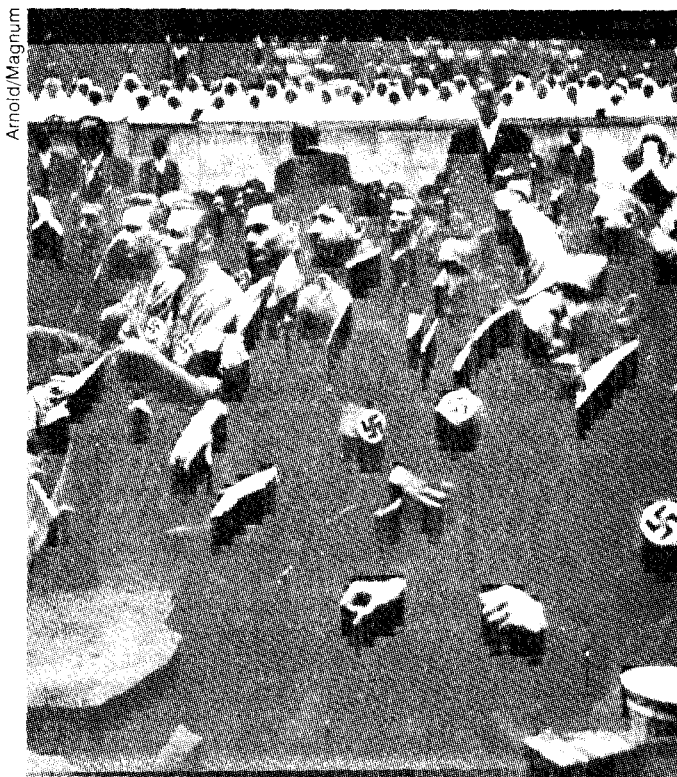
"The Honorable Elijah Muhammad and I have worked out an agreement of mutual assistance in which they will help us on some things and we will help them on others."

—James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart* (1985)

Moreover, while hundreds of civil rights workers were being beaten by the KKK, NOI cultivated relations with the Klan. After his break with the NOI, Malcolm X revealed that he had been ordered by Elijah Muhammad to represent the NOI in a meeting with KKK leaders on 28 January 1961 in Atlanta. The existence of this meeting was the subject of a secret FBI report reproduced in Clayborne Carson's *Malcolm X: The FBI File* (1991). As summarized by Michael Friedly in *Malcolm X: The Assassination* (1992):

"The reason for the meeting was to institute a nonaggression pact between the two groups since they were both, after all, fighting for the same goal: the separation of the races. The pact was formalized, and the KKK agreed to help the Muslims in their goal of setting aside a couple of states for their homeland after they were freed from the laws of the United States government."

While Malcolm X never adopted a class-struggle strategy of revolutionary integration, he broke with Elijah Muhammad's refusal to confront the KKK and Nazi racist terrorists. In the spring of 1964, Malcolm wired the leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), then the most



**American Nazi party delegation as invited guests of June 1961 Nation of Islam convention in Washington, D.C.**



WV Photo

## Freedom Now for Geronimo!

Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), America's foremost class-war prisoner, has endured 23 years of California prison hell for a crime the government knows he did not commit. Former Black Panther Party leader, Geronimo is a victim of the FBI's vicious COINTELPRO campaign to destroy the Panthers. The Black Panthers represented the best of a generation of radical black youth who wanted to smash capitalism and make a revolution. For that reason the Panthers were targeted for destruction by the racist ruling class and its deadly political police. Despite overwhelming proof of his innocence, Geronimo is kept locked away because, as the D.A.'s representative to Geronimo's 1987 parole hearing said, "he's still a revolutionary." The fight for Geronimo's freedom is an important part of the struggle for black liberation through socialist revolution.

radical wing of the civil rights movement, offering to send some of his people South to "give the Ku Klux Klan a taste of their own medicine" (Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* [1965]). And the following January Malcolm X sent a telegram to American Nazi Party führer Rockwell:

"This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of nonviolence, and who believe in asserting our right of self-defense—by any means necessary."

—*Malcolm X Speaks* (1965)

### The Panthers: "Revolutionary" Nationalism vs. Cultural Nationalism

The Nation of Islam's condemnation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s prostration before his tormentors sometimes struck a responsive chord. The famous cartoon in *Muhammad Speaks* captured King's spirit: "If there is any blood spilled on the streets, let it be *our* blood!" As King led the black masses into a dead end, the NOI's condemnation of Christian submissiveness could appear to some as something it wasn't, namely, a political criticism of King's pacifistic liberalism and ties to the white ruling class. However, the NOI abstained from the historic struggles of the black masses because to do otherwise would deny its very reason for existence.

It was the Black Panther Party, formed in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, which represented the best of a

generation of radical black militants who courageously stood up to the racist ruling class and its kill-crazy cops. The Panthers considered themselves the heirs of Malcolm X because they were inspired by his advocacy of armed black self-defense against racist attacks and sought to organize independently of the Democrats and Republicans. However, as self-declared "revolutionary nationalists," the Panthers rejected the Marxist understanding that the working class, because it is exploited and concentrated and organized in the process of production, held the potential social power to overthrow the racist capitalist system. Instead the Panthers proclaimed the lumpenproletariat, especially ghetto youth, the vanguard of the American revolution.

The main political opponents the Panthers confronted were what they called "pork chop" cultural nationalists, such as Ron Karenga, who preached "voluntary segregation," black capitalism and rediscovery of African culture as a program for black liberation. (Cultural nationalists like Karenga, incited by COINTELPRO, revealed themselves to be pro-police thugs and were responsible for the murder of a number of Panthers.) The Panthers fought the cultural nationalists' reactionary program which meant withdrawal from struggle. Huey Newton remarked in a prison interview:

"Many times cultural nationalists fall into line as reactionary nationalists. 'Papa Doc' in Haiti is an excellent example of reactionary nationalism. He oppresses the people but he does promote the African culture. He is against anything other than black, which on the surface seems very good, but to him it is only to mislead the people. He merely kicked out the racists and replaced them with himself as the oppressor. Many of the nationalists in this country seem to desire the same ends."

These remarks could apply equally

well to Farrakhan's NOI. And indeed, Black Panther leader Elaine Brown's description of the charged confrontation which took place between Newton and Farrakhan in 1971, at a time when NOI members were slugging it out in the streets with Panther newspaper salesmen, testifies to the depth of political hostility between the two organizations (Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power* [1992]).

The racist capitalist state mobilized its security forces to eliminate the Black Panther Party through arrests, frame-ups and cold-blooded murder. The massive repression against the Panthers and other militant black groups decimated the Panther leadership within a few years and wiped out an entire generation of potentially revolutionary black leaders. Government documents concerning the FBI's COINTELPRO conspiracy against mainly black radicals reveal a vast operation on the part of the racist bourgeois state. Through nearly 300 FBI operations against black groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s—233 of them against the Panthers alone—virtually every militant black leader was either physically eliminated or slammed in jail on a string of charges long enough to hold him for years. Former Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) is still in prison, framed up for a murder which the government *knows* he did not commit.

But the Nation of Islam and other right-wing cultural nationalists were left unscathed. Where the Panthers and the early and contradictory "black power" movement initiated by SNCC identified with the colonial enemies and victims of U.S. imperialism, Farrakhan asks America's racist rulers to help him set up jails in Africa where they can dump ghetto youth! The Nation of Islam shares Booker T. Washington's view that the races

should be "as separate as the fingers," but it has no qualms about working hand in glove with the white racist state.

### Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Tragically, as the Panthers were destroyed by bloody state repression there was not the communist intervention of a revolutionary party sizable enough to win the best of these radical black youth. In the early 1960s, the core of the future Spartacist League, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), fought for such an intervention into SNCC and other components of the left wing of the civil rights movement. The RT's 1963 document, "The Negro Struggle and the Crisis of Leadership," insisted:

"The rising upsurge and militancy of the black revolt and the contradictory and confused, groping nature of what is now the left wing in the movement provide the revolutionary vanguard with fertile soil and many opportunities to plant the seeds of revolutionary socialism.... We must consider non-intervention in the crisis of leadership a crime of the worst sort."

The RT was subsequently expelled by the SWP, which continued its abstentionism while tailing both M.L. King and Malcolm X. As a result of the criminal abstentionism of the SWP, the "black power" radicals never found the bridge between their struggles and the program of workers power, with the consequent loss of many thousands of black militants to the revolutionary movement.

The failure of the civil rights movement when it "went North" underlined that the oppression of black people is deeply rooted in the bedrock of racist American capitalism. Genuine black emancipation, fulfilling the promise of the Civil War, is only possible through proletarian revolution. The murderous U.S. ruling class knows this well, and so does Farrakhan—that is why they both stand in dread of militant black struggle. Farrakhan writes that "the condition of black people in America makes us the Achilles heel of this nation" (*Back Where We Belong*).

Nationalism proved to be a dead end for a generation of black militants. Black people in the U.S. are not a nation but an *oppressed race-color caste* integrated into American society while forcibly segregated at the bottom of it. The genuine alternative to both the liberal accommodationism of King and the illusory separatism of the NOI is for common struggle of the multiracial working class against the racist special oppression of blacks and other minorities and



WV Photo

**Black proletariat will play a vanguard role in integrated working-class struggle for socialist revolution. Above, New York City transit workers demonstrate against layoffs.**

to overthrow the capitalist system which spawns it. This program of *revolutionary integrationism* must be successfully rooted in the working class and the black masses if the pent-up fury of the oppressed is not to explode in directionless conflagrations or be dissipated into the schemes of pro-capitalist demagogues like Louis Farrakhan.

That black nationalism is today getting a hearing—and in its most reactionary expression—is a symptom of the despair of a whole layer of black youth who have never seen successful social struggle. The appeal of separatists is fed by a deep feeling of *black isolation* in a virulently racist (and hypocritical) society. It is telling that today it's left to the communists to fight for even the most basic democratic rights such as the right to be served at restaurants. When the Spartacist League called pickets around the country last summer to protest discrimination against black people by the Denny's chain, the NAACP led by former civil rights activist Ben Chavis was only interested in negotiating an "empowerment" agreement for black franchises, suppliers and managers, and above all a black board member, while Denny's workers slave at minimum wages without union protection.

Yet we noted that the May 1992 *multiracial* revolt in Los Angeles demonstrated that U.S. society can be polarized along *class* lines:

"But we have also insisted that the desperate condition and increasing numbers

of the black ghetto poor must not obscure the fundamental fact that *black workers still play a strategic role in the American economy and even more so in the organized labor movement....*

"These black proletarians can serve as a bridge between the ghetto poor and the organized labor movement. Conditions are overripe for a massive social explosion in this country extending from the ghettos and Hispanic barrios to white skilled workers, many of them one paycheck away from bankruptcy and eviction. The eruption of integrated protests following the acquittal of the racist cops in the Rodney King case signals the potential for just such a new wave of militant social struggle."

—WV No. 551, 15 May 1992, reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 9

The fight against racial oppression is key to workers revolution in the U.S. The labor movement is the one powerful racially integrated force in this society. Their strategic position in the labor movement makes it possible for black workers to lead in bringing down the entire racist, capitalist system through united class struggle. Black women, whom the nationalists seek to keep "in their place" as producers of babies, belong in the forefront of the fight for black freedom. Black and white and Latino and Asian revolutionaries, armed with a communist program and organized in a multiracial communist vanguard party which acts as the tribune of the people, can lead a fight on behalf of all the oppressed and exploited for workers revolution, to smash imperialist domination throughout the Americas, Africa and the world. ■

## The Government's War Against Black America



Mississippi Valley Collection

Sorrell/Ethopy

28 March 1968: Martin Luther King marched in support of striking Memphis sanitation workers (right). King was assassinated one week later.

# Massive Army Spy Operation Stalked Martin Luther King

It has been known for years that Martin Luther King Jr. was the target of a massive surveillance and disinformation campaign by the FBI and other government police agencies. The FBI's COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program) sought as one of its main goals to "Prevent the rise of a 'messiah' who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement." The Atlanta FBI had a "Destroy King" squad. But a recent investigative report by Stephen G. Tompkins in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* (21 March) reveals a far more extensive and sinister spy operation carried out by the U.S. Army against the slain civil rights leader.

King was struck down 25 years ago, as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis on 4 April 1968. James Earl Ray immediately pleaded guilty to being the lone assassin. Yet, at the moment of his murder, King was being secretly tracked by droves of Army intelligence officers and, apparently, elite Green Beret "counterinsurgency" squads.

Summarizing the results of his exhaustive 16-month investigation—based

on reviewing "a trail of memos, memoirs, diaries and meeting notes" as well as classified government documents and interviews with nearly 200 people—journalist Tompkins judiciously writes that there is "no hard evidence that Army Intelligence played any role in King's assassination." But the wealth of material amassed by Tompkins (who now works for the governor of Tennessee) makes it abundantly clear that the Army was prepared to use any weapon against King and was "desperately searching for a way to stop him."

### "Klan Special Forces"

Army Intelligence first started a dossier on King in 1947, when he was photographed with other Morehouse College students at a meeting with a "suspected Communist." Ten years later, "Army spies pegged King as a Communist tool" when he spoke at an integrated school in Tennessee. As King went on to become the most prominent spokesman of the liberal civil rights movement, Army Intelligence and a host of other spy agencies began dogging his every step and eavesdropping on every conver-

sation. King had been the target of FBI surveillance and dirty tricks for years before his murder, going back to a COMINFIL ("Communist infiltration") campaign in 1962, which was the precursor for the later COINTELPRO operation aimed at destroying the Black Panther Party and other militants (see "Why the FBI Tried to Destroy M.L. King," WV No. 396, 31 January 1986).

As Tompkins documents, the Army spy operation against King was part of a covert war against black America dating back to at least 1917, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, when a domestic espionage network was set up to go after militant socialists, revolutionary syndicalists like the Industrial Workers of the World, and "Negro unrest." King's maternal grandfather, head of the Atlanta NAACP, was an early target, as was his father, who participated in the National Negro Congress, associated with the Communist Party.

Tompkins reveals that government spying on the civil rights movement was so massive that, beginning with the 1963 Birmingham civil rights campaign, the Army was deploying high-altitude



U-2 spy planes, notorious for infiltrating Soviet airspace, to track black protesters! On at least 26 occasions over seven years the military used U-2s in domestic spy flights, taking off from the super-secret "Site 98" outside Nellis AFB in Nevada, as well as SR-71 "Blackbird" reconnaissance planes.

When Maj. Gen. William Yarborough was appointed Army assistant chief of staff for intelligence in late 1966, he brought with him the conviction that King and other black activists were directly bankrolled by China or the Soviet Union. The liberal preacher was an ideological opponent of black radicals, who rightly viewed him as a conciliator of the racist status quo. But the feds were determined to prevent the rise of a "black messiah." The convulsive growth of black militancy in the urban ghettos coupled with massive antiwar protests sweeping the campuses made the Pentagon brass feel like they were fighting—and losing—a war on two fronts, particularly in the wake of their humiliation at the hands of the Vietnamese NLF during the January 1968 Tet Offensive. It looked as though "the empire was coming apart at the seams," Yarborough said later.

Yarborough presided over what Tompkins terms the "largest domestic spy network ever assembled in a free country." Six regional Military Intelligence Groups ran 304 different offices around the country, while a seventh (the 116th MIG) operated exclusively in Washington, D.C. and the "super-secret" 902nd MIG headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia was controlled directly by Yarborough. Army Intelligence maintained its own dossiers on nearly 81,000 individuals and more than 211,000 organizations, with access to an additional 21 million files held by the Defense Central Index of Investigation, the FBI, CIA, Secret Service and other spy agencies.

Before taking charge of Army Intelligence, Yarborough had commanded the Green Beret training school at Fort Bragg. Insisting that the Green Berets and Army Intelligence could "mutually support" each other in "counterinsurgency operations both foreign and domestic," Yarborough began making use of these hard-bitten killers on the home front. Prominent among them was the 20th Special Forces Group based in Birmingham, Alabama, which included some of the worst dregs from the Vietnam War, "those who had worked in murky clandestine operations with the CIA, the Special Operations Group (SOG) or the top secret Detachment B-57"—like the infamous Phoenix "rural pacification"

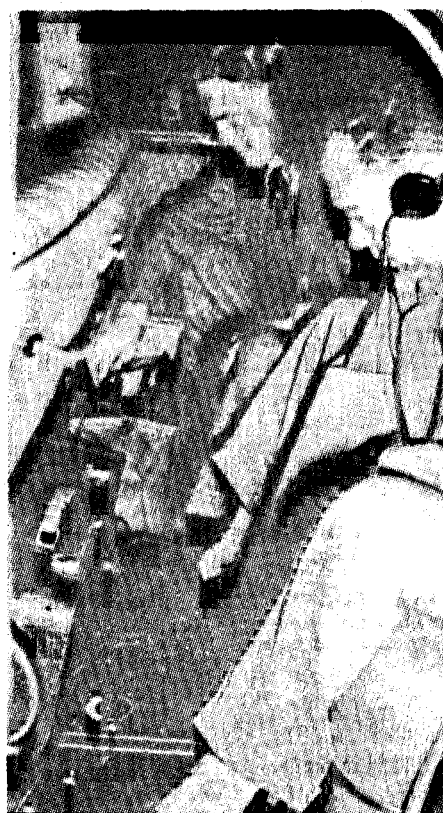
program which assassinated tens of thousands of Vietnamese. For the racist killers of the 20th, according to one counterintelligence officer, "Birmingham became Saigon. The rural South was in-country and at times things got out of hand."

When black Detroit erupted in the summer of 1967 in the largest inner-city rebellion yet seen, Yarborough ordered his men: "Get out your counterinsurgency manuals, we have an insurgency on our hands" (quoted in Frank J. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance*). Tanks rolled through the streets of the Motor City, blasting away at anything that moved and killing 43 people.

Tompkins notes that the military churned out plans—which were kept secret even from civilian police agencies—for possible counterinsurgency operations the following summer in 124 cities, complete with "maps with all 'sensitive areas' marked, landing zones, secret storage sites for riot gear and weapons, and files on all civic leaders and known troublemakers." Green Beret units were dispatched to 39 cities—including Memphis—to "scout sniper sights." Detroit mayor Cavanagh ordered a special \$9 million bond issue to buy machine guns, M-1 carbines, tear gas guns and grenades, armored vehicles, a helicopter and a spotter plane. Memphis cops set up five new "anti-sniper" squads.

Meanwhile, the army itself was secretly shoveling weapons and funds to metropolitan police departments and right-wing groups. The 109th Military Intelligence Group gave money to Baltimore's Inspectional Services Division to spy on "black radicals." The 116th allocated \$270,000 to Washington police in 1967 and 1968. In Chicago, the 113th MIG supplied the right-wing "Legion of Justice" terrorists with tear gas and electronic surveillance equipment for use against antiwar groups. In the South, the 20th Special Forces set up a paramilitary training base in Cullman, Alabama for KKKers who called themselves "Klan Special Forces" and "soon became the 20th's intelligence network."

When King began speaking out against the Vietnam War in 1967, an army report frantically warned that "Negro troops are unsettled." In February 1968, Yarborough's top aides held a strategy meeting at Army Intelligence Command headquarters at Fort Holabird, Maryland to map out a systematic campaign to stop King, who was then organizing a "Poor People's Campaign" march on Washington for April. A secret Pentagon report warned that the march would be "a devastating civil disturbance whose sole purpose is to shut down the United States government," and blasted King as "a Negro who repeatedly has



U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command photos

**U.S. Army Intelligence Command operations room at Fort Holabird, Maryland (left), as agents conduct domestic radio surveillance in 1968.**

preached the message of Hanoi and Peking."

Army and police teams photographed King at a prayer march at Arlington Cemetery on February 6, and then used the pictures for dart practice. Later that month, an intelligence report noted: "Indications from reliable source are MLK will be in Memphis to support union striking city." When a March 28 demonstration for striking Memphis sanitation workers was attacked by cops, leaving one black youth dead and 60 injured, the FBI used this to warn that "acts of so-called non-violence advocated by King cannot be controlled. The same thing could happen in his planned massive civil disobedience for Washington in April."

As King returned to Memphis on April 3, he was shadowed by the 111th MIG. Also in Memphis, on an "unknown mission," was an "Operation Detachment Alpha 184 Team" of Green Berets. Tompkins' research could account for only eight members of the usual complement of twelve on this team. The following afternoon, King was shot dead. Hundreds of thousands of blacks took to the streets in outrage, as America's inner cities went up in flames. Congressmen looking out of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. could see the smoke spiraling skyward.

### Feds and Klan Go Hand in Hand

One way or another, Martin Luther King was a victim of the very forces on whom he preached reliance. While urging the black masses to "turn the other cheek," King appealed for the organized violence of the capitalist state to be used in the service of reforming an unreformable system of racist oppression. He



**Birmingham, 1963: As police chief Bull Connor unleashed his stormtroopers against civil rights protests led by Martin Luther King, Army Intelligence U-2 spy plane flew overhead.**

looked to the cops even to quell *black* rebellion. When the Los Angeles ghetto of Watts exploded in the summer of '65, King despicably declared, "It was necessary that as powerful a police force as possible be brought in to check them."

Indeed, the cops and troops were used *exclusively* to check black unrest. When Birmingham police chief Bull Connor unleashed his stormtroopers against King's protests in 1963, the Kennedy White House sent in 3,000 troops only *after* black demonstrators started defending themselves against the racist thugs. Despite occasional token reforms and lip service to black rights, the capitalist government—at every level—worked hand in hand with the Dixiecrat segregationists and racist mobs, from FBI Klan "informant" Gary Rowe, who was complicit

in the 1964 Birmingham church bombing and the 1965 murder of civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo, to the feds' role in the 1979 KKK massacre of five Greensboro leftists.

Several months after King's murder, then attorney general (and current liberal darling) Ramsey Clark gleefully reported to his boss, Lyndon B. Johnson, that the predicted summer of violence which King's march was to have triggered never happened. Far from being a "rogue operation," the whole FBI/Army vendetta against King was tied to the White House through the Interdivisional Unit set up by Clark in 1967. Clark's chief liaison with Yarborough was Warren Christopher, now Clinton's secretary of state. (Clark and Christopher furiously denied involvement until confronted with internal memos they had written.) And from the massacre of an integrated religious commune in Waco to the police-state occupation of South-Central L.A. last spring, the capitalist government's war against black America remains in high gear.

King's death coincided with the demise of the liberal movement he embodied, whose reliance on the Democratic Party of war and racism hit a dead end when they tried to tackle the economically entrenched segregation in the North. In the end, he was a victim of the system he tried loyally to serve. As we noted in 1986, "If the FBI did not pull the trigger, they fueled the social climate that spawned the vermin like James Earl Ray. King tried to serve both the oppressed and the oppressor, but the latter would not accept a dual loyalty." ■

## Join the Labor Black Leagues!

The Labor Black Leagues stand for mobilizing minorities and working people in militant integrated struggle against the brutal system of racist capitalist oppression. The LBLs are fraternally allied to the Spartacist League, and are part of the revolutionary movement of the workers and oppressed against the bosses and for socialism.

For more information write

### ATLANTA

Labor Black League for  
Social Defense  
Box 16921, Atlanta, GA 30321

### OAKLAND

Labor Black League for  
Social Defense  
Box 751, Oakland, CA 94604

### CHICAGO

Labor Black Struggle League  
Box 6938, Chicago, IL 60680

### NEW YORK

Labor Black League for  
Social Defense  
Box 3238, Church St. Station  
New York, NY 10008

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# Clinton's Welfare "Reform": Blacks, Poor Will Starve

## Yuppie Racism in Action

From medieval Europe to fascistic mercenaries today, "Kill them all, let god sort them out," has been the battle cry of barbarism. This could also be the inscription on the plans by the racist rulers of America to, in the words of Democratic president Bill Clinton, "end welfare as we know it." *Fourteen million* people—over three-quarters of them children, the majority desperately poor blacks and Hispanics for whom the current meager, sub-poverty welfare benefits "guarantee" a life of starvation and raw misery—now face getting cut off without a cent.

This is a prescription for "Genocide U.S.A."—the headline of our article on the 1988 "workfare" law which Clinton is aiming to enforce with a cruel vengeance. As we wrote at the time: "The aim of this legislation is to see to it that layers of the minority population *die*, because this decrepit capitalist system no longer needs them" (*WV* No. 463, 21 October 1988). Today, "two years and out" is the rallying cry of the yuppie racist Democrats in the White House. During the first two years, welfare recipients will be required to enroll in education and job training programs. After that, chop—get a job or starve.

But there are no jobs. By official count, which is only the tip of the iceberg, there are nine million unemployed. In 1992, 1,500 jobs were eliminated *every day*. Of those "lucky" enough to have employment, over one-quarter of the U.S. labor force is employed in what is euphemistically called "contingent work"—otherwise known as temporary or part-time jobs. Meanwhile, some 15 million full-time workers have yearly earnings that are below the poverty level. This is the bankrupt capitalist "marketplace" into which the racist rulers propose to dump some five million welfare mothers who have few if any skills.

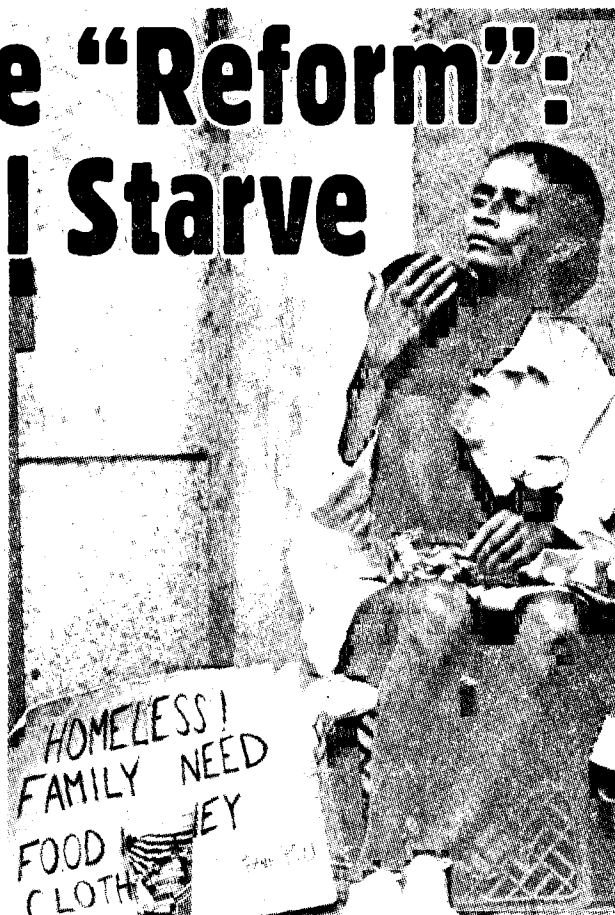
As a measure of the viciousness of the current "welfare reform" proposals,

the immediate targets are the most destitute recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). *Newsweek* (13 December) lays it out: "The reformers' real target is the minority of AFDC families—estimates range from 1.5 million to 2 million households—who stay on welfare for eight years or more. As a group these welfare mothers represent the poorest of the poor—the least educated and least employable women in America. Many are inner-city blacks."

Those who are unable to find a job will be pressed into "community service." One recalls Ebenezer Scrooge's retort in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* when asked to give money for the poor: "Are there no workhouses?" A more American image than that of the indentured labor houses of Victorian England is that of the Southern chain gangs of black prisoners breaking rocks. The modern-day equivalent of slave labor will pay no more than current welfare payments, which on average amount to less than 50 percent of the official poverty line in the U.S. (In Clinton's home state of Arkansas, which he holds up as a "model" for welfare reform, AFDC benefits are *less than 25 percent* of federal poverty income!)

### The "Republicrats"

Echoing Clinton's "two years and out" plan, the Republicans have their own welfare reform plan which they dub "tough love." Obscenely calling it "a compassionate idea that would give the down-trodden the incentive to change," they



D. Michael Cheers

propose to raise money for training programs by cutting food programs and barring immigrants from welfare benefits. Any single mother who is unable or unwilling to identify the father of her children will get cut off immediately. The Republicans' ultraright black spokesman Charles Murray put it baldly: "I want to cut everything. I want to get rid of food stamps, subsidized housing—all of it."

Clinton says Murray has the "right diagnosis" but the "wrong prescription." But the Democrats' sometimes efforts to give their "welfare reform" plans a "kinder, gentler" image—by promising real job training programs, childcare and education—are a cynical sham. This is a *bipartisan* war on the poor. It represents the consensus of the entire capitalist class, a supreme expression of Gore Vidal's statement that there is only one party in America, the property party, with two right wings.

Clinton recently gave the nod to Wisconsin's Republican governor Tommy Thompson to impose a two-year limit on AFDC benefits starting in January. Recipients will be required to work for their benefits in the second year and then

it's over, no more cash, not even the offer of continued slave labor for the "community." Another member of the Clinton "welfare reform team" is Michigan's Republican governor, John Engler, who cut 83,000 people off the general assistance rolls in that state in 1991. Only 8 percent found any work and those jobs they found paid on average \$120/week! Some 21 percent of these "able-bodied adults" had chronic physical or mental problems. Over 35 percent lost their homes, tripling the number of beds in Detroit's homeless shelters. Engler is a quintessential capitalist bloodsucker. Of those he axed from the state's welfare rolls, many supplement whatever meager earnings they have by selling their blood for \$20 a pint.

In the 1980s, Reagan reviled the "homeless who are homeless, you might say by choice." Now Clinton declares that the poor are poor by choice, arguing that his "welfare reform" will "remove the incentive for staying in poverty" and "reinforce the work ethic"! Playing on this theme of the moral turpitude of the poor, a column in the *Los Angeles Times* (22 November) with the Orwellian headline, "Pull the Plug on Welfare to Solve Poverty," asks: "by what moral logic should a taxpayer be asked to give a part of his earnings to sustain a child fathered by a young man who disappears, leaving mother and child wards of the state?"

This is truly perverse. It is the U.S. government that makes receipt of AFDC benefits contingent on there being no "man in the house"! And when a HUD task force proposed to continue welfare payments with a father present, there was a howl of outrage from the same racist crowd that blames poverty on the breakdown of the black family and "deadbeat dads." In fact, the rise of single welfare mothers in the inner cities coincides directly with the disappearance of jobs for black men—who were among the first to get axed in the massive layoffs of the '80s.

Portraying the "nation's five million welfare families as an indolent lot in need of a moral tonic," Republican conservative Newt Gingrich pronounced, "You can't maintain civilization with 12-year-olds having babies and 15-year-olds killing each other and 17-year-olds dying of AIDS" (*New York Times*, 11 November). So after bilking the economy, deindustrializing the country, eliminating jobs wholesale, smashing unions and turning the inner cities of America into vast urban wastelands of poverty, disease and death, the rulers now deride the poor as "uncivilized."

## The "New Democrats"

The *Economist* (13 March) noted that in the 1992 election campaign "welfare reform, and especially Mr. Clinton's embrace of a two-year time-limit on receiving assistance" together with support for the death penalty "were among the most powerful symbols that he was a 'new Democrat'." This year, Clinton, who took time out of his campaign schedule to personally supervise the execution of a brain-damaged black man in Arkansas, donated the White House Thanksgiving turkey to a children's petting zoo grotesquely citing this as his first "official pardon."

A White House aide boasted, "'Two years and out' always looked good in the campaign.... Now that we're here, we have to be willing to say that nobody is automatically entitled to the safety net." Indeed, in America the "safety" net has been replaced by the dragnet. There's no money for welfare, but under Clinton's new racist "anti-crime" bill there's millions for high-tech prisons, a hundred thousand more cops and the electric chair.

This week a proposal by U.S. Surgeon General Joyce Elders to legalize drugs was met with an outcry of protest in Washington. Why? Elders' proposal is eminently sane and rational. The decriminalization of drugs would take the profit and correspondingly much of the violent crime out of dealing. But the rulers of this country are insane and irrational. While they scream about drug-related crimes, the capitalists have a vested interest in keeping drugs illegal precisely because it provides the rationale for gearing up their machinery of death and repression aimed at keeping the working class and oppressed cowed and subservient.

Similarly, "welfare reform" is a broadside attack against all of the working class. In their book, *Regulating the Poor* (Random House, 1993) Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward point out that welfare recipients are to be treated in a manner that is "so degrading and punitive as to instill in the laboring masses a fear of the fate that awaits them should they relax into beggary and pauperism. To demean and punish those who do not work is to exalt by contrast even the meanest labor at the meanest wages."

In racist America, where labor and wages are only getting meaner and leaner, the overlay to preserving a system of raw exploitation and oppression is the black question. The forcible segregation of the black population in this country at the bottom of society has long been wielded by the capitalist rulers of America as an effective club in retarding

working-class struggle. Once serving as what Karl Marx called a "reserve army of labor" to be brought in during economic "booms," under decaying American capitalism ghetto blacks are now deemed to be a surplus population, an "unprofitable" mass not worth even being maintained at the most meager subsistence level.

The calls for "welfare reform" are openly racist, portraying blacks in the inner cities as a lazy and an immoral drain on society, a burden which is costing "hard-working folks." But in absolute numbers the overwhelming majority of the poor, the unemployed, the single welfare mothers are white. The rulers play the race card because that's how they think they can get away with the further impoverishment of the entire working class. And they calculate that the destitute masses of the inner cities have no social power—a calculation which is reinforced by the trade-union misleaders.

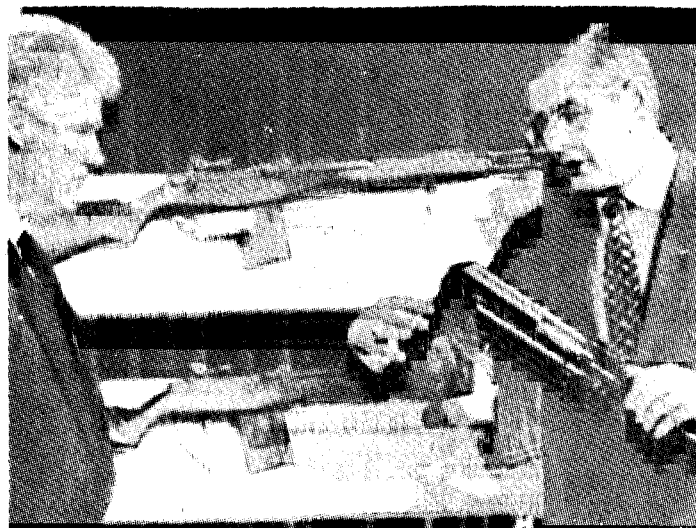
These racist labor cops for the rule of capital haven't lifted a finger in defense of the homeless and poor, many of whom are the product of the trade-union tops' giveback contracts over the past two decades which saw the "sacrifice" of hundreds of thousands of jobs, millions in wages and the decline of unionized workers from 29 to 17 percent of the labor force. Now the bureaucrats complain that an influx of workers paid at welfare level would threaten union jobs. A labor movement worth its salt would fight to organize the unemployed, demanding a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work around, union-run minority hiring and upgrading programs, a massive public works program at union wages, welfare payments at a living rate—for a start.

The way out of the all-sided depredation, union-busting, poverty, homelessness and racist genocide that is today's America is through sharp and hard-fought working-class struggle. The working people created all the wealth of this country; to claim the fruits of their labor and employ it to the benefit of the majority of society requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie. The working class has the numbers, the organization and the power to do this. What it lacks is the revolutionary consciousness and leadership to do it. For that we need a workers party, one that doesn't "respect" the property rights of the capitalist rulers, one that will fight as a tribune of all the oppressed, that will organize the power of labor in its own interests and for its own rule through socialist revolution. ■

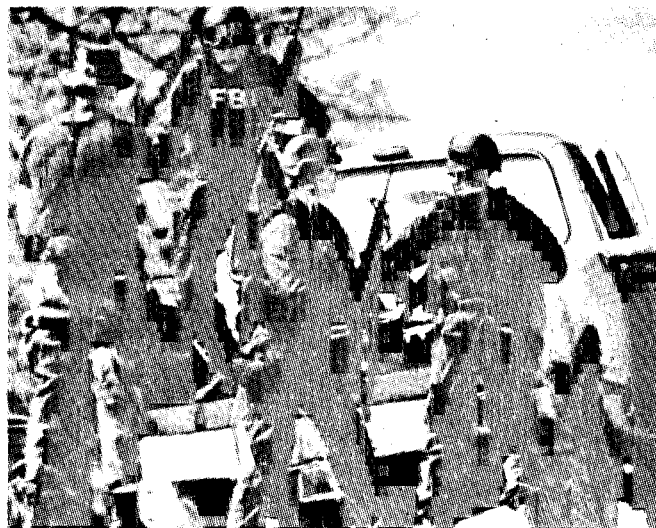
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## Defend the Right to Bear Arms

# Clinton Whips Up Hysteria Over "Assault Weapons"



Reuters



Bowmer/AP

**Left: Clinton inspects "assault weapons" with BATF director John Magaw. Right: Gun control, FBI-style, at religious commune near Waco. Government-unleashed firestorm killed 86 innocent men, women and children.**

"Remember that the musket... is better than all mere parchment guarantees of liberty."

—Frederick Douglass, 1863

For years the federal, state and local governments have been sniping away at the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which supposedly guarantees the right to "keep and bear arms." But now Clinton and Congress have let loose with both barrels in a full-scale assault on this fundamental constitutional safeguard under the guise of an "anti-crime" bill.

They are taking aim at the heart of the Second Amendment, threatening to disarm the masses at a time of increasing social discontent, while the government is arming itself to the teeth—boasting of plans to put 100,000 more cops on the streets. The anti-gun hysteria, like the government's "war on drugs," is aimed squarely at minorities and all working people.

This newest gun ban is part of the Omnibus Crime Bill, a draconian meas-

ure which will spend billions of dollars on super-prisons and racist boot camps for black and Hispanic youth, while greatly expanding the number of federal crimes carrying the death penalty. And to drive home the racist character of the state's legal lynching, Congress voted down a measure to allow death row prisoners to challenge their death sentence on the grounds of racial discrimination.

By a narrow margin of two votes, the House approved a bill on May 5 which would ban 19 specific semiautomatic "assault weapons" including the civilian versions of the most widely known military rifles, the Russian Kalashnikov AK-47 and the American M-16, and any "copies or duplicates." Moreover, an elastic clause would also ban any "semi-automatic rifle that has an ability to accept a detachable magazine" and at least two other military features, such as a folding stock, a pistol grip, a bayonet mount, a threaded barrel which could accept a flash suppressor, or a grenade launcher. A broad category of semiauto-

matic pistols with military features would also be banned, along with magazines capable of accepting more than ten rounds of ammunition. In short, the bill—which apparently will be passed by a House-Senate conference—enables the government to bar all civilian access to standard, effective combat arms.

There is another sinister purpose to their capricious definitions of what is an "assault weapon." It allows for a selective proscription of firearms in the future, and selective legal persecution of those declared enemies by the state. And of course the cops will remain armed to the teeth, as will the company gun thugs and scabherding outfits increasingly used against strikers from the New York *Daily News* workers to West Virginia coal miners. The capitalists' private security forces are heavily armed, including with machine guns.

### An Armed People

The bill passed with the help of some last-minute arm-twisting and fallacious

propaganda by the Democratic White House. In a letter to "hunters and sportsmen," Clinton argued that there was a "difference between a firearm used for hunting and target shooting and a weapon designed to kill people," and went on to assert that the to-be-banned weapons are the "weapons of choice for drug dealers, gangs, and terrorists."

Parrotting their president, the *New York Times* (3 May) editorialized that assault weapons "are not sporting weapons; they have no legitimate civilian purpose." This is a complete straw man, a deliberate smokescreen for a sneak attack on the Constitution. The Second Amendment was not enacted to protect hunting, personal self-defense, sports, hobbies or recreation, and they know it. The Amendment, ratified in 1791, was clearly intended to ensure a *people's militia*:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

For the framers of the Bill of Rights, only an armed people could be a free people.

The first ten amendments to the Constitution comprise the Bill of Rights, about which Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison in December 1787, "A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth." The Second Amendment was intended to create militias based on an armed people equipped with military arms to fight against the perceived enemies of the time, including a despotic government. In the 18th century this meant the use of a musket; today this

certainly would center on full/semi-automatic rifles, which are the standard infantry weapons.

As we wrote in "Revolution and the Right to Bear Arms":

"The constitutional right is not about hunting or target practice; the American colonial revolutionaries wanted the whole people armed, including with military arms, in order to be able to *kill British soldiers*, and to forestall the threat of any standing army, which they rightly regarded as the bane of liberty and the basis of tyranny....

"In the state conventions which ratified [the Constitution], a 'militia' was understood to mean the armed people, not a 'select' militia like the present-day National Guard.... The right to 'keep and bear arms' was universally recognized as an *individual* right. As Patrick Henry summed it up, 'The great object is, that every man be armed'."

—WV No. 475, 14 April 1989

The present rulers of America shudder at the idea of effective weapons in the hands of the masses of this country—especially the black masses. That is why they seek to undo the safeguards of popular liberty that are a heritage of their "own" revolution. So they are precisely targeting *military* weapons.

Their attack on the Second Amendment is a significant change in the rights of citizens relative to the government. The move to disarm the populace would transform everyone into second-class citizens. This is no recent American peculiarity. A book on the history of Yugoslavia notes that in the Ottoman Empire:

"Christians in areas under Ottoman dominion remained second-class subjects. They were prohibited, for example, from riding horses, carrying weapons, and wearing certain types of clothing,

and their choice of occupation and freedom of movement were severely limited."

—Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country* (1991)

When the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, the right to bear arms was granted to every citizen. At the time, a "citizen" was understood to be an English-speaking Protestant farmer who owned his own land; other categories were treated as second-class, at best. And it was the first-class citizen who was supposed to be armed. Nowadays, with blacks, women, Catholics, Native American Indians, Mexicans and others asserting their equal rights, the country's rulers want to ensure that everyone but the Praetorian guards of the government are second-class citizens. So the Second Amendment stands in sharp contradiction to present-day reality, and now there is a move to gut it.

### The "Assault Gun" Hoax

To whip up public hysteria, the politicians of both parties and the pliant media are using every trick in the book. They talk about assault weapons which "spray" bullets like a "machine gun," but in reality such automatic weapons (which continue firing bullets as long as the trigger is pulled) have been tightly regulated since 1934. Today's civilian versions of military assault weapons are only "semiautomatic" (one bullet fired for each pull of the trigger). Then they intone, like Democratic Congressman Charles Schumer, a leading sponsor of the gun ban, that "these are guns that were fashioned for no other purpose than to kill" (*New York Times*, 5 May). It's really no news that guns were designed to kill people, and there's no basis for arguing that "assault weapons" are more deadly than hunters' rifles—the latter often fire more powerful cartridges!

The most abused argument is the allegation that "assault weapons" have become the "weapons of choice" for criminals. The most oft-used "fact" of the anti-gun nuts is that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) "estimates that only one of every 100 guns in this country is an assault-type weapon," but "in the bureau's criminal investigations, seven of every 100 guns its agents trace turn out to be such weapons" (*New York Times*, 5 May). But "trace" turns out to mean *any* tracking of a gun by the BATF snoops, not necessarily because it was used in a crime. After all, the T-men's aim is not to "stop crime" but to enforce a *state monopoly of effective violence*.



Alonzo Chappel

**American militia at 1775 Battle of Lexington against British troops: Second Amendment protected right of the people to bear arms as guarantee against tyranny.**

Even the cops' own figures give the lie to the gun control propaganda. The percentage of guns seized by the police in alleged crimes which are "assault weapons" ranges from zero in New York City in 1992 to a high of 3.9 percent of seized guns in Oakland in 1990. ("The Assault Gun Hoax," by Edgar A. Suter, M.D. in *Fighting Firearms*, Spring 1994). And the National Rifle Association (NRA) notes in its latest pamphlet that semiautomatic assault rifles are "involved in less than one-half of one percent of violent crimes" and "guns with military cosmetics are rarely seen much less seized in connection with crime."

The fact is that assault rifles are too unwieldy for street crime and they're not concealable—the common gun crime is usually done with an ordinary pistol, though wealthy drug dealers might prefer more menacing machine-pistols with large-capacity magazines. (In fact, the easily converted TEC-9 of *Miami Vice* fame may inflate the crime statistics for "assault weapons.")

The present bill, the latest in a series of hysterical attacks on "assault weapons," was triggered by the brutal slaying of eight people at a law firm in downtown San Francisco last July. It was, in the words of the bill's author, Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein, in "a very secure building, a nice office building" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 8 May). Instead of the victims being black or Hispanic, this time influential white yuppie lawyers got blown away by a madman in their own offices. Incidentally, the murderer might have been stopped dead if anyone had had a defense weapon, but they didn't.

### Gun Control Kills Blacks

The key here is *racism*. This is the same Feinstein who tried to fly the Confederate flag of slavery at San Francisco City Hall in 1984 when she was mayor, and got off posing like a SWAT cop in her black jumpsuit. "Dixie Dianne" was foiled by a supporter of the Spartacist League and Labor/Black League for Social Defense who tore down the banner of racist terror—*twice*. Defenders of the Second Amendment right to bear arms are often portrayed in the media as right-wing racist "gun nuts." An ignorant and malicious article in the *New York Times* (23 May) says that the NRA "has traditionally equated pistols with patriotism." But then it lets slip that: "The gun association...started in 1871 as a rifle-training organization by former Union officers who were dismayed that their troops could not hit a bear in the

backside with a handful of sand...."

Today "crime" is the bourgeoisie's code word for going after blacks and other minorities. The *New York Times* is currently running a seemingly endless series on youth crime filled with photos of young black and Hispanic faces. Clinton's housing secretary Henry Cisneros is implementing massive search-and-seizure operations in government-financed projects where blacks are concentrated, in direct violation of Fourth Amendment protections. The NRA, which supposedly defends gun-owners' rights, is rabidly pro-cop, and self-defeatingly feeds the anti-crime frenzy, advocating more prisons and draconian "three strikes" sentences which will only leave the jails overflowing with senior citizens.

Blacks and Hispanics forced to live in the deadly high-crime areas of American cities know all too well the reality of lumpen crime, much of it fueled by the drug trade. If the bourgeoisie were really concerned about "violence," the logical step would be to decriminalize drugs immediately. Besides, the take-away-your-guns crowd doesn't believe their own propaganda about crime. As the pro-gun-control *New York Times* (5 May) admitted, "The proponents do not really believe that outlawing assault weapons would have much effect on crime," but is "a foot in the door" toward an outright total ban on handguns, or forcing all weapons to be registered.

Americans have good reason to want to keep their guns. The whole history of this country is strewn with examples of *ruling-class* violence: wiping out the Indians, mowing down strikers from Cripple Creek and Ludlow miners to Little Steel, the brutal suppression of ghetto rebellions from Watts '65 to South-Central L.A. in 1991. And when blacks defend their homes against racist terror, when workers defend their picket lines against scabs and gun thugs, the forces of the bourgeois state are mobilized against them.

Just over a year ago, in a combined FBI/BATF operation approved by the Clinton administration's attorney general Janet Reno, 86 men, women and children were murdered in a government assault on a racially integrated religious commune outside Waco, Texas. The feds brought in two helicopters, two M1A1 Abrams tanks, five M-60 main battle tanks (some equipped with CS gas dispersers), and nine Bradley armored fighting vehicles, along with enough submachine guns, grenade launchers and sniper rifles for a small army—which is what they had assembled

there. And with all this overkill, they tried to justify their fiery holocaust with charges of "illegal gun possession" (although the Branch Davidians' Colt AR-15 rifles were *legally owned*) and "child abuse"!

This cynical excuse comes from "General" Reno, who has the blood of *at least 25 children* she slaughtered at Waco on her hands. Nor will we ever forget the black MOVE commune in Philadelphia who lost eleven of their own, including five children, when they were attacked by the cops using fully automatic rifles and machine guns, and plastic explosive provided by the FBI and dropped from a police helicopter.

While they strip the population of its weapons, the murderous cops get outfitted with high-capacity 9mm Glock pistols. One "statistic" the tough-on-crime Democrats leave out is the black and Hispanic victims of racist cop terror. Instead they hide this in the death statistics of young black men, under the category of death by "Homicide and *Legal Intervention*"—killed by a cop.

The authors of the Bill of Rights passed the Second Amendment along with the others because they feared a despotic government. And from General AI ("I'm in charge here") Haig to Nixon's "enemies list" to Clinton's sinister BATF, the population of this country has plenty of reason to worry too. The assault on the Second Amendment may be the product of total racist hysteria on the part of the capitalist rulers...or they know exactly what they are doing. For our part, from the standpoint of the interests of the working class and oppressed minorities, we stand opposed to the bourgeoisie's campaign to disarm the people. ■

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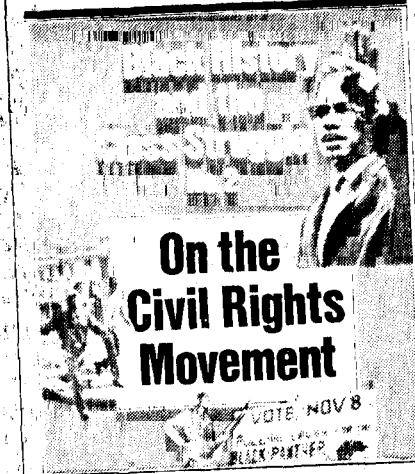
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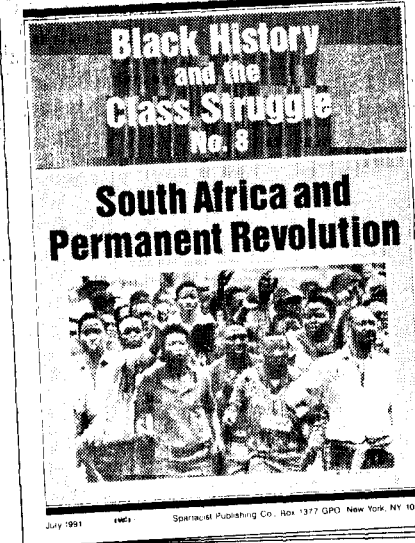
# On the Civil Rights Movement

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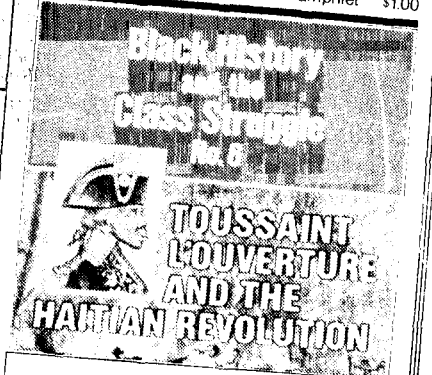
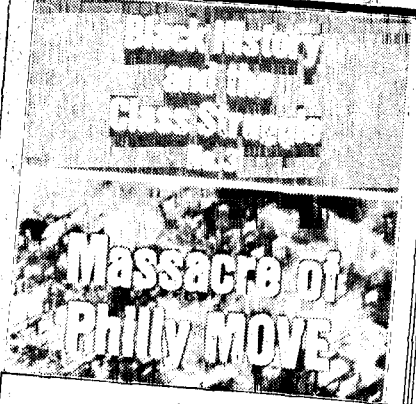
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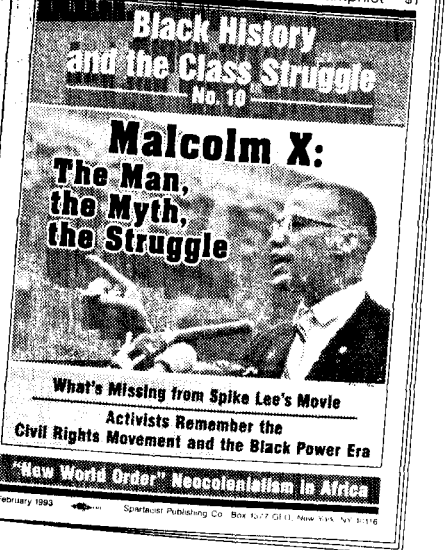
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What's Missing from Spike Lee's Movie  
Activists Remember the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Era  
"New World Order" Neocolonialism in Africa

