

# TORCH

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JULY 15 - AUGUST 14, 1983



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## Supreme Court Affirms Women's Right to Abortion

—EDITORIAL—

The struggle for women's rights and equality has been a difficult one in recent years, confronted by right-wing fanatics determined to drive women back into a totally subordinate position in the family and society, and by an economic crisis that is wiping out many of the gains made by women in employment and other areas, condemning poor women and their children to a life without a future.

On one front, however, women have just won an important victory, in the

form of a Supreme Court ruling reaffirming women's right to abortion.

It was 10 years ago that the high court issued its landmark decision (Roe v. Wade) saying that "a woman has a fundamental right to make the highly personal choice whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." This ruling legalized abortion throughout the U.S., saving millions of women from having to resort to wire hanger or back alley abortions that threatened their health and very lives. On the less tangible level, the

ruling seemed to legitimize a central tenet of the women's liberation movement: that women must be able to control their own bodies and reproduction if they are to gain control over their destinies.

The 1973 ruling has been the focus for activists on both sides of the abortion issue every since, as the right wing has sought to circumvent the ruling, with the goal of eventually reversing it altogether. These attempts have included passage of the Hyde Amendment, which

banned the use of federal (Medicaid) funds for poor women seeking abortions, and a slew of local and state laws all designed to limit women's right to have an abortion.

It was the legal challenge to these latter laws that once again brought the abortion issue before the Supreme Court.

In its most recent ruling, handed down on June 15, the court threw out various restrictive laws, of which an

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## Black People in the US: The Fight for Freedom

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SECCION EN  
ESPAÑOL

## Debategate: More Dirty Tricks

By PAUL BENJAMIN

An all-but-forgotten episode in the 1980 presidential campaign is rising up to haunt the Reagan administration.

No one paid much attention in 1980 when then-Republican congressman David Stockman told a group of his Michigan constituents that he had helped Reagan prepare for his debate with then-president Jimmy Carter with the aid of a "pilfered copy" of Carter's debate "briefing book." When Time reporter Laurence Barrett wrote an article about the "pilfered papers" in February 1981, his editors thought it was too unimportant to print. Even after Barrett briefly discussed the incident in his recent book on the Reagan administration, *Gambling With History*, no one—outside of a few former Carter campaign staff members—got very upset.

But when Congressman Donald Albosta (D-Michigan), head of a House subcommittee with jurisdiction over campaign ethics, began asking Reagan's aides about the briefing book, an all-too-familiar tale began to unfold. Some of the best-known and most powerful Reagan administrators began issuing admissions, denials, accusations and

counter-accusations all adding up to: "Don't blame me, it was the other guy."

Stockman, now head of the Office of Management and the Budget, admitted he had used the "pilfered papers," but said he got them from David Gergen, White House communications director, who had coordinated the Reagan campaign's debate preparations. Gergen at first denied seeing the papers, but later "discovered" hundreds of pages of Carter campaign documents in a file labeled "Afghanistan." James Baker, White House chief of staff, said he got the briefing book from William Casey, who headed Reagan's campaign and is now director of the CIA. Casey in turn more or less called Baker a liar.

Meanwhile, carloads of stolen Carter campaign material were turning up in Reagan files all over the country, including documents implying that Reagan adviser Edwin Meese and other top aides knew of a Reaganite "White House mole" on the Carter campaign staff. Revelations that the Reagan campaign staff had mobilized retired CIA agents and military officers to ferret out a feared "October surprise" by their opponents also surfaced. And reports started flying around Washington,

(Continued on page 6)

## Politicians vs. education

Dear Torch,

It's upsetting to see how Reagan and Democratic Party hopefuls are using the issue of education to get themselves elected. There have been numerous signs that declining education is of growing concern to the people of this country. The upset of Wilson Riles, long-time State Superintendent of Public Schools in California, by Bill Honig is an example of this. While Riles was generally viewed as a progressive liberal, California schools have so obviously been degenerating that when Honig vigorously campaigned around an active "back to basics" program, he was elected. Businesses are also voicing concern that so many young people interviewing for jobs are functionally illiterate. Since there are so few jobs out there to begin with, this no doubt increases parent concern that their sons and daughters get a high quality education so they can get a job. Education has always been viewed as the road to success, the way out of the slums, ghettos and barrios, by working class and poor people and to a large extent, until recent times, this has been true. But, as jobs disappear and education declines, parents' fear for their children's future makes them vulnerable to the lies of the politicians.

The Democrats campaigning for president picked up on education as an issue because Reagan's history on education has been so weak. The opportunism of each is revealed in that not one of them has a significant program to really make school more meaningful, interesting or useful for students. While in my generation (I'm in my mid-30s), working hard in school meant getting a decent job with decent pay, young people today don't see interesting or well-paying jobs waiting for them. They don't see how school and education is tied to their future lives. Their attitude toward school—with its outdated, boring, subtly racist books, few if any field trips, few if any extra-curricular activities, teachers who have so many students to relate to that they can't possibly give many the individual attention they need—is to get by with as little as possible.

I teach in the L.A. Public Schools and my classroom, in a brand new building, has no windows. Being in classrooms like this six hours a day is sensory deprivation. It is no wonder that young people under all these conditions have a hard time being interested in school.

If any of these Democrats were serious about education they would take these problems head on. Decent-paying jobs

would be guaranteed to high school students upon graduation. There would be plenty of field trips and a range of real life experiences that would be a regular part of their program. Books and other reading material would be honest, interesting and unbiased. Giving students as a whole, not an elite few, an actual voice in the school would go far in making education more relevant. Clean and healthful classrooms, with windows, would certainly be on their list of needs.

Instead of this kind of serious program, these politicians basically have a one-point program—merit pay for teachers. This program would give a few teachers higher pay, at the discretion of the administration. It would force teachers to work many hours of overtime—most teachers already work some—in an attempt to gain back some of the pay we've lost from inflation during the past 10 years. Artificial ways of measuring student success would be devised, wasting a lot of education funds, but not really improving education.

Not to be outmaneuvered by the Dems, Reagan has taken up the issue of education as his new calling. This opportunist has the nerve to try to come off as if he has more concern for our children than we do. In fact, what he has done is cut the federal education budget by billions, and now he's getting ready to send our youth to Central America to fight in a war which will benefit his rich capitalist friends.

The starting point of a decent education system in this country is a movement of parents, teachers and students that takes up and fights for an education system which really educates our children and prepares them for a decent life.

Elaine Scott  
Los Angeles

## On global trade war

Dear Torch,

In your April 15-May 14, 1983, newspaper you wrote an article on the threat of Global Trade War. This is true and if something isn't done to stop it or at least slow the rate down there won't be a tomorrow!

For someone like me who is in prison, life stops on the inside. But life goes on on the outside—this is fact. So people like me are one day "kicked out"—and are faced with something like this. And that is why a lot of them come back to prison. Unemployment is the big one that does it to them—"no jobs, no money."

Still, he or she is after all human and the will to live and eat is powerful. I just hope and pray to God that some way the world's economic problems can be met. Or there won't be a tomorrow.

Bobby D. Lawson  
Huntsville, TX

## Appreciates clear and enlightening reporting

Dear Torch,

As a recent subscriber to the Torch, I look forward to receiving your paper for the clear and enlightening articles you print. I have been reading left-wing press for many years, but do not find any other current publication that presents facts so concisely and clearly on complicated and sometimes confusing issues as you do.

I rarely write letters like this to newspapers, but your last paper inspired me to do so. The complex situation in Southeast Asia, with the many factions and political forces, has been nothing less than bewildering to me; especially in light of my past participation in actions and demonstrations on the issues in Southeast Asia. I must say your two page explanation clarified the events and I was able to grasp and understand and perhaps deplore what forces exist and are at play there.

I look forward to future editions and your continued high caliber reporting.

Sincerely,  
Clara Ghinger  
Yonkers, NY

## Torch warmly received at TDC

Comrades,

I am most pleased to address this letter to the Torch. Because of those that enable indigent prisoners such as myself to be a subscriber to the Torch, I now would like to say "thank you."

I have been a subscriber for several years now and each month I anxiously await the arrival of the Torch. Though there are some times when my captors refuse to allow some Torch publications to be viewed by myself and others, we realize the motives behind denying us the opportunity to receive our publications of Torch.

As a "branded" (recalcitrant, rebellious and revolutionary prisoner) within this system called TDC (my interpretation is Texas Department of Corruptions), I virtually climax with each issue of my Torch. It is a most encouraging, enlightening, spirit-lifting, educational and very warmly received paper that I cherish tremendously.

I share it with some prisoners (those worthy and interested) and they are as anxious as I to get the next issue. I have been locked up for almost 11 years,

yet the faith and belief that I have in the "people" has not declined or faltered any. "Power belongs to the people" and it is through the diligent efforts of those responsible for the publication Torch that the people can come to realize and understand all that it takes to attain the Power that is ours—but presently not fully ours. We have come a long way in our struggle for "human rights" and in the final analysis, we shall have "human rights for all oppressed and poor peoples of this world." A Luta Continua!  
Dedan Deda Kimithi  
Retrieve Slave Plantation  
Angleton, TX

## Interested in socialism and anarchism

Dear Torch/La Antorcha,

I'm 14 and have a great interest in socialism and anarchism. Your paper, Torch, puts forth a very good socialist point of view.

Other papers claim to, but just represent a warped liberal point of view and are about as revolutionary as Good House-keeping.

I think that Torch/La Antorcha sheds a much needed light on a vastly misunderstood subject. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,  
Doug Lewis

## Would like to join RSL

Dear Torch:

I received your letter dated June 28, 1983. I feel an obligation to write and express my appreciation to you and the Revolutionary Socialist League for making available to me each month the Torch/La Antorcha newspaper. I also firmly believe in and appreciate what the Revolutionary Socialist League stands for and I sincerely hope for the unlimited advancement of the RSL.

I will send a donation to the Revolutionary Socialist League next week, at which time I will have received something to donate. Also in the very near future I wish to, if possible, have a write up concerning the so-called justice system here in Mississippi.

Also I wish very much to know how I could join the RSL. I would like very much to join, and to be of any assistance that I could possibly provide.

Respectfully yours,  
Grady D. Harris  
Hinds County Detention  
Jackson, Mississippi

Greetings,

Just these few lines to congratulate everyone who is involved in making the Torch a newspaper which brings out facts about capitalism. Since I have been receiving the Torch it has taught me that capitalism is not the way for the working people.

I will be looking forward to the Torch now and in the future. As a prisoner and a subscriber, I would like to say "keep up the good work," and "Unidos Venceremos!!!"

Respectfully yours,  
Arnolfo Cortez

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For subscription rates and information, see subscription blank in this issue.

# Chur Stril

By WILLIAM FAL

When Pope John Paul II... to Poland this June, he a... gather the Polish people aro... celebrate the honor and glo... Solidarity union. After a year... of military rule, more than o... all Poles came out to greet the... hold high the Solidarność ba... once fought behind. Thus, i... trip seemed, at least at first, to... defeat for the "Communist... regime led by General Wojc...

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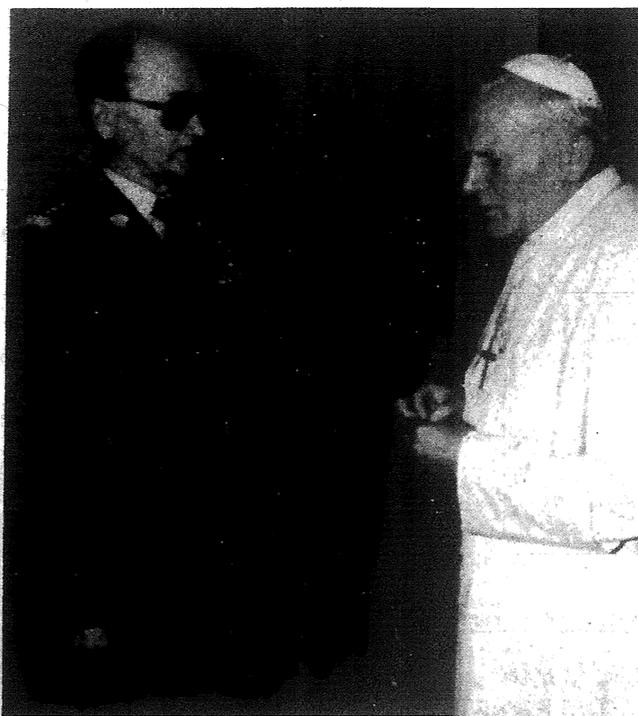
Some reports say that as pa... agreement the church will spo... trade unions, which would ex... Solidarity leadership. These... while legally separate from t... would tacitly support the reg... is the mirror image of the sit... Italy, where a Vatican-sponsor... cal party (the Christian Democ... its unions form the governme... tacit support of the Commun... and the unions it-controls.)

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Just before the Pope's trip... government head Jaruzelski d... his strategic goal as one of "es... ing constructive... relations... the lay state together with its l... ing force, the Communist Party... broad masses of believers a...

# Church and State Strike a Deal in Poland

By WILLIAM FALK



Polish leader Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski and Pope John Paul II pose for a picture during the Pope's visit to Poland.

## Interested in socialism and anarchism

Dear Torch/La Antorcha.

I'm 14 and have a great interest in socialism and anarchism. Your paper, Torch, puts forth a very good socialist point of view.

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I think that Torch/La Antorcha sheds a much needed light on a vastly misunderstood subject. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,  
Doug Lewis

## Capitalism is not the way for working people

Greetings,

Just these few lines to congratulate everyone who is involved in making the Torch a newspaper which brings out facts about capitalism. Since I have been receiving the Torch it has taught me that capitalism is not the way for the working people.

I will be looking forward to the Torch now and in the future. As a prisoner and a subscriber, I would like to say "keep up the good work," and "Unidos Venceremos!!!"

Respectfully yours,  
Arnolfo Cortez

When Pope John Paul II went home to Poland this June, he appeared to gather the Polish people around him to celebrate the honor and glory of the Solidarity union. After a year and a half of military rule, more than one third of all Poles came out to greet the Pope and hold high the Solidarność banners they once fought behind. Thus, the Pope's trip seemed, at least at first, to be a huge defeat for the "Communist" military regime led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

But behind the veil of his verbal challenges to the Polish government, the Pope was carefully laying the basis for a political agreement between the church and the ruling authorities of Poland. Today, in the aftermath of Pope John Paul II's trip, a new level of church-state cooperation is being negotiated. While the precise details of the impending arrangements are not yet clear, the Polish regime and the Vatican have both said enough that the broad outlines can be surmised:

The church will discourage and even condemn attempts by the Solidarity underground to maintain its struggle against the regime. Of course, the church will continue to endorse the "ideals" of Solidarity, but only as "spiritual values"—not goals to be achieved by action, either now or in the future. The church will also help the Polish military regime obtain loans and trade agreements with Western European and U.S. banks. Most importantly, the church will urge cooperation in the regime's efforts to increase production both on the farms and in industry.

In return for its support, the church has been promised official recognition from the state in a new law to be passed this winter. It will get wide freedom of action to conduct its affairs, "create Catholic lay organizations, build schools, parish churches and continue to publish its own newspapers. Martial law will be formally lifted, possibly as early as July 22.

In other words, the Catholic church will become an official institution in Poland in return for counseling the workers and small farmers to obey and cooperate with the government. Freedoms the partisans of Solidarity fought and in some cases died for in 1980 and 1981—and then lost in December 1981—will exist as the special privilege of the clergy.

Some reports say that as part of the agreement the church will sponsor new trade unions, which would exclude the Solidarity leadership. These unions, while legally separate from the state, would tacitly support the regime. (This is the mirror image of the situation in Italy, where a Vatican-sponsored political party [the Christian Democrats] and its unions form the government with the tacit support of the Communist Party and the unions it controls.)

There have also been predictions that Poland will open diplomatic relations with the Vatican. What has been announced for sure is an ambitious program under which a Vatican-formed foundation will obtain billions of dollars from Western Banks to aid Polish agriculture.

Just before the Pope's trip, Polish government head Jaruzelski described his strategic goal as one of "establishing constructive...relations between the lay state together with its lay leading force, the Communist Party, and the broad masses of believers and the

church." Jaruzelski may have achieved his aim.

The result: The ruling class of Poland is about to cut a deal with the Catholic Church, which retains the loyalty of the vast majority of Poles. The ruling class's part of the bargain is the strengthening of the church apparatus and its leadership. In return, the church will use its prestige to defuse the Polish people's struggle against the government and to defeat the more irreconcilable opposition forces.

## Shabby treatment for Walesa

Perhaps the most dramatic signal of the developing church-state agreement was the Pope's treatment of Lech Walesa. Walesa, the most prominent of Solidarity's leaders, was also the union leader closest to the Catholic Church hierarchy. Throughout the period of Solidarity's open existence, Walesa consistently headed the tendency inside the union that argued for moderation and compromise and worked in concert with the church hierarchy.

Today, however, Walesa is no longer the "reasonable" man who can control the "hothead" leaders and an impatient rank and file. Instead, he is a symbol of the whole Solidarity movement and its past challenge to the ruling class. As such, he is a symbol that both the church and state would rather do without. On June 24, the semi-official Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, ran a front-page article that said, "Officially, Lech Walesa passes once more from the scene. We can say that he has lost the battle.... Sometimes the sacrifice of uncomfortable people is necessary so a higher good can be born for the

community."

Commenting on Walesa's June 21 audience with the Pope, the article noted that Walesa "had to meet the holy father as a private person in a secret manner without demanding to count any longer in the present phase of life in his country." Indeed, the audience was so private that a picture of the Pope and Walesa together was never released. In contrast, a picture of the Pope shaking hands in a friendly way with Polish leader Jaruzelski was widely distributed.

One day after the L'Osservatore Romano article appeared, its author, Reverend Virgilio Levi, was asked to resign as deputy editor of the paper. But the deputy editor's sin was apparently bluntness rather than dishonesty—neither the Vatican nor L'Osservatore Romano have denounced or criticized the contents of the article.

## 'Forget and forgive'

While the result of the Pope's trip to Poland may come as a surprise to many, in retrospect, it can be seen that many of the Pope's comments made during his visit were aimed precisely at establishing a concordat with the regime.

Thus, even as he praised Solidarity, the Pope emphasized that, "Forgiveness is not weakness. To forgive does not mean to give up truth and justice." Over and over, he counseled against "hatred and revenge," and stressed that: "The discussion that has been going on in Poland in recent years...cannot be resolved in any other way than through a true dialogue between the authorities and society."

Nearly all the Pope's statements had a strong Polish nationalist theme and he encouraged the use of the old Polish

royalist emblem—the eagle with a crown—as a symbol of protest. While Polish nationalism is an essential element of Solidarity's politics, the Pope was fanning it for his own purposes: 1) To prepare the ground for a government of national reconciliation that would bring all Poles, including the Jaruzelski government, together; 2) to give the church, as the historical embodiment of the Polish nation—it is the only continuous Polish national institution—the right to judge what is and is not appropriate political action.

In his sermons, John Paul walked what Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, who accompanied the Pope to Poland, called "a slippery tightrope." "He cannot conceal the truth, indeed he must state it. But he must also make sure that this does not lead to an overreaction on the part of the people. He is calling for moderation as he knows that the good of the nation will not be served by political outbursts," the Cardinal told the Wall Street Journal.

## Church solidarity with authorities

Despite common impressions, the impending church-state deal does not represent a fundamental break from the church's past role in Poland. It has always favored social stability and respect for authority over justice and freedom. During the very birth of Solidarity, for instance, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński told the Gdańsk shipyard workers they should give up their struggle long before the government gave in and recognized the new union. Similarly, during the heady days of Solidarity's struggle that followed, the church constantly urged retreat, compromise and cooperation with the regime. In the fall of 1980, for example, the church urged Solidarity to accept a court decision that inserted a clause into the union's constitution that asserted "the leading role of the Communist Party" in society. It was only the mass strikes, waged by millions of workers against the advice of the church hierarchy and the Solidarity leaders close to the clergy, that forced the regime to back down.

More recently, the church helped defeat a general strike the Solidarity underground called last December. It also opposed demonstrations this past May and called on Polish actors to end their boycott of state television and theater.

Since most Poles have illusions in the Pope—and because the more militant workers' leaders are still in prison—the impending deal between the church and the Polish government may prove to mark the end of a whole chapter in the Polish class struggle. But the marriage of church and state has not yet been concluded. Many times before the Polish workers, despite their loyalty to Roman Catholicism, have balked at following the hierarchy's line of "quiet but blessed suffering." It is true that, today, the Polish workers are demoralized and confused by the defeat of December 1981. It is also true that the level of struggle, organization and consciousness of the earlier Solidarity days is not likely to be regained in the immediate future. But no Tsar, Pope, King or General has ever permanently defeated the Polish people in the past—and it is unlikely that they have done so now. □

## Racism— Alabama style

Two members of the Ku Klux Klan were arrested June 16 for the March 1981 lynching of a 19-year-old Black man, Michael Anthony Donald. Donald had left his aunt's house in Baldwin County, Alabama, to get cigarettes at about 11 p.m. on Friday, March 20, 1981. He was found hanging from an elm tree in nearby Mobile the next morning.

Medical evidence indicated that Donald was beaten, strangled with a rope noose, his throat cut and then hung from a tree.

On March 25, 1981, three young white men were arrested in connection with Donald's slaying. Police claimed that the three had killed Donald in an argument over a drug deal, brushing away suggestions that the murder was racially motivated. However, a grand jury refused to indict the three men after one witness recanted her testimony and another was shown to be lying. Mobile police then admitted they had no evidence Donald had ever been involved with drugs.

Now, nearly two and a half years after the lynching, two members of the Ku Klux Klan have been arrested. Reportedly, James Knowles, 19, is ready to testify that he and a friend, Henry Hays, 28, picked up Donald at random and murdered him to show the anger of the Klan over a jury verdict finding a Black man innocent of killing a white policeman.

Knowles has entered a guilty plea to charges of conspiracy to violate federal civil rights laws —reportedly in return for leniency on a state murder charge. He is being held without bond, with a recommendation for a life sentence. Hays is being held in the Mobile county jail on a \$1 million bond.

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In a separate case in Baldwin County, a former county judge has asked the Alabama Supreme Court to reverse the suspension he received for ordering a Black man in a divorce case to have a vasectomy. Freddie Lee Scott, 42, had the sterilization operation last December, two days after Judge Wilson said there were "enough pickaninnies in the world," and gave Scott a two-week deadline to get the operation.

Scott says he complied with the order because he wanted to be awarded the house where he and his wife Dorothy had lived together prior to their seven-year separation. Scott is now suing Hayes for \$20 million. The judge had been defeated in a re-election bid in the November 1982 election and was in the final weeks of his term when the Scott divorce came before him. The five and a half week suspension cost him \$6,000 in lost salary and that is what he now wants to recover.

—WF



Torchphotos by Steve Rose, Ian Daniels and Elaine Scott.

## Lesbian and Gay Pride Day — 1983

An estimated 60,000 people marched in New York City's Christopher Street Liberation Day Lesbian and Gay Pride March on June 26. The march drew a turnout larger than last year's despite last-minute threats by right-wing and religious groups to stop the march, and despite a threatened counter-demonstration by anti-gay bigots. Significantly, this march was the first one in the 13-year history of New York's gay pride marches to face such threats.

After failing in a legal suit to cancel the march, a group called Catholic War Veterans held a counter-protest of about 100 people near St. Patrick's Cathedral. The counter-demonstrators had wanted the march stopped on the grounds that it was "sacrilegious." They carried such signs as "Stop the Homosexual Takeover" and "Down with Koch and Bellamy and Their Gay Empire" (referring to two leading New York politicians who are widely believed to be gay). Also thwarted was a call by the right-wing daily *New York Post* to have the march canceled and have all gay bars and baths closed for the weekend on the grounds that they pose a major health threat with the potential spread of AIDS, as gay people from all over the northeast congregated for gay pride weekend.

Within the march, a number of left and progressive groups organized the Militant Stonewall Contingent to put forward the view that lesbians and gays must fight for their liberation, and that the struggles of all oppressed people are connected.

The contingent was endorsed and supported by over 20 lesbian, gay and left organizations. Unfortunately, the unity of the Stonewall contingent was disrupted by actions of the Workers World Party-led All-People's Congress (APC). While the APC endorsed the contingent, at the last minute they refused to coordinate tactics with Stonewall contingent organizers, disregarding previously agreed upon plans, and generally tried to take over the contingent. Despite this sectarianism, members of NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association), Radical Women, American Gay Athiests, Lavender Left, the RSL and other groups marched behind the Militant Stonewall Contingent banner. Almost 1,000 buttons produced by the Stonewall contingent to help politicize the lesbian and gay pride march were sold at the march and in the days preceding by contingent organizers. (The button reads: "Diversity Is Our Strength, Liberation Is Our Fight—Militant Stonewall Contingent for Lesbian and Gay

Liberation, 1983," in English or Spanish, set over a pink triangle. They are still available for \$1 each; write to the Torch.)

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An estimated 90,000 people turned out to watch or participate in Los Angeles' annual Christopher Street West (Gay Pride) parade on June 26. But only one of the 150 marching units carried a directly political theme. That was the "U.S. Out of El Salvador!" contingent, organized by the Gay and Lesbian Committee of Echo Park CISPES. Seventy-five people marched behind the CISPES banner, raising chants such as "CIA, Out of Nicaragua!" and "F-M-L-N, FMLN Will Win!" The day's favorite chant, however, which drew loud applause from the thousands of onlookers, was "Money for AIDS, Not for War, U.S. Out of El Salvador!"

Other groups which marched in the contingent included NAMBLA, the Feminist Women's Health Center, Freedom Socialist Party, Democratic Socialists of America,

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Federation for Progress, and the RSL.

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In Ann Arbor, Michigan, after a week of workshop activities, Lesbian and Gay Pride Day culminated in a march and rally of over 150 people on June 25. While the speeches were going on, a man in his late thirties stopped his car and began yelling about "sick homosexuals." Later, the man attacked a woman demonstrator, hitting her in the face. The woman fought back until others intervened to stop the fight. About an hour later, however, after the march was completed, the same man returned with a shotgun. Luckily, one of the demonstrators spotted him and alerted the single cop assigned to the rally, who then removed the shotgun, a box of ammunition and a six-pack of beer from the man's car. While a serious attack was avoided, the incident was one more indication of the rapidly rising tide of anti-gay bigotry throughout the country.

Anti-gay bigots hold counter-demonstration at NYC's Lesbian and Gay Pride Day march. This year's marches witnessed a sharp rise in anti-gay threats and violence across the country.



Torchphoto by Steve Rose

## Spontaneity in Czecho- slovakia

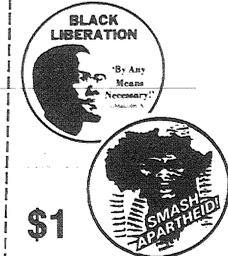
Writing in the July 9 issue of the *Nation* magazine, long-time Czech dissident Milan Simecka recalls: "As far back as I can remember, campaigning for peace in Czechoslovakia has been an activity reserved for official dignitaries, for scientists, artists and clergymen who are selected to attend peace congresses abroad and to exhort audiences at officially sponsored events at which beer and sausages are served and few bother to listen. A detached observer might well conclude that people in our country couldn't care less whether there is peace or war. I would point out to him that we do care, deeply, but that we cannot show it spontaneously because such expressions have been preempted by the state, and are assigned to selected individuals whose task is to instruct us in such matters. Spontaneity is not permitted."

But Simecka spoke too soon. On June 21, several hundred Czechoslovak youth heckled official speakers and fought with police on the opening day of a state-sponsored "World Assembly for Peace and Life Against Nuclear War" held in Prague, June 21-26. It was the first large street demonstration in Czechoslovakia in over 15 years.

The youth interrupted a rally by shouting "We want freedom!" Police moved in but the protesters evaded them by blending into the crowd. After midnight over 300 youths chanting, "We want peace and freedom!" formed into groups and marched to Wenceslas Square, a center of protest activities during the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Police attacked them with truncheons and after some initial scuffles the protesters scattered.

—WF

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Torchphotos by Steve Rose, Ian Daniels and Elaine Scott.

## Spontaneity in Czechoslovakia

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## Livermore anti-nuke activists stage jail strike

Over 1,000 women and men were arrested on June 18-20 after demonstrating outside the government's main nuclear weapons laboratory—and then over 900 of them went on strike while in jail, plea bargaining as a group until they won acceptable sentences.

The demonstration—at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory outside San Francisco—was part of a national Disarmament Action Day. About 2,500 people, the majority of them women, took part in the protest, which was organized by the Livermore Action Group and the Mobilization for Survival. Demonstrators lay on the road in front of the laboratory and were arrested by a police force of over 1,000.

Once they were in jail, Judge John Lewis tried to slap the protesters with \$500 fines and two years probation. But the anti-nuke protesters balked, particularly because the probation would expose them to harsh penalties if they were arrested at future demonstrations. They struck, refusing to leave the tents that served as temporary jails and telling the judge he would have to come to them if he wanted to carry out any arraignments. The protesters also began complaining about the food, the daytime heat and the nighttime cold.

Judge Lewis initially considered having the protesters hauled bodily into court in groups of 60, but then backed off. On June 30, state prosecutors, Judge Lewis and the anti-nuclear activists' lawyers reached an agreement: In return for cooperating with the



arraignment and entering guilty pleas to a minor charge of blocking traffic, the protesters would be sentenced to \$240 fines or six more days in jail—but not probation.

—WF

## Stop the death flights!

The protest campaign against Mexicana Airlines' deportation death flights of El Salvadoran refugees continues in Los Angeles with frequent picket lines outside Mexicana's three area ticket offices. Mexicana is the target for the campaign because the airline is collaborating with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the deportation of Salvadorans who have fled their government's terrorism but who have been denied asylum in the U.S. Every month, nearly 1,000 refugees are sent on Mexicana Airlines flights to San Salvador.

On June 18, nearly 100 people marched from one of Mexicana's downtown offices to the other, picketing both and temporarily disrupting business when protesters entered the offices to deliver written demands. The next such action is scheduled for July 30.

Meanwhile, a coalition formed in Southeastern

Michigan, the Committee to Stop the Death Flights, has announced plans to hold a demonstration July 26 in front of the INS office to protest the INS/Mexicana Airlines complicity in deporting Salvadoran refugees. Activists in the coalition have been building for the demonstration by going door-to-door in Detroit's Chicano and Mexican communities.

In Chicago, about 40 people marched on July 6 in front of the downtown office of Mexicana in a spirited picket line sponsored by the Circle Organizing Committee on El Salvador and Central America. Hundreds of leaflets were distributed and spokesperson Maria Teresa said, "We'll be back!"

During the Second Mexico/U.S. Border Conference in Solidarity with the Salvadoran People, held July 2-3 in Tijuana, the Mexicana protest campaign received a strong endorsement. All of the 150 groups participating in the conference were urged, by a unanimous resolution, to take up the campaign.

A Refugee Commission, elected by the conference, will provide coordination of the work between Mexican and U.S. groups. The Border Conference accepted the proposal of one Echo Park (Los Angeles) CISPES member who stressed the urgent need for Mexican groups to apply political and economic pressure on Mexicana at its offices inside Mexico:

For further information on

the growing campaign against Mexicana Airlines' deportation death flights, see "Events" on this page.

## El Centro hunger strike ends

Forty-three hunger strikers at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) prison in El Centro, California, have ended their strike after two weeks, on the advice of outside supporters, when one person became ill. The strike began June 2 as a protest against guard brutality and poor conditions inside the prison, which houses about 300 undocumented immigrants—most of them from Central America. As a concession to the strikers, the INS has announced plans to provide a library and a number of pinball machines for their use. Previously, prisoners who requested reading material were given a copy of the Bible, but nothing else.

In addition, the INS says it will plant several large trees in the prison yard to provide more shade for the prisoners, who are required to stay outside all day in desert temperatures which often reach 110 degrees.

But behind the concessions lies the fist of the state. Since the strike began, seven people, identified as strike leaders, have been removed to a federal prison in San Diego and charged with felonies. Their cases are now awaiting trial. For information on how you can help, contact: Santana Chirino Amaya Central American Refugee Committee, 1345 S. Burlington, Los Angeles, CA 90006, (213) 487-2534.

## Quote of the month

"What I want to see above all else is that this country remains a country where someone can always get rich. That's the thing that we have and that must be preserved."

—Ronald Reagan

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## EVENTS

**FIGHT FOR JOBS, PEACE AND FREEDOM!**  
On Saturday, August 27, several hundred thousand people will march on Washington, D.C., in what is expected to be the largest civil rights demonstration in the U.S. in decades. The RSL is organizing for the march and will be in Washington raising our revolutionary socialist point of view. For information on our plans or to ride on the RSL bus from New York City, call (212) 695-6802 or write RSL, Box 1288, New York, NY 10116.

### DETROIT

July 26—Picket Line Against Deportation Death Flights at INS Office, 333 Mt. Elliott (corner of Jefferson), 4:30 pm. Sponsored by Committee to Stop the Death Flights. For more info: (313) 841-9200.

### CONCORD, CALIFORNIA

July 24—Stop US Arms Shipments to El Salvador! March

and rally against the use of Port Chicago for the shipment of arms to El Salvador and the storage of nuclear weapons. Assemble at 1:00 at the Concord BART station. Rally at 3:00 in Concord Blvd. Park. To march with the RSL, call (213) 385-6029.

July 25—Land and Sea Blockade of Port Chicago. Mass civil

disobedience will be carried out. For info, call (415) 644-3636.

### LOS ANGELES

July 30—Stop Mexicana Airlines Death Flights! Picket Mexicana's ticket office, 432 S. Broadway, 12 noon. Sponsored by Echo Park CISPES. For more info, call (213) 660-4587 or (213) 385-6029.

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Federation for Progress, and the RSL.

####

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, after a week of workshop activities, Lesbian and Gay Pride Day culminated in a march and rally of over 150 people on June 25. While the speeches were going on, a man in his late thirties stopped his car and began yelling about "sick homosexuals." Later, the man attacked a woman demonstrator, hitting her in the face. The woman fought back until others intervened to stop the fight. About an hour later, however, after the march was completed, the same man returned with a shotgun. Luckily, one of the demonstrators spotted him and alerted the single cop assigned to the rally, who then removed the shotgun, a box of ammunition and a six-pack of beer from the man's car. While a serious attack was avoided, the incident was one more indication of the rapidly rising tide of anti-gay bigotry throughout the country.



Torchphoto by Steve Rose

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# Women's Right to Abortion

(Continued from page 1)

ordinance passed in 1978 by the Akron, Ohio, city council was a case in point. Among the ordinance's 17 provisions "regulating" abortion was one that required "informed consent" by the woman seeking an abortion. To the Akron city council this meant requiring doctors to tell women that the fetus is a "human life" from the moment of conception, and that abortion is a major surgical procedure with numerous possible physical and psychological complications.

The Akron law also mandated a 24-hour waiting period, after a woman signed a consent form, before she could have the abortion. It required parental notification and consent before an unmarried minor could have an abortion, and it said that second and third trimester abortions could only be performed in a hospital. Previously, such abortions were available in licensed clinics, where they were less expensive than in-hospital abortions and, more importantly, more accessible, since most Akron hospitals refuse to perform abortions.

By a 6-3 vote the court ruled that these measures violated its 1973 ruling, which limited the state's role in regulating abortion to "the preservation and protection of maternal health." It noted that Akron's informed consent clause appeared to be designed "not to inform the woman's consent but rather to persuade her to withhold it altogether."

The three dissenting votes came from the two justices who opposed the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973 (Byron White and William Rehnquist) and the first woman to sit on the court, Reagan appointee Sandra Day O'Connor. O'Connor wrote the minority opinion, which basically argued against the framework established by Roe v. Wade for legal abortion, and declared that the abortion issue should be settled legislatively, not judicially. She has thus paid back her debt to Reagan, who appointed her amid a storm of criticism from right-wingers who felt her opposition to abortion was too soft.

## Double setback for anti-choice movement

The June 15 ruling was a blow to the anti-abortion movement, and was followed by another setback in the Senate in late June. There the issue was a constitutional amendment to nullify the 1973 Supreme Court ruling. Different amendments have been promoted by one or another wing of the anti-abortion movement over the past several years, but the one that came to the floor stated only that "A right to abortion is not secured by this Constitution." This wording was roundly opposed by arch-reactionary Sen. Jesse Helms, among others, because it did not actually ban abortion. But it was the amendment given the best chance of passage by Senate conservatives. When the vote came, they mustered a not-insignificant 49 votes, but this was far short of the 67 votes needed for passage. Following the vote, the principal sponsor of the measure, Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), conceded defeat, saying, "Frankly, I'm going on to other issues."

Taken together, the Supreme Court ruling and the rejection of the Hatch Amendment in the Senate represent a significant defeat for the anti-choice movement. On the judicial level this movement pretty much has no place to go. On the federal legislative level, the fight for a constitutional ban on abortion has been, at least temporarily, derailed. Anti-abortion activists now say they will take their fight to the states and localities; but if, as they say, their

determination is greater than ever, it is also true that the movement has shrunk and suffered from its inability to make any serious progress toward its goal.

## No time for complacency

On the other hand, now is not the time for complacency. Orrin Hatch's talk of moving on to other issues should not be taken lightly, and we can expect the right wing to step up its focus on other aspects of its agenda, particularly, at the moment, education. Most importantly,

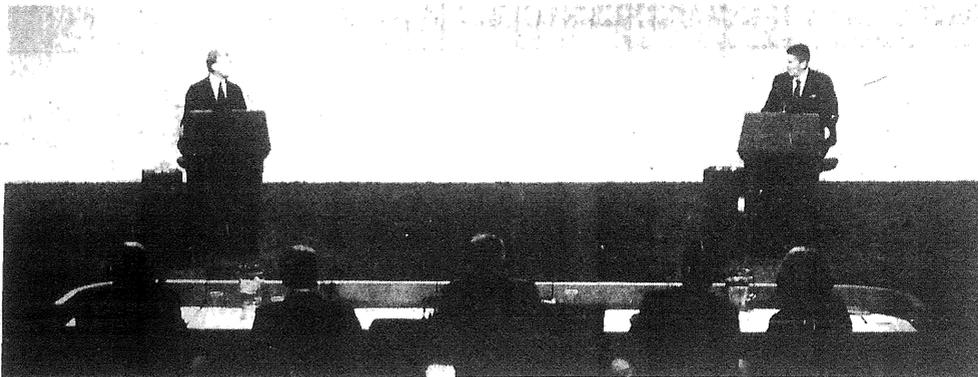
the right-wing movement is still very strong in this country, although it is going through a period of upheaval as the glow of the Reagan victory has worn off, and the conservative leaders must now try to demonstrate that behind their rhetoric are practicable solutions to the economic and social problems confronting the country and even the world.

For women, and others kept down in this society, this time is also contradictory. There can be no doubt but that the Supreme Court decision is a tremendous legal victory, one that is likely to secure the right to abortion for the foreseeable future. But it would be wrong to exult too much, when the actual, material

conditions of life for most women are, if anything, getting worse. Economically, the recession has hit women hard, reversing the inroads made by women into traditionally male jobs. It is also becoming increasingly clear that women and their children comprise the vast majority of the nation's poor. At the same time, violence against women—rape and spouse abuse—is on the rise.

The principle of the right to choose has been upheld. But as long as a woman's choice is conditioned by a myriad of economic and social factors beyond her control, that choice cannot truly be free.

—Sue Edmunds



# Debategate: More Dirty Tricks

(Continued from page 1)

D.C., about sexual hijinks between Carter and Reagan campaign staff members, demonstrating that politics does indeed make strange bedfellows.

The avalanche of publicity forced Reagan to back off his earlier stance that the "pilfered papers" story (now known as "Debategate") was "much ado about nothing." Reagan has been forced to authorize an FBI investigation of how the Carter papers came into the hands of the Reagan campaign, and has promised to fire anyone guilty of wrongdoing.

## Where does the buck stop?

While some Democrats are eager to use Debategate as a club against the administration, other top party leaders want to minimize the whole affair. On July 12, both House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill and House Majority Leader Jim Wright said they personally opposed a congressional Debategate investigation. They warned that an investigation would be perceived as a partisan political maneuver by the Democrats and would "divert attention from the real flaws of the Reagan presidency."

Probably more important to their stance is the fact that the whole business makes the Carter administration—and by implication the Democratic Party—look pretty bad. As Newsweek put it: "The Carter White House had been leaking secrets like a sieve." Top Democrats hardly want to revive memories of the bumbling Carter presidency as they head into an election year.

But this is scant consolation for the Reagan administration, which is under the gun right now. The FBI investigation, along with the House subcommittee hearings set to begin in September,

could very well turn up more dirt on the 1980 Reagan campaign. And at least one, if not several, Reagan staff members may eventually get the axe for obtaining and using the Carter papers.

## Power struggle in Reagan administration

The advent of yet another political scandal in Washington hardly comes as a surprise. Capitalist politicians aren't the most ethical people in the world, and everyone knows this. Eighty-five percent of the people polled in a recent Newsweek survey said they believe spying is at least an occasional feature of political campaigns. Nevertheless, Debategate is not without significance.

One effect of the scandal has been to rekindle the power struggle between the moderate ("pragmatist") and hardline ("ideological") factions among Reagan's closest advisers. The "pragmatists" in the Reagan camp—Baker, Stockman and Gergen among others—whose ties are with the Republican Party's traditional supporters in the financial and industrial elite, contend that the administration needs to compromise with moderate Republicans and Democrats in Congress on major issues to enact its programs into law. The "pragmatists" also believe that a majority of people in the country are not as conservative as Reagan and, as a result, argue that the president has to appear to tilt toward the center if he is to get himself reelected in 1984, assuming he chooses to run.

On the other side, Casey and Meese, along with Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and National Security adviser William Clark among others, belong to a hardline faction which has urged the president to "let Reagan be Reagan," that is, to come out openly for

his full right-wing program and use his political clout to bulldoze it through Congress. Most of these people have been with Reagan for years and have friendly ties with the New Right.

Each faction hopes the other will be saddled with responsibility for Debategate—and each is trying to help their opponents to the exits with some judicious namedropping. As New Right leader Richard Viguerie put it, "If it's got to happen to someone, better them than us."

## Political crisis in U.S. ruling class

On a broader level, scandals like Debategate reflect the ongoing political crisis in the U.S. ruling class. The seemingly unending tales of petty and big-time corruption are slowly eating away at the moral authority the capitalists and capitalist politicians need to rule effectively. Every recent administration has been plagued by one scandal or another. As a result, most people in the U.S. increasingly have little faith in the sincerity and honesty of the country's leadership.

Even more important, the capitalists and their political representatives have no answers to the mounting problems facing U.S. society—the economy, the crisis of the educational system, arms control, the destruction of the environment, etc. Consequently, there is no serious political debate over real issues, either during elections or in between. Instead, U.S. politics increasingly consists of media hype and dirty tricks; it is always easier for politicians to defeat opponents by looking better on TV or dredging up muck than by coming up with alternative policies. Meanwhile, the country, and the world, are lurching toward the brink of destruction. □

# Anti-War Mexico/U

By ALBERT LARY

Four hundred political activists from northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest gathered in Tijuana July 2 and 3 for the Second Mexico/U.S. Border Conference in Solidarity with the Salvadorean People. The meeting was an exciting indication of the growth of the anti-war movement and its potential to develop into a militant international struggle against U.S. imperialism.

Delegates at the conference represented a wide variety of interests—leftist parties, trade unions, community groups, service organizations, religious student, anti-nuclear, gay, women, Black, Chicano, and refugee support groups.

The plan of action adopted by the conference includes a series of local demonstrations against military bases and Honduran consulates in the U.S. (highlighting the collaboration between the U.S. and Honduras in attacking Nicaragua and the Salvadorean rebels) and against U.S. consulates in Mexico. This campaign will take place throughout September and October of this year.

On November 12, three large mobilizations are planned—in Mexico City, Washington, D.C., and a city on the West Coast. Additional actions will be scheduled on the day of the upcoming Salvadorean national elections—a date not yet certain but possibly as early as December. On January 22, 1984, an international protest march will be held with contingents converging on the U.S.-Mexico border from both sides. The exact location was not decided.

In a separate action plan presented specifically on behalf of refugees, the conference adopted a declaration which says in part: "...The refugees on both sides of the border of Mexico and the United States suffer exploitation and continuous maltreatment. This strengthens our commitment to fight against these discriminations. Although the struggle is different on the two sides of the border, the needs are the same: the right to work, the right to education, the right to social services and the right to political asylum."

The delegates committed themselves to a campaign to stop the deportation and death flights of Central American refugees.

## U.S. OUT OF

Over 7,000 people gathered in New York City for a Veterans Memorial demonstration against U.S. war against Central America. A White House, for a second rally. A Rally Ball that the demonstration was organized. Demands of the protest included: Stop the U.S. war against Nicaragua, Panama and Haiti!

Despite sweltering heat and humidity, there were particularly large demonstrations, including many New York branch of the RSL participate. Nearly 500 copies of the Torch/La Ambrance of the Defense of Haitian Territory (CO) had a contingent of over 75 people.

The July 2 action was called by (PAM), a group dominated by the Workers, considerable friction prior to July 2 involved in organizing against U.S. aggression. Groups feeling that PAM/WWP had consultation and coordination with the friction was a factor in keeping the rally. A far larger turnout is expected against U.S. intervention in Central America. Second Mexico/U.S. Border Conference (see accompanying article), are Washington, D.C., and a city on the

# Anti-War Activists Map Plans at Second Mexico/U.S. Border Conference

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gees. Mexicana Airlines was especially targeted for protests, since it is currently the primary air carrier cooperating with U.S. immigration authorities to carry out these death flights. In addition, the delegates voted to oppose the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill now before the U.S. Congress and to campaign to win official refugee status for the hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans and Salvadoreans now living in exile in both Mexico and the U.S.

During the conference debates, several amendments to the proposed resolutions were put forward. One amendment to the political resolution, offered by the U.S. Organization for Revolutionary Unity (ORU) and supported by the RSL, would have added the view that true freedom for the people of Central America cannot be won without the victory of socialist, working class, revolutions in those countries. In other words, the amendment noted the fact that national liberation struggles themselves—however important and vital to defend—cannot achieve a truly just, or classless, society as long as the struggle remains within the boundaries of radical, but still capitalist, reforms. Opponents of the amendment admitted that a majority of delegates at the conference were themselves socialists of one kind or another, but felt that an open declaration of support for socialism would tend to exclude non-socialists from the anti-war movement. Furthermore, they argued, this amendment would make it appear that the conference was dictating to the Salvadorean people whose acknowledged leaders, the FDR/FMLN, stand on a program which is not socialist. The amendment was defeated by a wide margin.

Another amendment, also offered by the ORU, changed the resolution so as to place the blame for U.S. intervention on the entire U.S. government, not just on Reagan alone, as the original proposal had it. This amendment was accepted in a modified form.

The biggest political clash of the conference occurred late on the second day over the election of a new Border Commission. The commission serves as a steering committee between conferences; to see that conference decisions are carried out, and to plan the follow-

ing conference. Supporters of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party proposed that nominations to the commission be open to all groups participating in the conference. This was opposed by those stated on the Border Commission since the first conference, as well as by supporters of the U.S. Communist Workers Party and the Mexican Corriente Socialista, who argued that only delegates from mass organizations—not political parties—should be eligible to serve on the commission. The RSL, along with the Mexican Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, supported the proposal to open the nominations to all, but it was not approved.

A Third Border Conference in Solidarity with the Salvadorean People has

been set for May 1984. Between now and then, the movement against U.S. imperialist intervention faces a critical challenge. Reagan is positioning himself for a full-scale U.S. invasion of El Salvador if the rebel forces continue to make gains. The new U.S. training base in Honduras and the current bloody rural "pacification" drive in central El Salvador are only hints of more to come. But the U.S. ruling class is not united behind Reagan's war plans. Many fear another Vietnam-type involvement and the politically destabilizing anti-war movement it might create. Our job is to create that movement now, before El Salvador becomes another Vietnam. The Tijuana Border Conference was an important step in that direction. □

## PRI Government Attacks Mexican Working Class

*Below, we are printing a translation of a leaflet sent to the Torch/La Antorcha by the Frente Popular (People's Front), a group of left-wing activists based in Durango, Mexico. The leaflet discusses recent attacks on the Mexican working class by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—Institutional Revolutionary Party) government of Miguel De la Madrid Hurtado and explains why these attacks are the result of the deepening crisis of Mexican capitalism.*

The capitalist class is trying to strengthen its control over society and push the working class (the unemployed and the employed) further into misery. The PRI government's attack on the standard of living of the poorest and most defenseless part of the Mexican working class is no doubt the worst of any up to now. It is difficult for anyone who understands the facts not to become terrified of what appears to be a premeditated program against the nutrition of the children and the health of the aged. Becoming indignant will not by itself solve the situation.

### Why?

We can begin by eliminating what seems to be the most popular answer. De la Madrid and his advisers are not reducing our living standards because they are bad people. He did not wake up one day and say, "I think I'll do something really rotten today." De la Madrid is probably sincere in his conviction that this economic program is necessary for the benefit of the country.

Like López Portillo, Echeverría Alvarez and López Mateos before him, De la Madrid Hurtado is faced with a capitalist system in danger of going under. The program of nationalizing the banks is an attempt to strengthen the currency (the peso) and fortify the control of the capitalists over the economy. This devaluation and the concomitant reduction in the real value of the income and services of the workers and our families is part of the most recent effort to prop up the capitalist system.

From the point of view of our ruling class and its politicians and economists, this program or a similar one is necessary to produce the needed profits

to make the capitalists want to invest their money. The only way to increase the profit of the capitalists is to reduce the part due to us and our families in the form of wages and social services. We get more than before in quantity (peso for peso), but the real value (quality) of what we can buy is less. This attack against the Mexican people sabotages the efforts of the worker to keep his/her wages in line with the cost of living.

### The socialist solution

The solution to the growing poverty in Mexico is not throwing out De la Madrid and electing someone else. Our problem is not the quality of the government officials but a bad economic system. Capitalism by its nature, independent of the morality of the officials, reduces the living standard of the People.

We believe that this country has enough human resources, natural riches and industries necessary to produce a good life for everyone. Unfortunately, we also have a small capitalist class (the rich) that owns the resources and the industries. They refuse to hire workers to produce goods unless they can sell them at a certain margin of profit.

Under these conditions our only alternative is to expropriate the capitalist and governmental control of all economic sectors of the country, such as industry, the commercial, service and agricultural sectors; to build a new economic system in which we can work together to satisfy the needs of all instead of the greed of a few. We will not achieve this aim by electing politicians to do it for us or by reforming the old system.

Social revolutions directed from above by leaders and/or elitist groups end up as new dictatorships like those in Russia, China and Cuba. Electing politicians who promise to reform capitalism and make it less oppressive will only succeed in keeping the fundamental system of private property intact, as in France and Scandinavia.

We must act today. Tomorrow will be too late. Forward to a new world of economic freedom for all!

Frente Popular  
(People's Front)

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## Political Tricks

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### Political crisis in ruling class

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U.S. society—the economy, the  
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l, the destruction of the environ-  
etc. Consequently, there is no  
s political debate over real issues,  
during elections or in between.  
d, U.S. politics increasingly conf  
media hype and dirty tricks; it is  
easier for politicians to defeat  
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d the brink of destruction. □

### U.S. OUT OF EL SALVADOR!

Over 7,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C., July 2 to protest the U.S. war against Central America. After a rally at the newly-erected Vietnam Veterans Memorial, demonstrators marched to Lafayette Park, behind the White House, for a second rally. (A Reagan administration gala Independence Ball that the demonstration was originally going to march on was canceled.) Demands of the protest included: Stop U.S. aid to El Salvador!—U.S. troops out!; Stop the U.S. war against Nicaragua!; U.S. military out of Puerto Rico, Panama and Haiti!

Despite sweltering heat and humidity, both the rally and march were spirited. There were particularly large contingents of Latino groups in the demonstration, including many Salvadoreans and Nicaraguans. The New York branch of the RSL participated in the rally and march, distributing nearly 500 copies of the Torch/La Antorcha. In addition, the Committee for the Defense of Haitian Territory (CODETH), of which the RSL is a member, had a contingent of over 75 people, most of them Haitians.

The July 2 action was called by the People's Anti-War Mobilization (PAM), a group dominated by the Workers World Party (WWP). There was considerable friction prior to July 2 between PAM/WWP and other groups involved in organizing against U.S. aggression in Central America, with many groups feeling that PAM/WWP had called the protest without sufficient consultation and coordination with the rest of the solidarity movement. This friction was a factor in keeping the rally smaller than it otherwise might have been. A far larger turnout is expected this November 12, when major protests against U.S. intervention in Central America, called by CISPES and the Second Mexico/U.S. Border Conference in Solidarity with the Salvadorean People (see accompanying article), are scheduled to take place in Mexico City, Washington, D.C., and a city on the West Coast.

The article below is the first of a three-part series on the state of the economy of the USSR. Part one shows that the Russian economy, like the rest of the world economy, is indeed in crisis—despite claims to the contrary by various U.S. left groups—and takes an initial look at the causes of this crisis. Subsequent articles in the series will discuss various aspects of the economic crisis in Russia, the roots of the crisis and, in particular, the long-standing problems of Russian agriculture.

By W. E. SCHWEIZER

Recently two left groups have printed long articles extolling the soundness of the Russian economy. In early April, the *Militant*, newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), dismissed the idea of an economic crisis in Russia as a figment of the boss press and concluded that Soviet society is "dynamic and progressive." Two weeks later, Line of March (LOM) in its paper, *Frontline*, characterized Russia as an "economic powerhouse."

The *Militant* and *Frontline* claim that nationalized property and central planning have prevented a crisis in the USSR. The SWP further claims that the plan and state property have eliminated production for profit in Russia.

Both the SWP and LOM present any problems with the soviet economy as purely external to an otherwise well-functioning system, which they claim is "socialist," or a "workers' state." For example, the *Militant* attributes food shortages solely to Russia's harsh northern climate. Industrial shortages are blamed partly on the world recession, partly on the arms race to keep up with imperialist enemies. The plan doesn't work right because the bureaucracy won't let the workers contribute to the planning process. And the chronic labor shortage is really a reflection of running a centrally planned industrial economy flat out all the time.

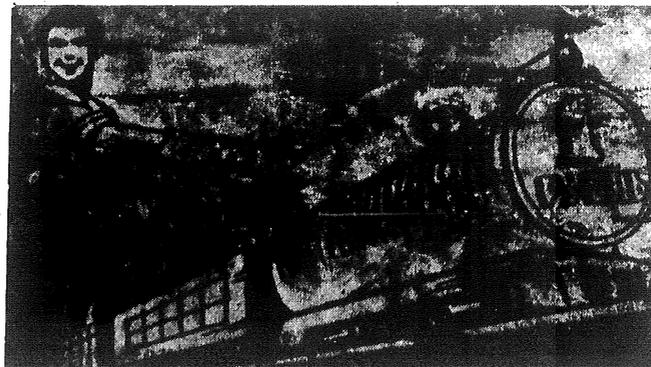
Is this rosy picture accurate?

Not quite. In reality, the USSR is neither dynamic nor progressive. It may once have been an economic powerhouse, but today, like the rest of the capitalist world, it is rusty and breaking down.

### Long-term stagnation

Russia is in a severe crisis. The crisis does not take a cyclical form, as it does in the U.S. and other Western capitalist countries, but the form of a long-term stagnation of the economy. Over the last decade, the growth of Russia's gross national product (GNP—the total value of all the goods and services produced in the economy) has slowed from 5.5 percent to 2.8 percent per year. (In comparison, U.S. GNP rose at a rate of about 2.5 percent a year over the last 10 years.) Coal output actually fell from 724 to 704 million metric tons a year since 1978. Railroad carloadings also fell last year. Although this year is better, the grain harvest was up to 30 percent below its target in each of the previous four years. The harvest was so bad in 1981 and 1982 that the Statistics Board didn't even publish the figures. Last year food was rationed throughout non-European Russia and shops in Moscow began advising customers on "50 ways to make tasty dishes" from old bread.

The growth of labor productivity fell from an average of 2.0 percent to 1.2 percent per year since 1970. As a result, Communist Party Chairman Yuri Andropov opened a widely-publicized campaign last winter to round up workers who were absent from their jobs. At the same time, Andropov started another campaign against high-level corruption and black-marketeering, which accounts for up to 25 percent of Russian GNP. Also, in February the government quietly raised the prices of many household necessities, such as toilet paper,



## A reply to the SWP and Line of March

# The Economic Crisis in the Soviet Union



thread, zippers, and beverages, and rumors of price increases on food continue to circulate.

The USSR continues importing food to cover for its own shortages. Last year it bought from abroad more than 30 million metric tons of grain, or over one-sixth of its domestic harvest. Russia is also maintaining its program to import advanced technology to make up for its lagging development of it at home. And it continues to run up its foreign debt, which last year totaled \$20 billion.

To a degree, the crisis in the USSR is caused by external factors, as the *Militant* and *Frontline* suggest. Although it produces a large and varied amount of goods, in the last 10 years Russia has been forced to become dangerously dependent on the world market for importing food and technology and exporting oil.

For example, given Russia's chronic agricultural crisis, the country must export oil, gold and other commodities in order to obtain the so-called "hard currency," such as dollars and pounds, to import food. Mostly these exports are oil; 60 percent of the USSR's hard currency earnings come from foreign petroleum sales, making the country almost as dependent on a single export as many underdeveloped Third World nations. When the world prices for oil and gold dropped in the last two years, the USSR was seriously hurt. Earlier this year when OPEC cut its oil prices, the

Russians were forced to reduce their even more in order to maintain their share of the world market. Such panicky price-cutting is hardly the action of a dynamic "economic powerhouse."

In fact, however, Russia's vulnerability to the fluctuations of the "external" world market is basically the same as other capitalist countries. As the Russian economy has matured, it has become more integrated into and dependent on the world (capitalist) market and the international (capitalist) division of labor.

Other external factors also have contributed to the Russian economic crisis. For several years, beginning in 1978, abominable weather conditions did severely cut the size of the Russian harvest. But the root cause of the problems of agriculture in Russia is not the weather. It is the Russian peasants' hostility to the so-called "collective farms" and the lack of incentive to produce more on these essentially government-run plantations.

### Defending an imperialist empire

Finally, the costs of defending Russia have steadily increased, which has hurt the economy. Spending on armaments increased 4 percent in 1981, after more

than a decade of similar increases. Overall, the USSR spends about 12 percent of its GNP on weapons, as opposed to 5 percent for the U.S. This expenditure essentially is waste, since war "products" are neither consumed productively in the manufacture of something else which is useful, nor are they consumed directly by the people as part of a higher standard of living. (Here, too, Russian arms spending is not really different from the arms spending of Western capitalist countries. All capitalist countries claim that their arms are meant only to defend the country from aggressors. In addition to defending Russia from U.S. imperialism, arms spending in Russia is meant to maintain the hold of the Russian ruling class over its own people and the people of other countries. The invasion of Afghanistan, for example, is costing \$2.7 billion per year.)

### Collective hostility

However, the major reason for the crisis in the USSR is not external factors, such as the world recession, the weather, or the threat from Western imperialism. It is the very nature of the Russian state-capitalist system itself.

In the USSR, just as in Poland, Romania, China, Cuba, Vietnam, etc., the workers, farmers, and other producers have no control over the process of production. They do not make the decisions of what to produce, how to produce it, or how to distribute it. They do not control the state, the plan, the factories or the farms.

When a worker goes to his or her job, he or she gives up control over that portion of the day, just as in the U.S. or other capitalist countries. On the job, a worker's time is spent making or doing something at the orders of an authority over which he or she has no say. In addition, each worker must spend an average of two hours of his or her day just waiting in line for scarce necessities like bread or meat. Workers have no right to speak freely, organize for their point of view, form independent unions, or strike. In form things may look different—the USSR has a multitude of official trade unions and other organizations which pretend to represent the interests of the producers. But in reality these are controlled by the ruling class in the Communist Party. When these groups do fight for the workers, it is for goals which are very limited, in the way that a company union or government-sponsored anti-poverty agency might do in the U.S. Moreover, even including some free or inexpensive social services, the workers are paid extremely poorly and there is very little they can buy in any case. Meanwhile, they are ruled over by a self-selecting, self-governing bureaucracy which, in addition to being extraordinarily corrupt, directs the economy to increase its own power and privileges.

It is this class division which is the fundamental reason for the low productivity and economic growth in Russia. While the bureaucracy and the state apparatus sop up an extraordinary amount of social wealth, the workers and farmers in Russia—who have no real control or freedom and are confronted by scarce and shoddy housing and other consumer goods—have little incentive to produce. In fact, the people in Russia have few outlets to cope with an inefficient and brutal system, except through alcohol and absenteeism. Thus, the rate of alcoholism in the USSR has tripled since 1955, reaching the point where now the death rate from alcohol poisoning is 88 times higher than in the U.S.!!!

It's no wonder that in recent years Russian workers have added a modern proverb to their repertory of traditional ones: "They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work."

[TO BE CONTINUED]

# Black People The Fight A HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION



On August 27, 1983, thousands or more—will come to Washington for Jobs, Peace and Freedom the famous 1963 March on Washington mobilization this country has seen the fight for full rights and equal freedom for all.

On this occasion, we are struggling for Black people in the nation, held June 19-21, 1981 an overview of the Black experience until today. The second part discusses and evaluates integration strategies for Black liberation published in our September 15 movement that can overcome, people have faced at the hands

"It's impossible for a chicken to produce a duck egg—even though both belong to the same family. A chicken just doesn't have the system to produce a duck egg, do it. It can only produce according to what that particular system was constructed to produce. The system of the country cannot produce freedom for the Afro-American. It is impossible to produce a duck egg with a chicken system, this economic system, political system, this social system, period. It's impossible to produce a duck egg with a chicken system, as it stands, to produce freedom for the Black man in this country." "And if ever a chicken did produce a duck egg, I'm quite sure you would it was certainly a revolutionary chicken!"

—Malcolm X, May 2, 1963

Black people have always been a part of U.S. society. To a large degree, capitalism and Western civilization as a whole were built on the backs of Black people. The advent of capitalism in Europe brought with it a tremendous need for capital with which to finance new manufacturing enterprises and materials for energy and to be made into finished products; markets for the unmanufactured goods; and large-scale

decade of similar increases. Over the USSR spends about 12 percent of GNP on weapons, as opposed to 5 percent for the U.S. This expenditure is a waste, since war "products" are neither consumed nor produced in the manufacture of something which is useful, nor are they controlled by the people as part of a standard of living. (Here, too, the arms spending is not really different from the arms spending of capitalist countries. All capitalist countries claim that their arms are only to defend the country from aggressors. In addition to defending against U.S. imperialism, arms spending in Russia is meant to maintain the power of the Russian ruling class over the people and the people of other countries. The invasion of Afghanistan, for example, is costing \$2.7 billion per

## Active hostility

Over, the major reason for the hostility of the USSR is not external factors, but the world recession, the weather, and the pressure from Western imperialism. The very nature of the Russian state-capitalist system itself. In the USSR, just as in Poland, China, Cuba, Vietnam, etc., workers, farmers, and other producers have no control over the process of production. They do not make the decisions of what to produce, how to produce it, or how to distribute it. They do not control the state, the plan, the priorities or the farms.

When a worker goes to his or her job, he gives up control over that part of the day, just as in the U.S. or other capitalist countries. On the job, a worker's time is spent making or doing things at the orders of an authority which he or she has no say. In addition, a worker must spend an average of 8 hours of his or her day just to produce a line for scarce necessities like meat. Workers have no right to collectively organize for their point of view, independent unions, or to form things that may look different from the system. The USSR has a multitude of official organizations and other organizations that pretend to represent the interests of producers. But in reality they are controlled by the ruling class in the Communist Party. When these organizations fight for the workers, it is for very limited, in the way of a company union or government-authorized anti-poverty agency might do so. Moreover, even including the most expensive social services, workers are paid extremely poorly. There is very little they can buy in the USSR. Meanwhile, they are ruled over by a self-selecting, self-governing bureaucracy which, in addition to being corrupt, directs the system to increase its own power and

maintain this class division which is the main reason for the low productivity and economic growth in Russia. The bureaucracy and the state apparatus sop up an extraordinary amount of social wealth, the workers in Russia—who have no control or freedom and are consequently scarce and shoddy housing and consumer goods—have little to produce. In fact, the people have few outlets to cope with the violent and brutal system, except for alcohol and absenteeism. Thus, the prevalence of alcoholism in the USSR has since 1955, reaching the point where the death rate from alcohol is 88 times higher than in the

wonder that in recent years workers have added a modern touch to their repertory of traditional ways: they pretend to pay us, and we do work."

TO BE CONTINUED]

# Black People in the US: The Fight for Freedom A HISTORY OF OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE



On August 27, 1983, thousands of people—perhaps as many as a half-million or more—will come to Washington, D.C., for the "20th Anniversary Mobilization for Jobs, Peace and Freedom." The demonstration, which will commemorate the famous 1963 March on Washington, is expected to be the largest civil rights mobilization this country has seen in years. Hopefully, it will begin a new chapter in the fight for full rights and equality for Black people and for human dignity and freedom for all.

On this occasion, we are beginning this month to publish a resolution on the struggle of Black people in the U.S. adopted by the RSL at our Fifth National Convention, held June 19-21, 1981. Part one of the resolution, printed below, sketches an overview of the Black experience in this country, from the time of the slave trade until today. The second part of the resolution, which will appear next month, discusses and evaluates integrationism, nationalism and socialist revolution as differing strategies for Black liberation. The concluding part of the resolution, to be published in our September 15 issue, looks at the prospects and tasks for building a movement that can overcome, once and for all, the centuries of oppression Black people have faced at the hands of racist U.S. society.

"It's impossible for a chicken to produce a duck egg—even though they both belong to the same family of fowl. A chicken just doesn't have it within its system to produce a duck egg. It can't do it. It can only produce according to what that particular system was constructed to produce. The system in this country cannot produce freedom for an Afro-American. It is impossible for this system, this economic system, this political system, this social system, this system, period. It's impossible for this system, as it stands, to produce freedom for the Black man in this country. "And if ever a chicken did produce a duck egg, I'm quite sure you would say it was certainly a revolutionary chicken!"

—Malcolm X, May 29, 1964

Black people have always been central to U.S. society. To a large degree, U.S. capitalism and Western capitalism as a whole were built on the backs of Black people. The advent of capitalism in Europe brought with it a tremendous need for capital with which to finance new manufacturing enterprises; raw materials for energy and to be made into finished products; markets for the manufactured goods; and large-scale com-

mercial agriculture to provide both materials such as dyes and cotton for industry and food for the growing urban centers.

For a variety of reasons, these needs could not be met fully within Europe itself, and in the 1500-1600s it was to Africa, the slave trade and the "New World" (the Caribbean, Latin America and what became the continental United States) that European merchants and entrepreneurs—the early capitalist class—turned. Basil Davidson, an eminent historian of pre-slavery Africa and the slave trade, has described the result in this way:

"Thus began the 'Great Circuit' trade that was to dominate much of the commerce of the western world for many years thereafter. This circuit consisted in the export of cheap manufactured goods from Europe to Africa; the purchase or seizure of slaves on the Guinea Coast and their transportation across the Atlantic; the exchange of these slaves for minerals and foodstuffs in the West Indies and Americas; and, lastly, the sale of these raw materials and foods in Europe.

"By this triangular system three separate profits were taken, all high and

all in Europe: the first profit was that of selling consumer goods to the slavers; the second derived from selling slaves to the planters and mine-owners of the Americas; while the third (and biggest) was realized in the sale of American and West Indian cargoes in Europe. It was largely on the steady and often stupendous profits of this circuitous enterprise that France and England would ground their commercial supremacy. . . . Out of this rapid economic expansion there flowed the circumstances that enabled England to achieve an industrial revolution." (Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade*, 1961)

In England's eastern seaboard colonies of what became the U.S., slave labor was the colonists' answer to the dire labor shortage of the "New World." In 1607, the first permanent English settlement was established in Jamestown (Virginia), and within a few

years, the colonists were importing indentured servants—both Black and white—to work in the "New World's" potentially rich fields. By the middle of the 1600s, however—the precise year is not known—the white colonists had decided that the use of indentured servants did not provide enough laborers and was too costly; and it was during this period that the colonists began to bond specifically the Black servants, and of course the slaves, in perpetuity, that is to totally enslave them and all their offspring. Sources differ on the exact date, but by the middle of the 1600s, the enslavement of Black people was legally recognized, spurring tremendously the trade in slaves. Within a century, for example, the slave population of Virginia jumped from a few hundred to

(Continued on following page)

"Over the course of some three centuries of the barbaric trade in human beings, involving an estimated 50 million

Africans, Black people were central to the development of capitalism on both sides of the Atlantic."

**TO BE SOLD & LET**  
BY PUBLIC AUCTION,  
On **MONDAY the 18th of M. 11. 1829.**  
UNDER THE TREE

**FOR SALE**  
THE THREE FOLLOWING  
**SLAVES,**

THE  
MARRIED, about 20 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character.  
WILLIAM, about 15 Years old, a Laborer.  
ANNIE, an excellent House Servant, and Sister to WILLIAM.  
On the usual conditions of the City: Selling them in Bond, for 1 year and Half."

**TO BE LET**  
**MALE and FEMALE**  
**SLAVES,**

FOR SALE, about 10 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character.  
ANNIE, about 15 Years old, a Laborer.  
WILLIAM, an excellent House Servant, and Brother to ANNIE.  
On the usual conditions of the City: Selling them in Bond, for 1 year and Half."

Also for Sale, at Eleven o'Clock,  
Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,  
Needles, Pins, Ribbons &c. &c.  
AT ONE O'CLOCK, THE CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE,  
**BLUCHER,**

(Continued from previous page)  
 over 120,000 by 1756. Slavery also existed, on an increasingly legal basis as the 17th century progressed, in the then-English colonies of the Carolinas, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Massachusetts (and only a little later in Georgia). However, the percentage of Blacks among the total population in the Northern colonies remained extremely small (under five percent), while the South, with its big plantations that produced for the world market, became the real bastion of chattel slavery, with Black people often making up anywhere from 25-50 percent of the total population.

Thus over the course of some three centuries of the barbaric trade in human beings, involving an estimated 50 million Africans, Black people were central to the development of capitalism on both sides of the Atlantic: as a source of capital for the emerging bourgeoisie, and as a source of cheap labor for the emerging landowning class in the colonies. While the first became less important by the 1800s, when the Industrial Revolution was already well underway, the latter did not; and even after the abolition of slavery in 1865, Black people remained crucial to the economic development of the country, in the form of debt peonage and sharecropping, and increasingly as a super-exploited section of the working class in basic industry and elsewhere.

But the centrality of Black people to the United States has hardly been limited to the economic sphere. From the beginning, nearly every political question before the nation has been related to, or had ramifications on, the status of Black people. For instance, Black people were a political football in a dispute among the Founding (white) Fathers over how to apportion political power among the Northern and Southern upper classes in the newly independent republic. The desire of the slaveowners to extend the geographic scope of slavery also motivated and made possible the southern westward expansion of the U.S. In fact, the U.S. government's annexation of Texas, then part of Mexico, in 1845, and then the war with Mexico in 1846 to enforce the seizure, took place expressly at the behest of the politically powerful slaveocracy. Later, Black people were active participants in the Civil War and Reconstruction, and shook the country again and again in the 20th century through mass social movements such as the Garvey Movement of the late teens and early '20s and the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements of the 1960s-70s. In these and other ways, Black people have been at the center of the country's political life since the beginning.

The cultural impact of Black people on U.S. society also cannot be minimized.\* The dominant culture in any society is and always has been that of the ruling layers who have the power to define it. In the case of the U.S., this dominant culture is a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) puritan culture that can be broadly characterized as relatively repressive, unexpressive and individualistic, and in which form and technique (translated into money and success) are elevated over more expressive, communal, and human (humane) values (being in touch with one's feelings and with nature, viewing the world from the vantage point of the interests of the

\*By culture, it is important to understand more than simply the arts—music, dance, etc. Culture encompasses the entire body of customs, mores, artistic and religious endeavors, and even the way of looking at the world, etc., of a given group of people, the "ethos" of a people. A dictionary definition of "culture" includes the statement that it is "the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings which is transmitted from one generation to another."

## WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING



**"Throughout U.S. history, the white rulers, in alliance with substantial sections of the white population, have conspired to keep Black people outside the society, reaping extremely few of the benefits that the power and wealth of the country have meant for other groups."**

community, not self, etc.). Insofar as there have been counteracting forces to the dominant WASP "ethos" in the U.S., they have come from the so-called "ethnic" portions of the society. After the Native American peoples, who had lived on the continent for eons, Black people were the first non-WASP group to "settle" (against their wills) in the "New World." Blacks brought with them already developed, African cultures, which changed, grew and became a unified Black culture under the impact of Black people's separate and specially oppressed status in the society, and despite the efforts of the white ruling classes to suppress it. Thus, Blacks as a people have made an enormous and distinct contribution to the culture of the country over the centuries, particularly in injecting more expressive values (what has been called "soul") into the music, dance, literature, language and style of the country. This is most obvious when we consider that the only two types of contemporary music that can be considered "American" are country music (stemming from poor, oppressed white layers of the population) and Black music: blues, gospel, jazz, rhythm and blues and soul (stemming from poor, oppressed Blacks), which in turn sired rock and roll and shaped generations of popular music both here and around the world.

Thus we can see that in every field—social, political, economic and cultural—Black people have played an essential role in the history of the country. Indeed it is no overstatement to say that the United States as we know it today would be inconceivable without the contributions of Black people.

### Blacks defined outside the society

Yet throughout U.S. history, the white rulers, in alliance with substantial sections of the white population, have conspired to keep Black people outside the society, reaping extremely few of the benefits that the power and wealth of the country have meant for other groups.

While for large sections of the population bourgeois democracy is little more than hypocrisy (summed up in the phrase "Both rich and poor are forbidden to sleep under bridges"), for Black people this hypocrisy has taken on monstrous proportions.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident," reads the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness..." but for over three and a half centuries, Black people have consistently been denied their lives, their liberty, and the ability to pursue happiness. "America" was supposed to be the "land of the free" . . . but not for Black people. It was supposed to guarantee "liberty and justice for all" . . . but not for Black people. At every critical juncture of U.S. history, this hypocrisy has been driven home to Black people. When the rulers of the Northern states fought "to preserve the Union," this is, launched the Civil War to prevent the Southern states from seceding, they did not intend at first that this Union free Black people. When the U.S. capitalists intervened in the first imperialist war in 1917 "to make the world safe for democracy," this democracy was not meant to apply to Black people, either in the U.S. or elsewhere. When the U.S. imperialists intervened in the second inter-imperialist world war to fight for the "Four Freedoms," this freedom was not to include Black people. And when Ronald Reagan today speaks of a "New Beginning for America," he hasn't the slightest intention that this "beginning" include Black people.

Practically from the moment the first Africans were brought to these shores, Black people have struggled against their oppression and for their freedom. According to the historian Herbert Aptheker:

"The first settlements within the present borders of the United States to contain Negro slaves was the locale of the first slave revolt. A Spanish colonizer, Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, founded, in the summer of 1526, a community whose probable location was at or near the mouth of the Pedee River in what is now South Carolina. The set-

tlement consisted of about five hundred Spaniards and one hundred Negro slaves. Trouble soon beset it. Illness caused numerous deaths, carrying off, in October, Ayllon himself. Internal dissension arose and the Indians grew increasingly suspicious and hostile. Finally, probably in November, several of the slaves rebelled, and fled to the Indians. The next month, what was left of the adventurers, some one hundred and fifty souls, returned to Haiti, leaving the rebel Negroes with their Indian friends—as the first permanent inhabitants, other than the Indians, in what was to be the United States." (Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 1974)

After the founding of the permanent English settlements and the institution of slavery a century later, periodic slave revolts—such as the one led by Nat Turner in 1831—terrorized the white population of the slave states and added to the costs to the slaveowners of owning other human beings. The slaves also fought back in other ways—poisoning their masters, breaking tools, sabotaging anything they could and, of course, escaping. No one knows how many slaves successfully escaped from slavery, but it is believed that through the "Underground Railroad" alone, some 75,000 slaves were able to flee to freedom in the North and Canada. During the Civil War, slaves refused to work and went over to the Union lines in droves, crippling the Southern economy and virtually guaranteeing the victory of the Northern forces; and, despite foul treatment, 200,000 Black people fought as soldiers and another 200,000 served as laborers for the Union army to defeat the slaveocracy.

Following the Civil War and emancipation, Black people fought, determined struggles in an attempt to become truly equal citizens of the country. And they fought heroic—but ultimately unsuccessful—battles against the newly formed Ku Klux Klan and to prevent the gains of Reconstruction from being stripped away. In the 1920s, millions of Black people joined the mass movement led by Marcus Garvey that had international effects, and in the '30s Blacks were at the heart of many of the struggles against unemployment and other struggles of the Great Depression period. In the 1950s-70s, through the Civil Rights, Black Liberation and Black

**"Practically from the moment the first Africans were brought to these shores, Black people have struggled against their oppression and for their freedom."**



Workers' Movements, and the urban uprisings of the mid-'60s, Black people again fought in a mass way against their oppression. And just one year ago, Black people in Liberty City in Miami rose up against the racist system following the acquittal of white cops who had beaten a Black insurance salesman to death. Thus in these and other ways, throughout the history of the country Black people have made it clear that they don't accept their second-class status in U.S. society.

But despite these heroic struggles, in an infinite number of ways—all of them coercive and brutal—the U.S. ruling class has been successful in defining the U.S. as a "white man's country," in which Black people, whose heritage in this country goes back much further



**"The victory of Ronald Reagan—based to a considerable extent on the political mobilization of a thinly-disguised right-wing movement among significant sectors of white people—has nearly-unanimous agreement within the capitalist class to strip away the gains granted as concessions to Black people, take away the gains granted as concessions in the '50s and '60s and, as much as possible, recreate the 'caste' status of Black people in the United States."**

tlement consisted of about five hundred Spaniards and one hundred Negro slaves. Trouble soon beset it. Illness caused numerous deaths, carrying off, in October, Ayllon himself. Internal dissension arose and the Indians grew increasingly suspicious and hostile. Finally, probably in November, several of the slaves rebelled, and fled to the Indians. The next month, what was left of the adventurers, some one hundred and fifty souls, returned to Haiti, leaving the rebel Negroes with their Indian friends—as the first permanent inhabitants, other than the Indians, in what was to be the United States.” (Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 1974)

After the founding of the permanent English settlements and the institution of slavery a century later, periodic slave revolts—such as the one led by Nat Turner in 1831—terrorized the white population of the slave states and added to the costs to the slaveowners of owning other human beings. The slaves also fought back in other ways—poisoning their masters, breaking tools, sabotaging anything they could and, of course, escaping. No one knows how many slaves successfully escaped from slavery, but it is believed that through the “Underground Railroad” alone, some 75,000 slaves were able to flee to freedom in the North and Canada. During the Civil War, slaves refused to work and went over to the Union lines in droves, crippling the Southern economy and virtually guaranteeing the victory of the Northern forces; and, despite foul treatment, 200,000 Black people fought as soldiers and another 200,000 served as laborers for the Union army to defeat the slaveocracy.

Following the Civil War and emancipation, Black people fought, determined struggles in an attempt to become truly equal citizens of the country. And they fought heroic—but ultimately unsuccessful—battles against the newly formed Ku Klux Klan and to prevent the gains of Reconstruction from being stripped away. In the 1920s, millions of Black people joined the mass movement led by Marcus Garvey that had international effects, and in the '30s Blacks were at the heart of many of the struggles against unemployment and other struggles of the Great Depression period. In the 1950s-70s, through the Civil Rights, Black Liberation and Black

**“Practically from the moment the first Africans were brought to these shores, Black people have struggled against their oppression and for their freedom.”**



Workers' Movements, and the urban uprisings of the mid-'60s, Black people again fought in a mass way against their oppression. And just one year ago, Black people in Liberty City in Miami rose up against the racist system following the acquittal of white cops who had beaten a Black insurance salesman to death. Thus in these and other ways, throughout the history of the country Black people have made it clear that they don't accept their second-class status in U.S. society.

But despite these heroic struggles, in an infinite number of ways—all of them coercive and brutal—the U.S. ruling class has been successful in defining the U.S. as a “white man's country,” in which Black people, whose heritage in this country goes back much further

than that of many other ethnic (white) groups, have been defined as alien.

This special oppression of Black people forms one of the key contradictions of U.S. capitalism. While having had a crucial role in U.S. society since the beginning, Black people have always been defined as outside that society. And while the U.S. ruling class has always held out the promise of liberty and equality for all “Americans,” from the beginning it has been clear that this does not, and will not, extend to Black people.

This contradiction is built into the very foundation of U.S. capitalism and is ingrained in it at every conceivable level—economic, social, political, cultural, ideological and psychological. So central is it to the existence of U.S.

capitalism and the strength of its ruling class, that freedom for Black people—even in the sense of equal democratic rights as promised in the Constitution and Bill of Rights (let alone real freedom)—can only be won through a revolution that smashes U.S. (and eventually, international) capitalism, overthrows the ruling class and destroys the institutions and attitudes that combine to oppress Black people and results in a new, truly free and cooperative society run by working and oppressed people.

### **Capitalism can't grant Black people freedom**

If there were any illusions in the ability of Blacks to win freedom and equality within U.S. capitalism, these should be rapidly collapsing. Today, with U.S. and world capitalism in a severe crisis and heading for a 1930s style depression, the special oppression of Black people is being intensified, not lightened. For some years now the gains of the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements—an end to some segregation-Jim Crow laws, voting rights, greater access to higher education and better jobs for some Black people, etc.—have been under attack. More generally, the climate that was created through the struggles of Black people in the 1950s-70s in which racism and racist attacks became more socially unacceptable among whole sections of the population is changing for the worse. The victory of Ronald Reagan, based to a considerable degree on the political mobilization of a thinly-disguised right-wing racist movement among significant sectors of white people, signals a nearly-unanimous agreement within the capitalist class to attack Black people, take away the gains granted as concessions during the '50s and '60s and, as much as possible, recreate the old “pariah” “caste” status of Black people in the United States. It is in this context that today we are witnessing the frightening revival and growth of the Ku Klux Klan, and the growth of the Nazi organizations that share the Klan's fundamental outlook. While not directly the product of the ruling class itself, the Klan will increasingly become a welcome tool of the ruling class in carrying out its objectives toward Black people and working class and oppressed people as a whole.

Whether or not U.S. and world capitalism can pull itself out of its present crisis is impossible to predict. Abstractly, we agree with Lenin when he said that there were no situations that the bourgeoisie could not find a way out of; in other words, there are no economic or political crises the bourgeoisie is automatically incapable of solving. Concretely, however, we find it hard to believe that the present crisis of the entire world capitalist system can be resolved short of a world depression, the rise of mass fascist movements and a new world war. And we have serious questions about the ability of the system to survive such developments. In any case, the present crisis is severe, will get much worse and will not be resolved in the foreseeable future. For all practical purposes, then, the choice Black people face, which is the choice all working and oppressed people must confront, is socialism or barbarism. This, of course, is no choice at all, but makes the fight for socialist revolution a burning necessity. In this context we can consider our main strategic slogan vis-a-vis the Black struggle to be: “Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution.”

There is another side to this, however. In arguing for a perspective of Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution, we should add that a revolutionary perspective for the United States could equally be considered one of “Socialist

Revolution Through Black Liberation.” If anything in this world is certain, it is that there will be no successful socialist revolution in the United States unless two things happen.

First, Black people, and Black workers in particular, must play a major and leading role in the workers' movement. The special oppression of Black people, and the strategic position of the Black working class, has given many Black people a greater awareness of the true nature of U.S. society and a higher level of consciousness and militancy than most white workers. This greater awareness and militancy can be a crucial factor in raising the level of the class struggle of the entire working class, and in raising the consciousness of white workers in particular. It is therefore essential that Black workers play a central role in the working class movement throughout the country. The degree to which this doesn't happen, for whatever reason, will be the degree to which we can expect the movement to fail to gain a certain class-consciousness and militancy.

Secondly, the entire working class movement must come to grips with the so-called “Black Question,” that is, wage an intense, head-on campaign against racism in its own ranks and among the mass of white workers and other white people (the lower middle class, small businesspeople, etc.). And it must embrace the rights and needs of Black people and their struggle for total liberation as its own demands. The degree to which this doesn't happen will be the degree to which the movement is not in fact a class-wide and class-conscious movement; at most it will be a parochial movement fighting for the narrow interests of only a section of the working class in defense of relative privileges. It will not be able to distinguish who its real friends and allies are from who its real enemies are, and in fact will be open to, if not actually forming, alliances with sections of the ruling class against the more oppressed sections of the working class, especially against Black people.

In other words, only if a substantial number of white workers and other white people see their interests as one with their oppressed Black brothers and sisters—that is, only when they reject an alliance with the white rulers of the country, including the racism fostered by and in the interests of those rulers—will a substantial revolutionary socialist movement and struggle be possible in this country.

For us in the Revolutionary Socialist League, therefore, our goal is twofold: the need to fight against the special oppression Black people face in this society, and the need to fight against the capitalist system that ultimately prevents freedom not only for Black people, but for the vast majority of people—Black, Latin, Native American, Asian and white, men and women, gay and straight.

### **The special oppression of Black people**

In order to demonstrate our case and to lay out a strategy for winning Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution, it is necessary to discuss, if only sketchily, our analysis of the oppression of Black people and the function of this oppression within U.S. capitalism.

Black people in the U.S. are oppressed in two somewhat distinct, but overlapping, ways. First, Blacks are oppressed as a group, as Blacks. That is, Black people as a whole are singled out, primarily on the basis of their skin color and other physical “racial” characteristics, for special treatment—special oppression. This is fairly obvious in the

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(Continued from previous page)

case of slave society where, as historians have noted, Black people were singled out for slavery precisely because they were Black. In the words of John Hope Franklin:

"If they (Blacks) ran away they were easily detected because of their color. If they proved ungovernable they could be chastised with less qualms and with greater severity than in the case of whites, because the Negroes represented heathen people who could not claim the immunities accorded to Christians. By the middle of the seventeenth century Virginians realized the possibilities that lay in the exploitation of black labor..." (John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 1969)

While there were a small number of free Blacks, this was largely the result of historical accidents and exceptions: Practically from the beginning, Black Africans were brought to the colonies to be slaves (exploited laborers) and, indeed, the overwhelming majority of Black people were slaves, with absolutely no economic or political rights to speak of. They were kept on the very bottom of society through terror and violence, to provide virtually unpaid labor and to produce a surplus product (actually surplus value, but this is beyond the scope of the present document) for the slaveowners. The entire economic, political, social and cultural structure of Southern slave society was built around the maintenance of Black people as slaves, that is, to keep them on the plantations and working. Because of this, even those Blacks who were free during this period, mostly craftsmen and wage laborers, were constrained and oppressed by the institutions and attitudes that existed to maintain, and which reflected, the slave status of the majority of Black people.

With the end of slavery, Black people continued to be oppressed as Blacks, though this took some new and different forms. In the post-Reconstruction South, a campaign of brutal terror and violence was waged by the former slaveowners who, utilizing the recently formed Ku Klux Klan as their paramilitary arm, wrested back the economic, political and social gains won by Blacks in the Civil War and Reconstruction. The result was that Black people were virtually re-enslaved. Economically, the majority of Black people continued to work on the old plantations, which were now divided up into small individual plots that were worked on a tenant-farmer or sharecropping basis. Unable to eke out a decent living on these plots, many Blacks thus became bound to the old slave masters as debt peons. Supplementing this oppression, and in fact essential to it, were new laws, regulations, mores and customs, all backed up by armed force—"lynch law"—that told Blacks where to live, what jobs they could hold, where they could go, how they could relate to white people—in short, the whole apparatus of Jim Crow laws and customs that kept Blacks on the bottom of society, deprived of virtually all economic and social power and, not incidentally, political power through being denied in fact the vote. While in its most overt form Jim Crow evolved in the South, it also emerged in the Northern part of the country in a just barely less explicit and equally oppressive form. Wherever it existed, Jim Crow applied to all Black people, from professionals and small businessmen, to small farmers and workers.

Through the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements of the 1950s and '60s, Black people broke down many of the more overt forms of Jim Crow, such as legal segregation in schools and housing; the poll tax and other similar barriers to Black people voting; the "separate but equal" type of facilities and "back of the bus" mores. Thus Black people as a whole made consider-

able gains in this period. They gained access to certain jobs, neighborhoods and schools from which they had been excluded. They acquired a degree of political power they had not had before. And they achieved a degree of social and cultural recognition that they had been deprived of.

Yet it would be an error to see in this a permanent and truly decisive victory in the battle to eradicate the special oppression of Black people. In particular, the material, social and political gains won by Black people in this period accrued mostly to the Black middle class, which did grow and achieve some social status and power in white "society." But many of the gains that directly affected the mass of Black people were relatively limited and, as the present racist offensive shows, none of the gains was permanent. Moreover, many of the old, overt forms of Jim Crow were merely replaced by more subtle versions; where before, for example, Black people were deprived of political power by the poll tax and other means to prevent them from voting,

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today, the same effect is gained by less obvious methods, such as establishing at-large voting districts that practically nullify the Black vote. Or where before Black people were kept in "separate but equal" (that is, inferior) schools by law, today this same result is accomplished through the economic inaccessibility of certain communities to Black people, etc. Finally, the entire economic, social, political, cultural and psychological mechanisms of racism combine to keep Black people in the more or less same version of the especially oppressed state that has been their lot since the end of Reconstruction.

In sum, Black people in the U.S. have been and still are oppressed as a group, as Blacks, kept on the bottom and, in fact, outside white U.S. society through a variety of legal, extra-legal and illegal means.

In addition to being oppressed as a people, the majority of Black people have also been oppressed and exploited as members of working classes. Under slavery, the majority of Black people constituted a working (as in laboring) class. In addition to providing agricultural labor, a significant number of Black slaves were sent by their owners to work in the cities as artisans and in the mines and on the docks. Women slaves who were considered too weak to work in the fields were sent to work in cotton mills. In these cases, the slaves were doing the same work as white workers; they were wage laborers except their wages would be stolen by their slaveowners.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the majority of Black people were small farmers, also a laboring class, while smaller numbers of Blacks flourished as artisans, teachers and wage earners. The end of Reconstruction in 1877, however, served to temporarily drive Black people into the most impoverished layers of the agricultural proletariat, owning little or no land and forced to work on someone else's land to survive. According to Herbert Gutman, Black people were to a large degree forced out of the more upwardly mobile jobs: "...of about 120,000 southern craftsmen in 1865 about 100,000 were Negroes, but... over the next forty years this figure

declined relatively and absolutely."

Starting around the turn of the century, however, and then spurred by the labor shortage created by the industrial boom during World War I, hundreds of thousands of Black people began moving to Northern cities, where the majority of them became workers, proletarians in the strict sense, with nothing to sell but their labor-power. In this period, with the advent of mass production methods and the lessening of strictly craft work in basic industry, Black workers made up a substantial portion of the unskilled workforce in steel and the infant auto industry. Today, Black people are, in their majority, workers in basic industry and other sectors of the economy. Thus throughout their existence as laborers, Black people have been exploited (that is, had a surplus pumped out of them) by the ruling classes. And they have suffered the various forms of oppression that accompanies this position.

The combination of these two somewhat distinct types of oppression (oppression as a people and, in the case

of the majority, oppression as workers) leads to a situation in which the majority of Black people today make up what is a specially oppressed sector of the working class, usually doing the worst jobs for the least wages, last hired and first fired, discriminated against in hiring and promotion, and making up a disproportionately large portion of the reserve army of labor, deprived of the opportunity to learn or exercise skills. More broadly, Black people are still treated as second-class citizens (and often not as "citizens" at all) in almost every facet of life, denied their democratic rights and dignity that should be accorded to all human beings.

## **Black people in the U.S. can't be defined by traditional categories**

With these considerations in mind, we can proceed to a question that has been of continuing concern and debate within the radical movement, including the Black Movement. That is, how should Black people be characterized politically?

In trying to answer this, it is essential that we avoid one of the chief weaknesses of bourgeois sociology: a tendency to reduce historical and social experiences into static categories. This tendency ends up denying or downplaying the dynamic, contradictory nature of society, and winds up ignoring the fact that society is made up of concrete people who act in ways that "social categories" and "societal laws" can at best approximate. Specifically, Black people in the U.S. do not fit any of the neat categories of bourgeois sociology. Strictly speaking, Black people in the U.S. do not constitute a nation: they did not emigrate from one distinct national territory. While Black people's "roots" are African, Africa was not at the time of the slave trade, just as it isn't today, a single homogeneous society with one distinct language, culture or social organization. Slaves came from all parts

of Africa: from what is today Senegal, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, etc., on the northwest coast, to at least as far south as Angola and as far east as Mozambique, on the southeast coast of the continent. They were Mandé, Yoruba, Nupe, Foulah, Kissi, Senefu and others, and they spoke Hausa, Yoruba, Twi and dozens of other tongues. Moreover, the forms of social organization were not the same throughout Africa; there were extremely advanced, literate and hierarchical societies such as that around Timbuktu, and more nomadic, strictly tribal and non-literate societies in the south.

It was only over a period of decades and centuries in the U.S. that Black people became welded into a more or less unified people, with a distinct cultural-ethnic identity. Thus Black people's experience cannot be understood separate from their experience as part of the (nation of) United States.

At the same time, Black people cannot be defined as constituting a "caste" (as some bourgeois scholars have attempted, and as we did in our early history) without distorting the meaning of the term. Historically, castes have been distinct social groupings that are narrower than classes, differentiated from each other by social function and occupation, and sanctioned by religion. Black people, as we have discussed, constitute a grouping that is broader, not narrower, than one class (there are working class and middle class Blacks); is not primarily defined by a distinct occupation (there are Black farmers, workers and professionals); and is not sanctioned by religion.

If Blacks should not be strictly defined by the traditional categories, how then should they be defined? In searching for an appropriate term, we tried to base ourselves on the following understanding:

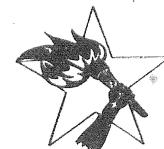
• Black people as a whole are an oppressed section of the society, are oppressed because they are Black;

• They are a people originally taken from different regions and societies in Africa, comprising different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups, and then forged through their own unique experience in the U.S. into a distinct people with most of the characteristics of a nation, particularly, a distinct cultural identity;

• Black people as a group in the U.S. cannot be understood outside their unique experience and position as an especially oppressed grouping within, and as part of, a larger nation.

Yet, after experimenting with a number of terms, including "oppressed nationality," none of which we found satisfactory, we have decided it would be better to avoid the terminological question altogether and refuse to settle for a second-best definition which we recognize to be inadequate. In doing this, we must emphasize our view that no single word or phrase can possibly convey some 450 years of the Black experience in this country. As a result, we are specifically anxious to avoid the static boxes that the other traditional phrases such as nation and caste have become. Moreover, the traditional definitions have come to be associated with certain programmatic implications that we do not necessarily agree with: in the case of nation, a belief that Black people should seek territorial nationhood as the answer to their oppression; in the case of caste, a belief that a removal of certain limitations and restrictions put on Black people by their "caste" status is all that is needed. Later in this document we will discuss these strategies, as well as our program, for Black Liberation. For now, however, we simply want to point out that what really counts are these differing strategies and programs, and not what label we or anyone else uses to describe Black people.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



1 The REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL LEAGUE is an organization to the fight for freedom for world's people—freedom from hunger; from racism and all forms of national, sexual, age and class-related oppression; from privileged rulers wars—freedom from capitalism.

We believe that this fight is necessary than ever. Today, the capitalist system is sliding deeper into a massive economic, and social crisis. This crisis is bringing conditions as bad as or worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. In countries, the ruling classes are reacting to the crisis by bludgeoning down the standards of the masses of people, curtailing our rights. Unemployment, wage-cutting, cutbacks in social services and a beefing up of the repressive apparatus—the police, military, etc.—are all part of the capitalist system in the 1930s, the crisis is paving the way for the rise of fascist groups eager to their genocidal solution on human civilization.

Internationally, the crisis will see the battles among the different blocs of national capitalists to flare into full wars, as each seeks to defend and expand its power, markets, investment and control of natural resources against the others. Twice already this century capitalists have fought devastating wars, in which millions of people died. Now, with the development of huge arsenals capable of blowing up the hundreds of times over, human civilization itself hangs in the balance.

Thus the continued existence of the capitalist system is pushing us closer to depression, fascism, world war, and possibly total destruction.

2 We in the RSL believe there is an alternative to all this. That alternative lies in the workers, small farmers, peasants, unemployed, and other oppressed minorities, young women, lesbians and gay men—in the downtrodden and persecuted people of every society—uniting together to throw our common enemy, the capitalist system, and establish SOCIALISM.

This will require a REVOLUTION which the masses of people fight to control of the governments, banks, means of transportation and communication, factories, fields, mills and mines. A revolution would also have to smash the capitalists' state apparatus: their police, armed forces, their courts and prisons, political bodies (legislatures, congresses, parliaments, etc.) and mammoth bureaucracies, and other institutions of capitalist rule.

While such revolutions are most likely to develop on a national basis, we believe that to be successful they must become worldwide in scope. Capitalism

## **RSL**

Capitalism in Crisis . . . . .  
Socialism vs. State Capitalism  
Socialism and the Fight for  
Mexicans and Chicanos in the  
and the Struggle for Socialism  
The Rise of State Capitalism  
(How the Russian Revolution  
The Russian Revolution  
(Revolutionary Socialist Education  
Imperialism, National Liberation  
(Educational Series, No. 2).  
Maoism and the Soviet Union.  
Basic Analysis of State Capitalism  
of the Revolutionary Tendency  
Gay Liberation Through Socialism  
of the Revolutionary Tendency  
South Africa: Victory to the Black  
Chile: Never Again! . . . . .  
Programme of the Revolutionary

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# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## Program in Brief of the Revolutionary Socialist League

of Africa: from what is today Senegal, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, etc., on the northwest coast, to at least as far south as Angola and as far east as Mozambique, on the southeast coast of the continent. They were Mandé, Yoruba, Nupe, Foulah, Kissi, Senefu and others, and they spoke Hausa, Yoruba, Twi and dozens of other tongues. Moreover, the forms of social organization were not the same throughout Africa; there were extremely advanced, literate and hierarchical societies such as that around Timbuktu, and more nomadic, strictly tribal and non-literate societies in the south.

It was only over a period of decades and centuries in the U.S. that Black people became welded into a more or less unified people, with a distinct cultural-ethnic identity. Thus Black people's experience cannot be understood separate from their experience as part of the (nation of) United States.

At the same time, Black people cannot be defined as constituting a "caste" (as some bourgeois scholars have attempted, and as we did in our early history) without distorting the meaning of the term. Historically, castes have been distinct social groupings that are narrower than classes, differentiated from each other by social function and occupation, and sanctioned by religion. Black people, as we have discussed, constitute a grouping that is broader, not narrower, than one class (there are working class and middle class Blacks); is not primarily defined by a distinct occupation (there are Black farmers, workers and professionals); and is not sanctioned by religion.

If Blacks should not be strictly defined by the traditional categories, how then should they be defined? In searching for an appropriate term, we tried to base ourselves on the following understanding:

- Black people as a whole are an oppressed section of the society, are oppressed because they are Black;

- They are a people originally taken from different regions and societies in Africa, comprising different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups, and then forged through their own unique experience in the U.S. into a distinct people with most of the characteristics of a nation, particularly, a distinct cultural identity;

- Black people as a group in the U.S. cannot be understood outside their unique experience and position as an especially oppressed grouping within, and as part of, a larger nation.

Yet, after experimenting with a number of terms, including "oppressed nationality," none of which we found satisfactory, we have decided it would be better to avoid the terminological question altogether and refuse to settle for a second-best definition which we recognize to be inadequate. In doing this, we must emphasize our view that no single word or phrase can possibly convey some 450 years of the Black experience in this country. As a result, we are specifically anxious to avoid the static boxes that the other traditional phrases such as nation and caste have become. Moreover, the traditional definitions have come to be associated with certain programmatic implications that we do not necessarily agree with: in the case of nation, a belief that Black people should seek territorial nationhood as the answer to their oppression; in the case of caste, a belief that a removal of certain limitations and restrictions put on Black people by their "caste" status is all that is needed. Later in this document we will discuss these strategies, as well as our program, for Black Liberation. For now, however, we simply want to point out that what really counts are these differing strategies and programs, and not what label we or anyone else uses to describe Black people.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

**1** The **REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST LEAGUE** is an organization dedicated to the fight for freedom for all the world's people—freedom from poverty and hunger; from racism and all forms of national, sexual, age and class-related oppression; from privileged rulers and wars—freedom from capitalism.

We believe that this fight is more necessary than ever. Today, the world capitalist system is sliding deeper and deeper into a massive economic, political and social crisis. This crisis is bringing conditions as bad as or worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. In all countries, the ruling classes are responding to the crisis by bludgeoning down the living standards of the masses of people and curtailing our rights. Unemployment and wage-cutting, cutbacks in social services and a beeping up of the repressive apparatus—the police, military, prisons, etc.—are all part of the capitalist attack. As in the 1930s, the crisis is paving the way for the rise of fascist groups eager to impose their genocidal solution on humanity.

Internationally, the crisis will cause the battles among the different blocs of national capitalists to flare into full-scale wars, as each seeks to defend and increase its power, markets, investment outlets and control of natural resources against the others. Twice already this century the capitalists have fought devastating world wars, in which millions of people died. Now, with the development of huge nuclear arsenals capable of blowing up the planet hundreds of times over, human civilization itself hangs in the balance.

Thus the continued existence of the capitalist system is pushing us closer every day to depression, fascism, world war and possibly total destruction.

**2** We in the RSL believe there is an alternative to all this. That alternative lies in the workers, small farmers, peasants, unemployed, national and other oppressed minorities, youth, women, lesbians and gay men—in sum, the downtrodden and persecuted people of every society—uniting together to overthrow our common enemy, the capitalist system, and establish **SOCIALISM**.

This will require a **REVOLUTION** in which the masses of people fight to seize control of the governments, banks, means of transportation and communication, factories, fields, mills and mines. A revolution would also have to smash the capitalists' state apparatus: their police and armed forces, their courts and prisons, their political bodies (legislatures, congresses, parliaments, etc.) and mammoth bureaucracies, and other institutions of capitalist class rule.

While such revolutions are most likely to develop on a national basis, we believe that to be successful they must become worldwide in scope. Capitalism is

an international system, with a world economy and a world market. Only through an international socialist revolution can the workers and their allies eliminate all capitalist oppression and have access to the human, natural and technical resources necessary to solve the problems confronting human society.

**3** In place of the dictatorship of the capitalists, the RSL believes working and oppressed people can build a cooperative, humane world society. Run by workers' councils and other mass organizations of farmers, housewives, soldiers and specially oppressed groups, the new society would provide the fullest democracy for the vast majority of people, while ruthlessly suppressing the capitalists and those who seek to get ahead by stepping on the backs of others.

Although the destructive legacy of capitalism would be severe, a truly democratic, mass-controlled government could begin to reorganize society to fulfill human needs, not provide a privileged existence for tiny elites. Resources currently thrown into the military, for example, could be used to end hunger, build housing, schools, roads, etc. The workweek could be shortened, creating jobs for millions of unemployed people.

In ways such as these, the inequality and scarcity that lie at the heart of capitalism's dog-eat-dog competitiveness could be eliminated. People would increasingly have no reason to get over on others, and the material basis of classes, the state, racism, sexism and anti-gay bigotry would disappear. Increasingly, everyone would have the time and opportunity to develop their full human potential; everyone would become truly **FREE**, able to control their own destinies.

This is our vision of **SOCIALISM**. It will not be easy to achieve. And it is not inevitable—people have to want it and fight for it. But we believe it is the only alternative worth fighting for.

**4** Socialism does not exist anywhere in the world today. What is called socialism in countries like Russia, China, Cuba, Albania, Poland, etc., is state capitalism, a 20th century variation of traditional, private shareholding capitalism. In the state-capitalist (often called Stalinist) countries, as in the "regular" capitalist nations, a small elite dominates society, making all the decisions and reaping all the benefits. Working and oppressed people have no more control of the factories and other workplaces, the economy, the government or anything else than do workers in traditional capitalist countries. The state-capitalist ruling class controls the state apparatus and nationalized industry, while the workers are in the position of being wage slaves, chained to a giant capitalist machine.

In these countries—as in all the countries of the world—**REVOLUTION** is the only way to establish real socialism and win freedom for all working and oppressed people.

At a time when the struggle between the world's two main imperialist powers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., is being portrayed wrongly as one between capitalism and socialism, democracy and totalitarianism, the RSL believes it is more important than ever to take a clear stand in opposition to capitalism in all its forms and to fight for a revolutionary, libertarian vision of socialism.

**5** In the coming period, as the capitalist crisis intensifies, we expect mass movements and mass struggles—both of the right and the left—to break out with increasing frequency around the world. The question is: Will these upheavals lead to fascist dictatorships, state-capitalist transformations, a new world war—or an international socialist revolution that puts all the capitalist garbage behind us?

The RSL believes that the last outcome can be brought to pass only with the active intervention and political leadership of a disciplined international revolutionary working class party. This party, and its sections in countries around the world, is needed to educate and organize workers and other oppressed people about the cause of their misery and the solution to it: to work in different movements and struggles to increase the class-consciousness and militancy of their participants; to combat reformist, social-democratic, state-capitalist, fascist and other leaderships that would derail mass, popular struggles and lead them to certain defeat; and to help unite the different forces oppressed by capitalism into a massive assault on the system.

The existence of revolutionary working class parties does not guarantee victory. But without them, the more-organized and powerful enemies of

socialist revolution will surely triumph.

The RSL considers the construction of a revolutionary party in the U.S. and around the world to be our main strategic task. In so doing, we reject any and all elitist notions that have come to be associated with such parties: that the party stands separate from and above the working class; that the party may use any method, no matter how base or dishonest, to gain leadership of the masses in struggle; that its goal is to form a one-party state within a supposedly socialist society. Our goal is a society where human beings can consciously shape their own existence; we see a revolutionary party simply as the vehicle through which this can be made possible.

**6** The RSL identifies itself in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, particularly the pioneering theoretical work of Marx and Engels; the conception of the party, the stress on the importance of national liberation struggles and the anti-statism shown in *The State and Revolution* of Lenin; and the fight against Stalinism of Trotsky. But we also identify with the best of anarchism, particularly its libertarian spirit. And we hold in no less regard those leaders throughout the ages who have fought against various forms of exploitation and oppression: from Spartacus to Harriet Tubman, from Emiliano Zapata to Malcolm X.

We believe it is crucial for the left to rid itself of the state-capitalist baggage which it has carried for far too long. To do so requires a careful evaluation of the theoretical underpinnings of the modern left, from Marx to the Russian Revolution to the current day. Only in this way can the best of our heritage—the fight against oppression and for revolutionary socialism—be preserved and the worst of it—an infatuation with technocratic planning and strong states—be discarded. Revolutionaries must be the vanguard in the fight for common decency and true freedom. It is to that fight the RSL is committed, body and soul. Join us!

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