

# *Political Affairs*

Theoretical Journal, Communist Party USA , July, 1998

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# *Political Affairs*

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# Paul Robeson: Artist, Freedom Fighter, Hero, American Communist

Gus Hall



The full truth and meaning of Paul Robeson's great legacy has never been told. Today on this, his 100th birthday, we are determined to restore the heritage that has been for too long denied our people, our Party, and Paul himself.

We are here today to restore Paul's full legacy for our Party, for his people, the African American and working-class people of our country, perhaps especially for our youth, who so desperately need the model, the example of his life for theirs.

Paul Robeson's political identity, perhaps the identity that most defined him, the essential core of his being, lay in his identity with the future, with a socialist USA and the Communist movement. It was his ultimate truth, his ultimate goal.

The essence of Paul's great humanity, the essence of his life work, was stolen from him by the ruling class, by the capitalist system, which he fought against all his life as the oppressor and exploiter of his people and his class.

Paul Robeson was many things to many different people, in so many areas of life, in so many parts of the world. He was a giant of an American, a genius of his age, a maker of history.

He was an all-star athlete, a brilliant concert artist with a magnificent baritone voice, actor of stage and screen, writer, scholar, working-class intellectual, linguist, lawyer, world citizen and - American Communist.

He was a fighter for peace, for human and democratic rights for African American and all working and oppressed peoples, for labor and the trade union movement.

He was a staunch fighter against fascism and war, McCarthyism, racism, anti-Communism, monopoly capitalism and U.S. imperialism, especially in the colonial African countries.

We are here today to claim all of the great her-

itage that Paul bequeathed to his country and to the world, and for which he gave his all, and ultimately his life. It was indeed capitalism and anti-Communism that ended his career and his productive life. It is a lesson of history all Americans must learn and never forget. Thus, the whole truth about this gentle giant of a man, whom I personally had the honor to know, to work with, and whom I grew to love, is what I want to talk to you about today. My tribute is to Paul Robeson, the Communist, because it is through the heart and mind of a Communist that I see the full meaning of Paul's life.

Unfortunately for the world, but especially for the American people, in all the many books, biographies, speeches, films, articles and exhibits, in all the recent 100th Centennial celebrations of Paul's life as an artist and freedom fighter most try to deny or simply omit Communist from the list of his enormous achievements. In the hundreds of tributes most deny that Paul was a proud member of the Communist Party USA. Some by silence, some by lies and slander. Although for Paul Robeson the Communist movement defined, guided and motivated his whole life, many still want to revive only an acceptable, sanitized Paul Robeson, cleansed of the convictions he fought so hard to live by.

Although Paul has been gone for over 22 years, there are those who would still deny him, as his enemies did when he was alive. Hiding his truth is but another injustice, another crime against Paul Robeson.

There is a Paul Robeson revival taking place on his birthday. We have a birthday present for Paul that no one else can give: the full truth, and nothing but the truth.

Just as we have had to tell and retell the truth, to dispel the slander and propaganda about the Communist Party USA, so we have had to undo the lies about our Communist heroes.

Just like the Communist Party, Paul Robeson is back by popular demand. We are here, today, to bring back the whole Paul, not just the part of Paul Robeson the anti-Communists want to bring back.

Judge George Crockett, a great lawyer who defended the Communists during the witchhunt trials said in a speech, "It is for us, the inheritors, to inscribe in the pages of history for all to know, the

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Gus Hall is national chairman of the Communist Party.



Paul wishes Party chairman William Z. Foster happy birthday.

full truth of the full meaning of Paul Robeson's life and legacy."

The sacrifice of his fame and wealth for the sake of remaining true to his Communist convictions is a legacy that should inspire us – and, even more, to mobilize us.

But too many would strip Paul of his main achievement. It was his life experiences as an African American child, growing up under Jim Crow, in a home where slavery was but one generation away, that led him to his convictions.

It was his real-life experiences as a student, scholar, worker, a member of six different unions, including the United Auto Workers, and a freedom fighter, that led him straight to the Communist Party, USA, where he staunchly, heroically remained all his life, in the face of the worst kind of racist, political and physical terrorism.

Unlike comrade W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul was not able to declare his party membership openly. At the height of the Cold War, Dr. Du Bois, in defiance of anti-Communism, called a press conference. I was proud to stand by his side as he announced for all the world to know that he had joined the Communist Party.

Unfortunately, because of the extreme repression of the McCarthy period, the ruling class was determined not to let Robeson do the same.

Paul was forced to serve a political life sentence. The U.S. ruling class and its corporate-ruled govern-

ment made it impossible for Paul to declare his commitment to the Communist Party and to a socialist USA.

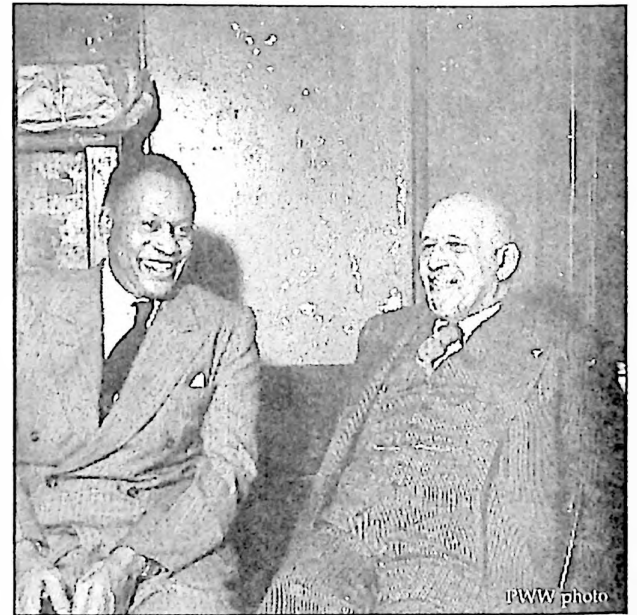
Beginning in 1949, Paul's concerts were cancelled, he was denounced in newspapers, his records removed from stores, studios refused him, his films disappeared, his name was dropped from athletic and theater rolls and his passport denied. The fascist forces in the U.S. ruling class pulled out all stops to render this people's champion into a nonperson overnight.

But throughout all of the socialist world, and in many European countries, Paul was beloved because of his many gifts, because of his unrelenting fight against racism here and colonialism abroad. He was respected because of his unflinching defense of the working class, his stand for peace and, yes, because of his devotion to true freedom, democracy, socialism and the socialist community of nations.

Paul was perhaps most loved because as great as his art was, Paul went beyond his art. He tied his art to the great causes he stood and fought for.

The Soviet Union grew to love him so dearly that they named the tallest peak in the Altai mountains in his honor – Mt. Paul Robeson.

Although Paul identified himself with all the forces and movements who were on his side of the great, historic class divide it was Paul, the revolutionary, the socialist, that guided his every word and deed.



Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois. Age meant for both an increased radicalism. Both shared a political home in the CP.

The truth is that it was mainly because Paul was a Communist, a Black Communist, and believed that socialism was a better social system, that the U.S. ruling class decided to isolate and destroy him. This was why he was officially scorned, blacklisted, persecuted and hounded out of his own country.

He was harassed to the point where he left to live in Europe for years, where he finally found work, and with it the dignity, respect and appreciation he so richly deserved.

In the Soviet Union he received not only love and respect, but also the medical care he could not get because of racism in his homeland.

Thus, he was a political exile outside his country. And then, ironically, his passport was revoked and for nine years he became a political prisoner inside his own country.

After almost ten years, in 1958 his passport was restored by a Supreme Court decision, as a result of a mass movement led by the Communist Party. Comrade Paul was never charged with any illegal action. He was never put on trial. But his persecutors made no bones about why he was being punished.

During the struggle to get his passport back, Paul said, "My fight for a passport is a struggle for freedom to travel, for a livelihood, for freedom to speak and express myself artistically, culturally, politically."

The enemies of democracy and freedom freely



Robeson shares a light moment with CPUSA national chairperson Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.



Robeson with Communist Party leader William L. Patterson and a trade union leader. "Pat" invited Paul to his first picket-line.

admitted that Robeson is a "dangerous Red" ... a dangerous Black man. And that made him doubly dangerous.

Just to give a sense of how Paul developed into this dangerous political personality, let me give you the essence of how Paul was molded by his early youth, his family, his community, his love for his people – a background that eventually led Paul to the Communist Party, USA. It was racism, his slave heritage, his extended family's working-class background, his father's life teachings, Paul's life as a worker, his union experience and the coincidence of events and people he met and struggled with that led Paul to his political and ideological home.

Paul was raised in a very religious family and community. His father, an ex-slave, was a minister most of his life. When Rev. Robeson lost his congregation, he labored for a living, but finally got his church back. Paul's father was a worker-preacher. His mother was a teacher.

Diligently, with great patience and love, his father taught Paul to do the right thing, always to be loyal to his convictions. And so he was!

To give a sense of how Paul developed his special love for and dedication to his people, and how the groundwork was laid for Paul's maturity, let me quote his own words from his book, *Here I Stand*,

Hard-working people, and poor, most of them, in

worldly goods but how rich in compassion! How filled with goodness of humanity and the spiritual steel forged by centuries of oppression! There was the honest joy of laughter in these homes, folk-wit and story, hearty appetites for life as for the nourishing greens and black-eyed peas and cornmeal bread they shared with me.

Here in this little hemmed-in world of Jim Crow Princeton, where home must be theater and concert hall and social center, there was a warmth of song. Songs of love and longing, of trials and triumphs, deep-flowing rivers and rollicking brooks, hymn-song and ragtime ballad, gospels and blues, and the healing comfort to be found in the inimitable sorrow of the spirituals. I heard these songs in the very sermons of my father ...

This background gave Paul a life-long appreciation and understanding of the role of religion in the life of his suffering people, a tolerance toward all religious beliefs that was in harmony with Marxism.

I have personally heard Paul quote Marx on the freedom of religion. He said, "Marx considered freedom of conscience and religious beliefs to be an inalienable human right. I will always defend a person's right to be religious in any way he or she has chosen to proclaim their religion."

As Paul reached manhood and political maturity he was able to place freedom of religion within the context of the defense of democracy, democratic and basic human rights. In other words, into his ideological and political life.

Thus, he spoke in many union halls, Communist halls, community halls, as well as in many churches.

Comrade Robeson should have been honored and remembered, perhaps first and foremost, for his political personality. It was the foundation stone of

his whole character and being, the fountain from which sprang all his brave deeds and memorable words.

However, as is too often the case with American working-class heroes, especially Communist working-class heroes, it is left to the Communist Party to restore the stolen legacies of great personalities like Paul Robeson to their rightful place of honor.

We cannot allow the ruling class, some liberal, left, and even some progressive forces, to praise him and then tear him down. We cannot allow them to turn Robeson into a liberal. Because the real Robeson was a revolutionary, a Communist.

We love and honor Paul. He belonged to the world, to all humanity. But in the deepest sense, Paul Robeson was one of ours – a Communist leader, a beloved comrade and dear friend.

It is because we loved and respected Paul in his totality that we are honoring Paul, here, in our Communist Party headquarters.

If Paul were alive, I believe this is where he would choose to celebrate his 100th birthday with all of you, with us, finally, openly, proudly proclaiming his life-long membership in the Communist Party, USA.

Since he cannot be here to take this stand for himself, we, his comrades and friends, will gladly stand up for him.

For the sake of truth and history, for Paul's sake, we Communists must take a stand to lift the veil of silence that has for so long denied this big, gentle tallest tree in our forest his rightful place among the giants of his age.

Perhaps my most vivid memories of Paul were his public speeches in defense of the twelve Communist leaders, including myself, who were sent to



Paul in Washington defending the 12 Communist leaders.

prison at the height of the McCarthyite hysteria, for conspiracy to teach the necessity of the violent overthrow of the U.S. government, in other words for the crime of thinking. It was a time that tried the souls of many people, a time when many liberals and even progressives fell into silence, or worse.

Not Paul. Never Paul. In spite of the fascist-like persecution he faced, Paul always took the offensive against slander, red-baiting, and anti-Communism.

Before the Foley Square trial of the twelve Communist leaders, at one of the many inquisitions of the House Un-American Activities

Committee he was forced to submit to, Paul said, "Not only as a representative of progressive America, but as a representative for the 12 Communist leaders on trial in New York, I expect to return to New York and testify on their behalf."

And so he did.

But when he took the stand to testify at the trial itself, the notorious hanging Judge Medina, refused to allow Paul to answer questions. He actually said in the courtroom, "I refuse to hear him."

Exasperated, George Crockett, the Party's lawyer, said, "It is impossible to continue," and told Paul to leave the stand.

Determined to give his testimony outside the courtroom Robeson gave a press conference.

Courageously, he proclaimed,

I came voluntarily to testify as a champion of civil rights. I came because there is a hysteria in this land, of which this trial is a part. And I came to express my feeling that the Communist Party has done a magnificent job on behalf of the Negro people and the working class, on behalf of peace.

I stand ashamed before you tonight. Ashamed that twelve great leaders of the American working class face going to jail at Foley Square because we haven't done enough. I am here as



Paul with Party leaders Ben Davis and Henry Winston.

a friend of the defendants with whom I have worked on many occasions and whom I have heard over the many years. And never once did I hear them advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence.

On the contrary, I have seen those prosecuting Communists use force and violence as at Peekskill.

I don't get scared when fascism gets near. The spirit of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass fills me with courage and determination that every Negro boy and girl, yes and every white boy and girl, shall walk this land, free and with dignity. I say that our people must look behind the trial, behind Peekskill, and discover that those responsible are the same few who

cause one-third of our nation to go ill-clad, ill-fed, ill-housed.

During the trial, Paul made public statements like: "If Communist leaders go to a penitentiary, it means that millions of Americans lose their freedom with them." And, "Today there is an overriding necessity to protect our democratic heritage from the wholesale attacks of McCarthyism. McCarthyism is an American brand of fascism." It was words like these that provoked the hanging judge to muzzle Paul unconstitutionally to deny him his right to speak.

Thus, he was not allowed to say that he was at a Communist conference in Washington in May of 1937; he was not allowed to say he addressed that conference; he was not allowed to say he was on the same platform with Eugene Dennis and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

It is precisely because so many times and in so many places Paul was denied his right to speak, to testify, to claim his rightful, hard-fought-for political identity while he lived, that we are so determined to uncover and to reveal Paul's truth on this special occasion.

Personally, perhaps my most precious moments



with Paul were when I met with him to accept his dues and renew his yearly membership in the CPUSA. It was myself and other Communist leaders, like Henry Winston, the Party's late, beloved national chairman, who met with Paul to brief him on politics and Party policies and to discuss his work and struggles.

Unlike the new, wonderful openness, the full legality and acceptance of our Party today, those were terrible days when our Party was forced to adopt a policy that especially well-known, public personalities should not be open Communists. This was a life-long sadness for Paul, a life-long burden.

Through it all he never forgot or denied who he was, although many tried to force him to abandon his beliefs. He identified with many other great leaders who were forced to fight for freedom underground and in secret, among them Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Eugene Debs and Harry Bridges.

When he was dragged before the grand inquisitor, Joseph McCarthy, and the fascist House Un-American Activities Committee, he was interrogated about his association with Communists. In response Paul made the following statement,

I have been around the world, in London, in many other places, and the first to die in the struggle against fascism were the Communists. I have laid many wreaths on the graves of Communist leaders. This is not criminal. And the fifth amendment has nothing to do with criminality.

When his torturers asked him why he didn't stay in Russia, Paul thundered in his deepest baritone, "Because my father was a slave, and my peo-

ple died to build this country, and therefore I will stay here. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it."

When the war against fascism was breaking out many times Paul said, "I am *not* for peace or friendship with fascist Franco. And I am not for peace with fascist-Nazi Germany. I am for peace with decent people."

Asked whether he meant decent to include the Communists, he replied, "Yes, the Communists march at the front of the struggle for a stable peace and popular democracy. But they are not alone. With them are all the progressive people of America Negroes of the South, workers of the North."

Going further, the Un-American Committee asked about his association with the Communist Party Paul answered with a question,

What do you mean by the Communist Party, USA? As

far as I know it is a legal party, like the Republican and Democratic parties. Do you mean a party of people who have sacrificed for my people, and for all Americans and workers that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?

On another occasion, forced to appear before the Committee of the Judiciary of the U.S. Senate, at hearings on a proposed Act to protect the U.S. against Un-American and Subversive Activities (the notorious Mundt-Nixon Bill) in May 1948, Paul was questioned about the essence of Communism. In part, it went like this,

Senator Langer: About the essence of Communism. First, if you had your way about it, would you have pub-



Robeson at May Day rally with CP General Secretary Eugene Dennis and Gus Hall, current chairman.

PWW photo





**Paul with William Patterson and Gus Hall at Ben Davis's funeral.**

lic housing for veterans and for poor people?

Paul: Yes.

Senator: Second, you would have social security that took care of all those who needed help, is that right?

Paul: Yes.

Senator: Third, you would enforce the Sherman Anti-Trust Act and wipe out those cartels and those monopolies?

Paul: Exactly.

Senator: Fourth, you would be in favor of laws protecting the electoral process.

Paul: I certainly would.

Senator: You would pass an anti-lynching law?

Paul: That is right.

Senator: You said you were also in favor of the nationalization of certain industries?

Paul: I say where these questions arise and where it is clear to the American people that such industries as coal, railroads, etc., are public necessities of national life or death, then it seems to me they should be nationalized.

Senator: In other words, you would take those industries out of the hands of the few and put them in the hands of the people themselves?

Paul: That is right.

Senator: I understand you believe that under the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, that every man, regardless of race, or creed, or language, and that includes women, is entitled to equal protection, and equal opportunity.

Paul: That is right.

Senator: Is that your definition of a Communist?

Paul: Yes, and many other good things.

Thus, even under the most extreme duress, and outright persecution Paul never relented, never ceased to speak his mind, to take his stand for everything he believed in, including socialism.

No matter what the racist, McCarthyite forces of evil did to separate him, it was an indelible fact of Paul's life that he was a Communist in every way, every day of his adult life.

Paul was a Marxist-Leninist. For Paul, Marxism-Leninism served as a guiding science for revolutionary action. He saw the working class as the main force for human progress. He regarded unity of the working class with the racially and nationally oppressed as an indispensable, primary ingredient for advance and victory.

Paul loved his people too much ever to separate them from the rest of the working class and the class struggle.

Wherever he found exploitation, discrimination and oppression, Paul was active in the struggles against them. And always fighting for working-class unity, Black, Brown and white.

Because of this, Paul was able to translate into practice the Marxist slogan, "Workers of all Countries Unite." Paul Robeson was part of the movement premised on Marx's scientific discovery of the laws of social development, their theoretical premise that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle. Throughout his life, he selflessly gave of his talents and genius, his understand-



**Paul with CP leader Mother Bloor at a children's camp.**

ing, his time and energy, his fame and fortune, to building this indispensable unity.

Paul's art was a big part of his being. But his total humanity was much, much more. In an address to the U.S. Negro Labor Council in 1952, he said,

It seems strange to some that, having attained some status and acclaim as an artist, I should devote so much time and energy to the problems and struggles of working men and women. To me, of course, it is not strange at all. I have simply tried never to forget the soil from which I spring.

No, I can never forget that the ultimate freedom and the immediate progress of my people rest on the sturdy backs, the unquenchable spirits of the coal miners, carpenters, railroad workers, clerks, domestic workers, cooks, stewards, and longshoremen, tenant farmers and tobacco stemmers.

It was because Paul Robeson never forgot he was a Communist that he was able to

give up fame and fortune to devote so much time and energy to working men and women. Marxism-Leninism and the Communist Party gave Paul's life meaning and direction and socialism gave him a goal to strive for.

By word and deed he let no doubt remain as to all the convictions that followed from his belief in the revolutionary science of Marxism-Leninism.

In his book, *Here I Stand*, he stated,

On many an occasion I would publicly express my belief in the principles of scientific socialism, my deep conviction that for all mankind a socialist society represents an advance to a higher stage of life which is economically, socially and ethically superior to a system based on private profit. History shows that processes of social change have nothing in common with silly notions about plots and conspiracies.

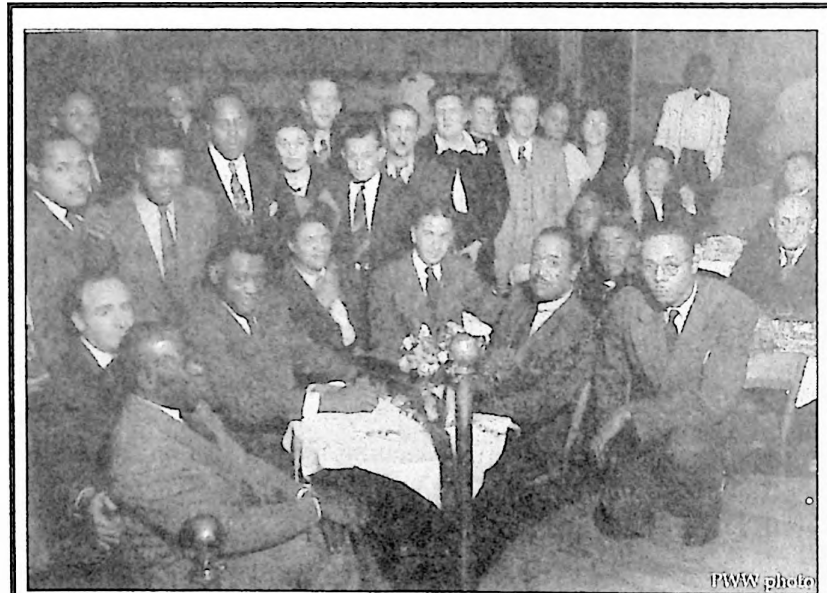
The development of human society from tribalism to feudalism, to capitalism, to socialism is brought about by the needs and aspirations of mankind for a better life.

History has confirmed, and will continue to confirm, the universal laws Paul Robeson held to with a consistency and steadfastness many cannot claim.

Thus, here in this Communist center on this very special day, we are here to reclaim Paul, to rediscover and reveal the full meaning of his great life and work.

We are here to add our voices to those who promise to keep Paul's memory and legacy alive, a promise that no young person should ever again have to ask, "Who was Paul Robeson?"

But, even more, we are also here to guarantee that no American should ever



Robeson and Davis receive labor salute at Small's Paradise in Harlem.

again have to ask, "Was Paul Robeson a Communist?"

It was Paul Robeson himself who put his commitment into words which he followed to his last breath, words that are engraved on the head stone that marks his grave, "The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice."

Comrade Robeson's choice of weapons in the fight for freedom was the Communist Party, USA.

We Communists are supremely proud and happy that Paul's ultimate choice was socialism and the Communist Party.

We will continue to tell the whole truth, till truth triumphs over all the lies, till the whole world recognizes and acknowledges that Comrade Robeson's magnificent life was nourished and sustained by Marxism-Leninism and the ever-growing Communist Party, USA. □

# World Communist Movement Greet Paul Robeson Centennial



## AUSTRALIA

We send warmest greetings from the Communist Party of Australia to all the members and friends of the CPUSA on the occasion of your celebration of the 100th birthday of Paul Robeson.

People who have heard Paul Robeson sing never forget his magnificent voice and the incomparable spirit, the humanism, the love and the strength behind those songs. An English music critic once said: "Robeson is one of the archetypal artists of the 20th Century... When he sings I hear the unsullied expression of the human spirit."

But he was much more than a superlative singer and actor; he was a unique 20th Century person and a worldwide symbol of the artist as activist and spokesman for the poor and oppressed in America and throughout the world.

In Madrid during the Spanish Civil War, Paul sang to the members of the International Brigade at the front lines. He said then: "The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I have no alternative."

In "Ballad for Americans" in 1939 he sang:

*Man in white skin can never be free*

*While his Black brother is in slavery...*

When Paul was here in Australia in 1960, he was shown a film about the appalling conditions in which Australian Aborigines - the First Australians - were forced to live. He wept and promised to return to help Aborigines fight for equality and justice. At a large peace reception for him at Paddington Town Hall in Sydney, he told the crowd: "There's no such thing as a "backward" human being. There is only a society which says they are backward."

**Central Committee  
Communist Party of Australia**

## BRAZIL

On behalf of all Brazilian Communists, the leadership and members of the Communist Party we would like to send of best revolutionary greetings to the event on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Paul Robeson who was a great modern day athlete, scholar, linguist, actor, and singer but also an unwavering warrior in the fight for national liberation, worker's rights, peace against fascism and McCarthyism. He was a leader in defense of the African American people and for socialism.

We hope the May 31st event in New York City honoring the hero Paul Robeson be a successful happening for class battles in your country and reinforce proletarian international solidarity.

**Central Committee  
Communist Party of Brazil**

## CUBA

The Communist Party of Cuba and the Cuban people are honored to associate themselves with such a well-deserved tribute on the centennial of the birth of Paul Robeson exceptionally talented artist and tireless fighter for the cause of the humble and the oppressed of the whole world.

There is deep admiration in our country for this great leader, who defended the rights of the African American people, who fought racism and segregation, and who also understood the strategic importance of unity in the struggle of US workers for the right to organize, and for other labor and social rights in which struggle he actively participated.

We accord special respect to the development of Robeson's political thinking for he came to embrace Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism and to join the ranks of the Communist Party USA during the most difficult "witch hunt" years of the McCarthy period.

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**- Cuban Communist Party**

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**Paul Robeson with Nicolas Guillen,  
Cuban Communist poet in Spain.**

The Cuban Revolution and our Party join with you in recognizing this universal North American who represented the best of his people and who left such a rich legacy that lives on in all those who struggle for a better world.

**Central Committee  
Communist Party of Cuba**

#### **CYPRUS**

The Central Committee of AKEL extends you comradely greetings and warmly congratulate you on your celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Paul Robeson.

Paul Robeson, a real giant in body, mind and soul, with his talents, vision and struggles won international fame and a place in history.

He inspired the oppressed peoples of the world in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, racism, for a new free world. He devoted himself greatly to the struggle for the full dignity of the African American people.

We are happy to add by this letter our tribute to his memory and our appreciation to his contribution to world culture and the struggle for socialism.

**Central Committee  
AKEL, Cyprus**

#### **IRAN**

The centenary of Paul Robeson's birth sees a world very different from the one he played such an important part in creating. The same forces that did so much to persecute and victimize Paul Robeson during his life-

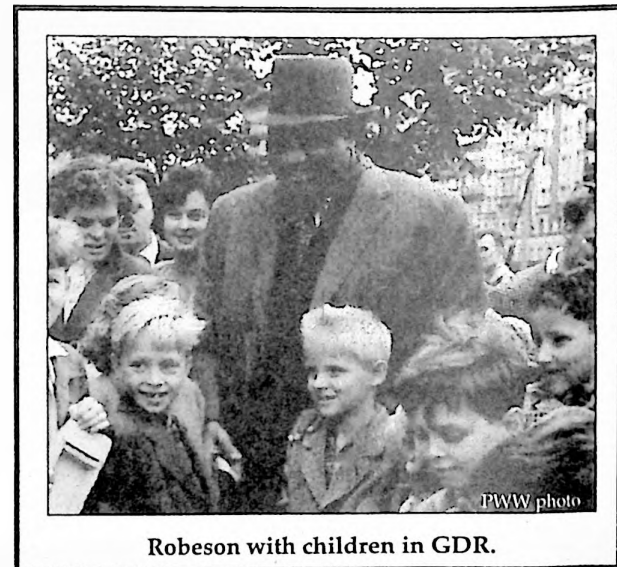
time, are today continuing their anti-human activities across the globe, buoyed up with the afterglow of their ruthless onslaught against the forces of social progress and the former lands of socialism.

The legacy of socialist pioneers, such as Paul Robeson, and the historic lessons arising from the experience of existing socialism cannot be extinguished easily. The beacon of peace, hope and freedom carried by Paul Robeson on behalf of all working people, and African Americans in particular, lives on despite the tide of imperialism and hatred, greed and despair, that are its principal characteristics.

The Tudeh Party of Iran is confident that if Paul Robeson were with us today, his spirit of resistance and vision would be as strong as ever. He would recognize and expose the culprits responsible for the suffering and divisions in our own land, which even during his life experienced the iron heel of imperialism. He would not lose sight of the steps that remain essential if ordinary people in all the world's continents are to achieve justice and freedom.

Paul Robeson displayed courage, self-sacrifice, intellectual vigor, honesty and creativity, putting these qualities at the service of class struggle and his party, the Communist Party of the United States of America. Today these qualities are precisely these needed to reinvigorate the struggle against racism and oppression and for socialism and peace. It is for this reason that the spirit and example set by Comrade Robeson will not perish.

On this great anniversary, we the Tudeh Party of Iran, salute the memory of Paul Robeson. We reject the futile attempts by sections of the international bour-



**Robeson with children in GDR.**

geoisie, to revise the history of Paul Robeson's association with the international struggle and their efforts to incorporate his artistic legacy into the machinery of profit, racism and exploitation.

**Central Committee of the  
Tudeh Party of Iran**

**IRAQ**

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great singer and fighter for freedom, peace and justice, Paul Robeson, we extend on behalf of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party, and in the name of all Communists and their friends in Iraq, our hearty salutations and militant greetings. The marking of this occasion is an opportunity to all freedom fighters the world over to remember the big contribution of Paul Robeson to the cause of working people in the USA and oppressed all over the world. His works and words will always be an inspiration to millions of young people struggling today against imperialism and capitalist monopolies, for peace, freedom, democracy, progress and social justice.

We will never forget the songs and words of Paul Robeson, and his works will remain in the hearts of those who share the goals and visions he dedicated his life to.

We wish your celebration every success and once again accept our warm and militant greetings.

**Political Bureau  
Iraqi Communist Party**

**ISRAEL**

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Paul Robeson, we have the pleasure to extend to you and all supporters of Paul Robeson's Party, the Communist Party USA greetings.

We honor his devotion to the struggle for peace, justice, equality and full dignity of the African American people and all oppressed people everywhere. Together with you we honor the full human giant who was and

remains forever Paul Robeson.

Inspired by the example of this great man, our Party is engaged at present in exerting every effort for strengthening the cooperation of all the peace and democratic forces in Israel, for toppling the right-wing reactionary government which is erecting serious obstacles in the way of the peace process and refuses to comply with the Oslo Accords agreed upon and aimed at reaching a just solution of the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieving durable and stable peace.

We are struggling for putting an end to the Israeli

occupation of Southern Lebanon, and for reaching a peaceful agreement between Israel and Syria, based on the evacuation of the Israeli forces of occupation from the Syrian Golan Heights, and mutual recognition of the just national rights of all sides involved. The Israeli Communists and their allies are sparing no effort directed at uniting the working class and the popular masses in Israel - Jews and Arabs - in a joint struggle

against growing unemployment, for foiling the attack of the reactionary government of Israel on the social rights and achievements of the working class and the popular masses for a just distribution of the national wealth of the country, and for socialism.

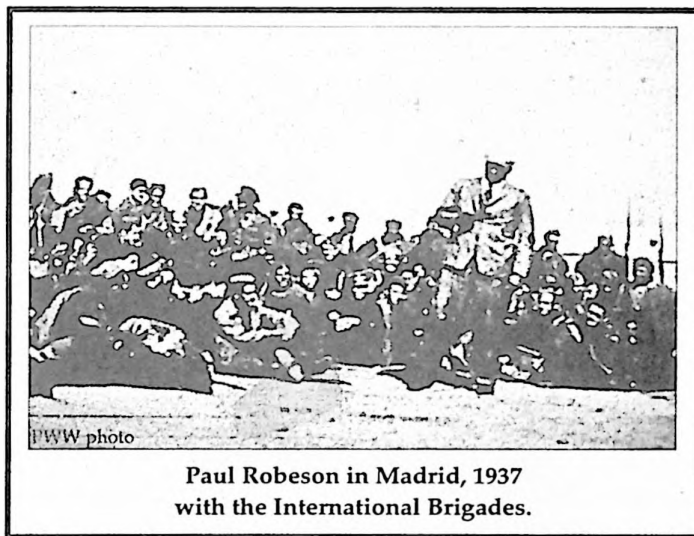
**Central Committee  
Communist Party of Israel**

**NORTH KOREA**

The Central Committee of the Workers Party of Korea congratulates you on the celebration of the 100th birth anniversary of revolutionary Paul Robeson, and extends militant greetings to the National Committee and the entire members of your Party.

The celebration will be an important political opportunity for your Party to educate the broad masses about socialist ideas and to mobilize them in the revolutionary struggle.

**Central Committee  
Workers Party of Korea**



**Paul Robeson in Madrid, 1937  
with the International Brigades.**

### **RUSSIA**

Dear participants of the event celebrating the 100th anniversary of Comrade Paul Robeson the great son of the African American people, big and true friend of the Soviet Union, patriot and internationalist, active fighter against fascism and aggression, fearless advocate of peace, disarmament and social progress.

We, the Soviet-Russian people, are very well aware of his remarkable life and creative work. Already, before WW II, his songs of social protest were widely known in our country while the Russian song *Polushko-Pole* had actually become his visiting card in the Soviet Union.

We also remember well his marvelous basso profundo voice which sounded loudly in the period of the Civil War in Spain, inspiring heroic international brigade soldiers for the first battles with fascism. In the time of WW II and the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet peoples against Nazism, Robeson's songs which he sang in more than 20 languages, were constantly accompanied by impassioned calls for fight against fascism.

Having visited our country for the first time in 1934, he returned many times and had become a sincere and true friend of the Soviet peoples. His impassioned calls for strengthening peace and disarmament, his direct participation in the struggle for peace, against the nuclear threat, for a world without wars and violence, have brought him worldwide fame as a tireless advocate of peace outstanding person in the world anti-war movement. This is why, not by chance, he had been elected a member of the World Peace Council, and had become a laureate of the International Peace Prize and International Lenin's Prize for strengthening peace among people.

Remembering today past times and keeping in our minds and hearts our common comrade, we want to assure all the participants of the commemorative event in New York City, that we remain faithful to those ideals of social justice, and interna-

tionalism which Comrade Paul Robeson has been fighting for all his life. We are sure that exactly this course will serve the best memory of the friend who passed away and real hope for future generations.

**Presidium, Communist Party  
Russian Federation**

### **SOUTH AFRICA**

The South African Communist Party joins Communists, anti-racists and progressive forces around the world in honoring that human giant, Paul Robeson.

Paul Robeson combined a deep rootedness in his own people and culture with internationalism; he combined immense artistic talent with a political vision.

Robeson also had a seminal influence upon our own South African struggle. Coincidentally, with this 100th Robeson anniversary is the exhumation and reburial of one of the great martyrs of our own revolution – Vuyisile Mini.

Vuyisile Mini was known as "South Africa's Paul Robeson" for his own fine, deep bass voice, and for his song compositions, many still sung today. In the early 1960s, Mini, a trade unionist

and SACP militant, was arrested, charged and condemned to death for the murder of an apartheid policeman. While Mini was certainly a member of the underground armed struggle, it was clear that he had no involvement in the murder whatsoever. He was hanged, nevertheless, in 1965. On his way to the gallows, Mini and his two fellow condemned comrades sang one of Mini's own resistance songs, in deep bass voices inspired by Robeson.

We wanted to share this story with our American comrades on this important anniversary of Robeson's birth. In honoring Mini, here in South Africa, we shall also be honoring Robeson – a voice that reached into the darkest corners of apartheid.

**Central Committee  
South African Communist Party**



Robeson with Soviet workers.



# What's at Stake in '98

Jarvis Tyner



From watching the media you wouldn't know that we are in the middle of a very important election year. The ruling class understands this and its program is already in full swing. The 1998 electoral struggle is on.

The issues surrounding "Starrgate" are the essence of the elections. Kenneth Starr's witch hunt is not really about the morality of the president. Similarly, the hearings about foreign money influencing the U.S. elections are not about having fairer elections.

In addition, the California "paycheck protection" ballot initiative (Prop. 226) was not about protecting union members paychecks at all. It was an effort to weaken organized labor's fight to really protect worker's wages, jobs and working conditions. It was to turn back the current more militant policies of the AFL-CIO. In the same manner, the so-called "civil rights" initiative was actually designed to set back civil rights and promote racism as was Prop. 227 which attacked bilingual education. These are issues richly financed by the big corporations and are designed to push the election debate to the right.

The ultra right wants to use Clinton's alleged sexual misconduct to mislead the voters into electing those who support the now unmentionable Contract on America. Gus Hall is right when he points out how the discredited Contract is still being fought for by the right because it is the essence of their budget proposals.

The ultra right fully understands that we are in the middle of a very important election year struggle. They know that if their candidates run on their real program and beliefs, the right will lose. On the other hand, if the real economic and social problems confronting the nation's working people come to the fore, the Republicans will lose.

We contend that the issue is still the economy. Even in this boom period, the effects of long-term

economic decay continue to impact on the working class. Profits are up, but real wages continue to decline. There are more jobs but underemployment and poverty continue to grow. The budgets are more balanced but they were balanced by creating more hungry, homeless, uninsured and incomeless working people.

The attempt to eliminate affirmative action, the growth of racist violence and the phenomenal rise in the prison population, the threat to Social Security and Medicaid, these are all issues of great concern to the voters. If the real economic and social problems confronting working people come to the fore, the right will lose in '98. If they don't the right can win a stronger position in the government. That is why we must help to bring the real issues forward.

U.S. corporations today are out to crush democratic rights in their fanatic drive for maximum profits. They want to guarantee that there is little or no popular resistance to their policies. The rights of working people are especially under attack. This is why the corporate drive to break unions has reached a new level.

The struggle against discrimination and for equality is meeting a new resistance from the ruling class. A new level of legislative and legal measures are being pushed to give the corporations a free hand to do whatever they want in pursuit of greater profits. A victory for the right in 1998 will move things further in a fascist direction.

Even though the passage of Prop. 227 is a set back, there are other electoral patterns that move in the opposite direction.

The fact that Ken Starr has only a twelve percent approval rating according to the latest polls is an indication that the right-wing conspiracy is not working. It's not that the voters like Clinton - they fear the ultra right. The defeat of Prop. 262 in California, the fact that Houston voted to maintain its affirmative action program last year, and the growing anger over the right-wing attacks on Social Security show that the voters are seeing through the super demagoguery of the ultra right and their corporate backers. It is correct to say that the right can be defeated in 1998. It is more urgent than that - the

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Jarvis Tyner is a vice-chairman of the Communist Party.

right must be defeated.

A victory for the right this year will mean more cut backs in working-class entitlements and more attacks on union rights and civil rights. It will mean privatization and corporate abuses. It could mean fast track will pass and more wars of aggression. It will also mean less money for the people. The hysteria being whipped up against socialist China and former Yugoslavia rival the worst imperialist propaganda of the Cold War.

The aim of the ultra right this year is to maintain and expand the right-wing majority in the Congress and in state governments across the country. If the right wins the battle for state governments it will be in charge of the reapportionment of voting districts. Such a set back could mean a long struggle to rewin the election of racially oppressed and working-class forces to office - it could take a decade to overcome the consequences.

If the ultra-right Republicans win in November they will be in a strong position to win the White House in the year 2000. All three branches of government would then be under the control of the ultra-right wing. Yes, the fascist danger will become greater.

This is why we must help find the way to register, motivate and mobilize millions of working-class, racially-oppressed and progressive voters to come to the polls this year and vote against the right danger.

To give an idea of what is needed, the AFL-CIO is aiming for an additional four million union household voters to be registered by the year 2000. In 1992 when Bush was defeated labor brought out 19.7 million voters which was 19 percent of all voters. In 1994 when the right won the House and the Senate, that number dropped to ten million or just about 14 percent.

In 1996 a basic reason why eight right-wing members of the Congress were defeated and we came within 10,000 votes of removing Gingrich as the Speaker was because labor mobilized an unprecedented 22 million voters or 23 percent of the active

electorate that year. When you put together those labor numbers with the large progressive vote of African American and Latino voters, along with women, seniors and youth, you can see that there is a strong democratic voting bloc that reflects the democratic sentiments of the majority of the electorate.

This year the battle must go on. We must complete the job in 1998 as we prepare for a sharp presidential struggle in the year 2000. The issue that will mobilize the largest number of progressive voters remains the urgent need to defeat the right danger.

The entire House, a third of the Senate, 36 governors and 24 state legislatures are up for reelection. There are also scores of initiatives on the ballot most of which are right wing in nature.

**LABOR** ■ Labor '98 is just what the doctor ordered. Fortunately, it is not the only effort by progressive forces this year. African American, Mexican American, religious, seniors (Social Security could turn the entire election against the right), women, youth and students organizations are also in motion. Because of its resources and organized presence in every state, Labor '98 is the anchor for the whole anti-right-wing electoral effort.

The AFL-CIO is planning to register four million union households. They are going to put organizers into 102 Congressional, two gubernatorial and 14 U.S. Senate races across the country. It will also field several hundred labor candidates as part of its 2,000 pro-labor candidates by 2000 campaign.

The estimate is that if the ultra-right picks up just five additional Senate seats the body would become filibuster-proof and strengthen the ability of the right-wing majority to have its way. Recent defeats for the right in the Senate shows that the filibuster can be an effective weapon against the right-wing majority. If on the other hand, eleven seats in the House were switched from the Republicans, Newt is out as Speaker. This is what must be achieved.

Where possible we should concentrate on the key Congressional races that labor has singled out. There



are eleven House races were right wingers won in '96 by less than 5,000 votes. In each there are more than enough union household voters to have defeated them. In fact labor points out that if an average of just 25 percent of the unregistered union household voters can be gotten to the polls this year Newt will be out and the fight for a pro-labor pro-people agenda for Congress will take a big step forwards.

There are a number of key gubernatorial and state Senate races. In New York an opportunity exists to defeat the infamous "Senator pot hole," Alfonse D'Amato. D'Amato can be defeated if the Democrats don't shot themselves in the foot. If Boxer is maintained and D'Amato defeated it would be a strong set back for the ultra right in the Senate, even if the Republicans maintain their majority.

At this point, New York's Governor Pataki is expected to be reelected, largely because the Democrats lack a strong candidate and desire to remove him from office. Those who are running are doing so for position.

There are some independent forces, the Greens and some Labor Party elements that are interested in winning ballot statues this year. This can only be won in a gubernatorial race.

In the race for California's governor the recent polls show that Gray Davis can defeat Lungren the right-wing Republican nominee. The victory over Prop. 226 was a real boost for the progressive forces and can set the stage for an overall defeat for the right. When you look at the returns, you see that

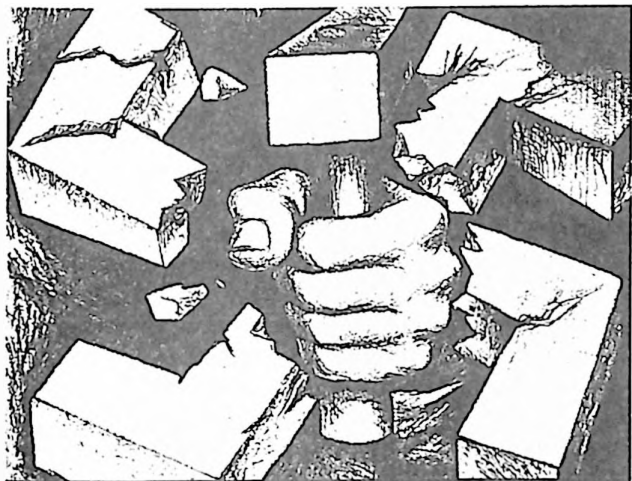
even conservative union members (in whose name, 226 was initiated) voted in the majority against 226. Exit polls showed that union members who are Republican voted in their majority against 226.

In Southern California, the reelection of Loretta Sanchez is very important. Her victory over "never say die" Dornan in '96 was a coast-to-coast psychological blow to the right. Forces are mobilizing to make sure that Sanchez is reelected.

The Party has an important role to play. We must be hard workers and active fighters. But we must also inject the advanced ideas of our Party into the electoral debate. One thing is crystal clear - we cannot separate ourselves from the most urgent immediate struggles of our class to defeat the right. Too many on the left and in the third-party movement are still on the outside of this united struggle to turn back the danger from the right. You can't fight fascism if you don't fight reaction as George Dimitroff pointed out. This is a day-to-day struggle. Sectarian policies toward building political independence, fear of mixing it up with forces in the Democratic Party, false notions of political purity have become rationales for a no-struggle approach. Nothing is more impure than the continued dominance of the Congress and most state houses and a large number of City Halls by right-wing Republicans. How could any one who claims to have the higher morality of a revolutionary be indifferent to the immediate plight of the people? Defeating the extreme right is fundamental to defeating monopoly's overall program and moving forward.

**SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY** ■ Gus Hall made a real contribution recently when he said, "The fact is, there can be no struggle for socialism without the struggle for democratic rights ... socialism is the highest form of democracy." To fail to understand this is to not understand how to fight and win revolutionary change.

We must be a leading part of the broad anti-ultra-right electoral coalition that is currently coming together. We can play a big role but our role must include the "plus" which in this case means finding the ways to advance political independence. We can do this, of course, by running on the Communist Party ticket or, as our recent experience shows, we can also run in nonpartisan races or run on the line of other parties. Whatever electoral vehicle or tactics we use, whether we put our Party membership up front or in some cases leave the



**Wake up: The Fascist  
Danger is Real.**



obvious unsaid, it is clear we need to run on our advanced program.

Our recent victories in the election of Communists to public office show that we must run more comrades for office and move from what have been predominantly protest campaigns to the election of Communists to office. This requires different tactics than we used before.

This year whether we have a lot of candidates or not, we must issue a Party electoral program for 1998. The Party is going to be out on the streets, with our recruiting and circulation drive registering and educating voters. We also must come out with mass pamphlets on the issues in this election such as the right danger. Our cable shows can make a big contribution by exposing the right and presenting our program. This will be a real contribution to the whole process.

We need to initiate where possible and support all referendums for a living wage, to support the need for public works jobs and the Martinez Bill, that call for an end to discrimination (in short all real civil rights initiatives), that call for universal health care and preserving Social Security and Medicare. We should also work for initiatives that call for real campaign finance reform, that weaken the dominance of corporate money in our electoral process. Also any measures that promote proportional representation or make it easier for independents to get on the ballot and win must be supported. We must as well support efforts designed to ease the voter registration process. "Motor Voter" added 13.7 million voters to the rolls in 1995-1996 alone.

**WHERE ARE THE COMMUNIST CANDIDATES?** ▣ This year we only have one candidate running for office, Coleman Persilly the perennial candidate in Marin County in Northern California. Coleman leads the Mobile Home Owners Association and is always out there in the public never missing an election. He is well-liked and it's clear he is going to get himself elected eventually.

But the question before the rest of us is why after the victories last year and all the discussions, is Coleman the only comrade running this year? What does it say about our commitment to building a mass Party? Gus put it plainly,

I think our lack of involvement in the electoral field shows a weakness in our understanding of democracy. The fact is that all the new developments and processes have a

big impact on U.S. politics, especially bourgeois democracy.

The counterforce to fascism is the fight to preserve, defend and expand all the democratic laws, rights and institutions and structures that make up our bourgeois democracy.

Short of running Communist candidates, we can play an important role in this year's election by jumping into the Labor '98 effort and any other efforts aimed at defeating the right.

There are many signs that the main ultra-right organizations, issues and personalities are running out of popular support. Newt Gingrich remains one of the most unpopular politicians in America. In most of the right-wing causes that depend on mail appeal money from regular folks, the revenue is down. The Christian Coalition is in a crisis, the Promise Keepers had to lay off most of its staff, and the Perot group was not able to get on the ballot in Texas recently – they said they were short of money.

The anti-abortion movement is also faltering. Kenneth Starr's 12 percent represents the most extreme right-wing element. It is this loss of popular support that is the cause of the split on the right. The most extreme contend the Republican Party compromises too much and is not fighting for their programs. On the other hand the more moderate Republicans are saying that the party has to be more centrist.

If our goal is to defeat the Contract and the right-wing majority in Congress and in the many state houses, we must be aware of the role of the Christian right which has delivered as much as five million votes in other national elections. Since Ralph Reed resigned, it has been facing a major drop in financial contributions. The Christian Coalition is at war with the moderate conservatives in the GOP. If this war will weaken their presence on the national scene, then let the internal battle proceed.

The growing rejection of right-wing extremist racist violence could impact on the elections as well. The mass reaction to the events in Jasper, Texas like the Oklahoma City tragedy and the closing down of the government before could spill over into the elections and create a larger vote against the fascist danger.

Let us go forward this year, confident that this struggle can be won, because it can be. In 1999 we must have many new Communist candidates and fight for results in the year 2000 that can help usher in a whole new era of pro-working-class, progressive anti racist advances. □

# Strike at GM

Sam Webb

The strike action of General Motors workers is a major class confrontation. If the strike continues – and there is every sign that it will – its significance to the entire working-class and democratic movement will grow with each passing day. The strike action of the GM workers will not run the same course as that of the Caterpillar workers who in the end needlessly suffered a serious setback in their strike struggle in the early '90s. GM workers not only bring to the table a fighting history and spirit, but also are better positioned to squeeze concessions from their class foe than the Cat workers were.

At this moment, nearly 10,000 workers in two parts plants in Flint, Mich. are on strike. In addition to the auto workers on strike, 70,000 other auto workers are idled due to shortages of parts. And this number could grow to as many as a half million in a short period of time as supply lines of parts destined for final assembly operations dry up.

Yet all across the country, GM workers idled by the Flint strike have spoken with one voice: their fight is our fight!

There has been an outpouring of solidarity from the entire UAW and from the Canadian Auto Workers. The AFL-CIO has expressed full support. There is a recognition that the Flint workers are standing up for all of labor. Indeed, a victorious strike will greatly strengthen its hand at the collective bargaining table and ballot box in the coming period, a period which promises sharp confrontations between labor and its foes sitting in plush corporate suites and in Congress.

Employment at the two struck plants in Flint has been on a downward slope for over a decade. Employment at Buick City, which houses one of the plants, has fallen from 13,000 to slightly less than 6,000 in the space of a decade.

To make matters worse there is no end in sight. Despite earlier agreements with GM that supposedly protected jobs, work has steadily been outsourced and little has been done to modernize either plant, raising fears that GM will close both plants as they

become obsolete.

GM is still a highly integrated manufacturing corporation. Much of its parts production – roughly 70 percent – is done in-house. In contrast, Ford and Chrysler contract much of their parts production to semi-independent outside suppliers, most of whom are non-union and hire only cheap labor. They are increasingly located in countries like Mexico, Brazil, China and Thailand.

Not to be left behind, GM is now spinning off its parts operations to outside contractors. The losers in this corporate restructuring process are Black, Brown, and white auto workers and their families – not to mention cities, like Flint, where these workers live.

Since 1993, GM has laid off approximately 40,000 auto workers, including a disproportionate number of minority workers, despite modest growth in sales during the same period. This “uncoupling” of employment from sales and output is a new feature of the auto crisis. In earlier periods employment in the auto industry would rise as output and sales increased. But with the widespread application of labor-displacing technology, global outsourcing of parts, and speedup on the shop floor that link has been severed. Thus, in auto (and other mass production industries, for that matter) we observe the paradoxical situation of declining job opportunities accompanying rising output and sales.

This is certainly the case in Flint, where nearly 50,000 jobs were permanently eliminated in 20



Sam Webb is a vice-chairman of the Communist Party.

years. The issue of jobs, and, in a larger sense, the question of who is going to bear the weight of the restructuring process is the epicenter of the storm now shaking the auto industry.

In this context, GM's decision to secretly remove dies on Memorial Day weekend from the stamping plant in Flint and transfer them to another GM stamping plant in Ohio added to the class confrontation. GM did this in order to turn out parts for a new pickup truck launch scheduled for the summer. Not coincidentally, pickup trucks, along with utility vehicles, happen to be GM's best-selling and most profitable products.

Up until a few years ago, the transfer of dies would have been nearly impossible for technical reasons. But with new flexible, multi-purpose technology, it is now much easier.

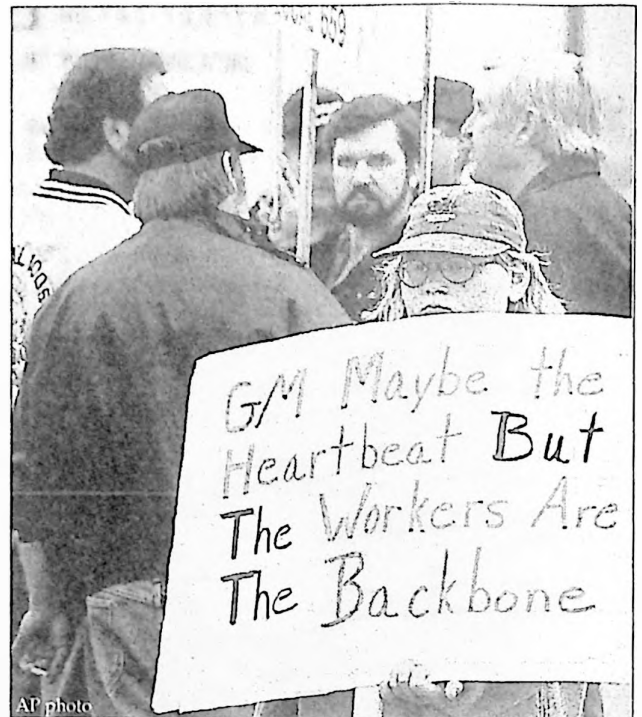
(As an historical aside, GM's decision to begin removing dies from the Fisher body plant in December 1937 convinced strike director and Communist leader Bob Travis to order the occupation of the plant. Thus was born the historic Flint sit-down strike that broke the open shop at GM and set into motion a wave of strikes nationwide.)

GM has reported record profits in recent years. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, GM is sitting on \$13 billion. This nest egg comes, and can only come, from one source: the unpaid labor of auto workers, from the appropriation by GM of the value that auto workers produce in the production process, from heightened exploitation of workers at the point of production.

So if anyone is thinking that GM is a basket case, think no more because they are living better than ever before off of the labor of a quarter million GM workers.

**CORPORATE RESTRUCTURING** ■ Nevertheless, neither GM's multimillion-dollar executives nor their equally wealthy counterparts on Wall Street are satisfied with the pace of the restructuring process at General Motors. Accelerate the process, these scavengers of workers' labor say, no matter what the human cost. The main thing, in fact the only thing, they go on to smugly argue, is the corporate bottom line. Thus, by the year 2000 GM intends to eliminate another 50,000 jobs. And if sales don't hold up, which is quite possible, job losses will be simply staggering.

This is the new framework of the present day class struggle. The current strike is not a momentary



blip on the screen, but rather a part of a larger and new pattern of class conflict. Since 1996 strikes similar to the present one at Flint have occurred at nine other GM plants.

This bitter battle now raging has its roots in GM's unceasing push for maximum corporate profits. It can very well be a defining moment for U.S. autoworkers and the entire working class. In which case, no one concerned about the future of our country should sit on the sidelines.

If I had a scorecard, I would say that the strike struggles in auto have slowed down – but not stopped – the auto corporations' restructuring plans.

Despite winning much hailed job protection language in local agreements, job loss continues owing to the invasion of new labor-displacing technology, the consolidation of manufacturing operations, the outsourcing of production and relentless intensification of work. It's not to the same extent had there been no fight by the auto workers and their union, but it continues nonetheless.

Therefore, it's fair to ask what is needed to defend the jobs and living standards of auto workers. Simply answered: a consistent class-struggle strategy. The present strategy of the UAW is flawed because it operates on the assumption that in a fully global, state-of-the-art, fiercely competitive, highly monopolized, and slow-growth industry, job loss is

as certain as night follows day.

**NEED FOR MILITANT DEMANDS** ■ In this era of corporate downsizing, job loss is as close as you can get to an iron law, say top UAW leaders. What follows from this – and the experience of the UAW bears this out – is a defensive and, in the long term, a less than fully effective strategy for protecting jobs and livelihoods.

What adds to the problem is that the negotiations have shifted from the international to the local union level. This puts local unions at a big, probably insurmountable disadvantage and eventually leads to whipsawing and concessions to the auto corporations.

We hear from time to time of negotiations between local unions and the Big 3, especially when a strike looms, but negotiations of this kind go on routinely, day to day. And while concessions may appear small, the cumulative effect is considerable.

If this were not the case, GM would not have provoked 25 strikes in the space of four years nor absorbed billions of dollars in revenue losses. Industry observers say if GM's entire North American operations are shut down the company will lose \$300 million a week.

What then is needed to shift the weight of the

restructuring process to the pocketbooks of GM and the other auto corporations? First of all, we need new demands that fit the new situation in the auto industry. Among the most important is the shorter workweek with no cut in pay – gains already won by workers in Germany and promised by the new coalition government in France. A shorter workweek with no cut in pay would create tens of thousands of new jobs.

Other demands would include controls on outsourcing and new technology and public ownership of the auto industry under democratic control. Taken together, these measures would go a long way to alleviate the ongoing crisis in the auto industry. A full resolution of this crisis however, rests with "Bill of Rights" socialism – a society where economic wealth is in the hands of its creators – our nation's working people – and political and economic decision making reflects fully the democratic will of the vast majority of American people rather than the selfish interests of a handful of corporations and the super-rich.

Second, a broad appeal to all working-class and people's organizations for their solidarity is absolutely necessary. The UPS strike demonstrated not only the utter importance of rank-and-file activity, but also the crucial role of public opinion and support to a strikes outcome.

Perhaps two or three decades ago a go-it-alone approach was feasible, but in this new era of pitched class confrontation those days are long gone. Finally, given the new conditions in the auto industry, the battle cry, "One Industry, One Contract, One Class," should echo on every picket line and in every local union hall and working-class community.

The fragmentation of the collective bargaining process and the shifting of negotiations to the local union level are a recipe for disaster for auto and other workers in mass production.

In any event, the main task now is to win support for the striking workers in Flint. Neither labor nor its allies should wait for an invitation to express their full solidarity with these courageous workers. They are on the front line of the class struggle.

Etiquette and formality may be appropriate at the dinner table, but in the class struggle any formality that impedes solidarity should be dispensed with.

Their fight is our fight. If they win, we win. If they lose, we all lose. All out for the striking GM workers! □





# World Communist Movement Convenes

Aleca Papriga

This year marks 150 years since the first edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, of the first scientifically founded theoretical and practical program of a revolutionary labor organization, the League of Communists.

The fundamental ideas expressed in it, the laws of social movement that are set forth with the authors' sharp language and profound insight are confirmed in the picture of the contemporary world.

Recently, we have observed a revival of interest in Marxism and the *Communist Manifesto* both in Greece and internationally. This relates to international developments, the hardships and tragic experiences that people are going through on a world scale. It bears witness to the vitality of Marxist theory as well as to the need for us to go back and study the sources that fed the gains and valuable lessons of popular resistance and revolution. We observe at the same time, that an effort is being made – by some deliberately, by others not – to alter the main message contained in the *Manifesto*. Some people praise the profound, scientific analysis of the capitalist system and the general prognosis for its future. However, they do not give the necessary projection to the most basic point stressed by Marx, i.e. the need to overthrow the last class society in history in a revolutionary manner. They do not pay attention to the basic message of the *Manifesto* that to the working class belongs the honor and the task of becoming a vanguard revolutionary force, the dominant force that guarantees the broadest alliance with the other oppressed social strata in the city and countryside.

Eclectic approaches to Marx not only do injustice to history and science but also makes much more difficult the development and enrichment of

scientific theory of socialism today.

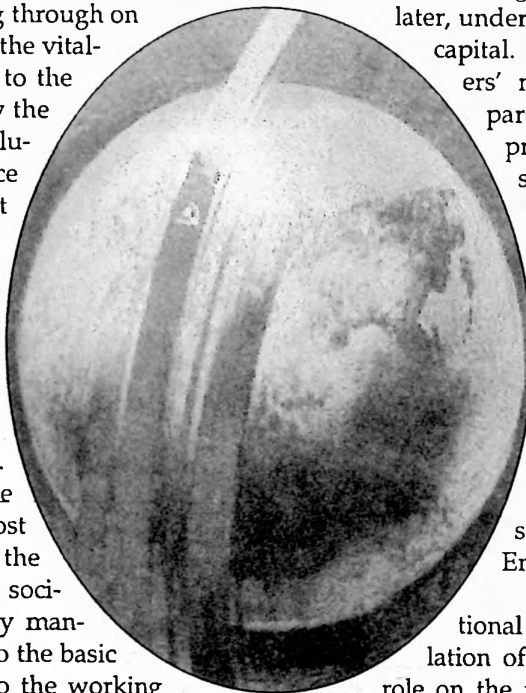
In the *Communist Manifesto* published 150 years ago, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels came to the following conclusions, among others: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without ceaselessly revolutionizing the means of production, in other words, relations of production, i.e. all social relations. By exploiting the world market, the bourgeois class shapes production and consumption in all countries on a worldwide level."

It is clear that the founders of scientific socialism had a profound understanding of the processes of internationalizing production, as had Lenin later, under the domination of monopoly capital. The Communist and Workers' movement is, therefore, prepared to face the various theories presenting globalization as something entirely new, presumably totally unknown until today.

The slogan Workers of the World, Unite! is a response to the problems, to the needs for internationalizing the class struggle. The dialectical relationship between the national and the international is present in the works of Marx, Engels and later, Lenin.

Today, the role of the international factor, the international correlation of forces, play an even greater role on the national level. The victorious outcome of the socialist revolution and, even more so, the building of socialism in a country or in a group of countries are influenced even more decisively by international developments.

Nevertheless, the struggle on a national level constitutes an inalienable element of international developments. International action of the peoples, its range and effectiveness, cannot but rely and depend on action on a national level and the close



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Aleca Papriga is the general-secretary of the Communist Party of Greece.

cooperation – interconnection of national movements on a regional and world scale.

We hail the important strike movements in various countries, such as Indonesia, Denmark, Australia, South Korea, Russia and elsewhere.

In our country, people's disaffection is growing too as do the mobilizations of the working people, many of which are organized by the rank and file, in spite of the will of the union leadership. In the center of these struggles, are privatization drives, the dismantling of labor relations, unemployment, the eradication of part of the poor peasantry. An important role has been played by the struggles of the seamen, the youth and teachers.

Important and multiform are also the activities developed by the anti-imperialist peace movement. A large part of the Greek people are feeling a growing concern as they begin to realize the eventual tragic consequences for our country, for the Balkans, for the Mediterranean of the willingness shown by the Greek government to participate in imperialist plans of NATO, from the redistribution of spoils in the Balkans, to the formation of multinational forces of rapid intervention.

As far as Greece is concerned, the CPG, through the resolutions of its 15th Congress, has mapped out the line of creating a sociopolitical alliance, which we call the Anti-imperialist Anti-monopoly Democratic Front, aiming at rallying the social and political forces that choose to fight against the choices of the imperialists and the monopolies in a united front, with the prospect of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism.

What kind of answer is needed today by the Communist and Workers' movement and the anti-imperialist movement in general?

We are experiencing a generalized offensive such as the post-war world has not seen, focused on well-known restructuring within the framework of the global capitalist economy.

One element of it is the snatching back of the workers' and peoples' gains, which has been called backsliding. But this is not in fact a return to the past but a symptom of capitalism becoming even more ripe and decay-ridden.

On the one hand, strong efforts are being made to reshuffle the capitalist system, to deal with its crisis and its contradictions to prevent new outbursts by the people, new uprisings and social revolutions. On the other hand, however, the margins for capitalism to maneuver and to find effective cures are

becoming increasingly narrow. The character of the system is growing more and more reactionary which is why governments are pursuing this non-negotiable political stance.

By the very course of things and developments, the struggle for immediate issues has grown today more linked to the struggle for socialism, despite the fact that the subjective factor is weaker today owing to the developments of recent years. The problem can, certainly, not be solved according to our wishes nor included in some schedule.

Outside the ranks of the anti-imperialist anti-monopoly struggle with the prospect of socialism no alternative solution can be found and especially, one with the prospect of viability. Even simple resistance can be neutralized and degenerated, partial gains by the working people become uncertain and are rapidly taken back by the forces of capital. Of course, partial resistance should not be underestimated, but will acquire weight and prospects when included in a more general radical prospect which looks forward to socialism. What is the situation, what is the preparedness of the Communist and anti-imperialist movements today?

We regard as encouraging the fact that, during recent years, meetings between Communist and Workers' Parties have increased, both on the regional level (the Eastern Mediterranean and Latin America), and on the world level (meetings in Moscow and Leningrad in 1997). However, we believe that, as the Communist movement, we have not yet managed to respond to the modern conditions of the struggle of the working class and other strata and peoples oppressed by imperialism.

**OBSTACLES TO UNITY** ■ However, what is preventing Communist Parties today from playing a more general active role on the international level, in international struggles?

We believe that, beyond the difficulties and particularities of development that may face the Communist Parties in each country, the major hurdles are serious ideological and political differences between Communist Parties.

We are far certainly, from the view that ideological differences can be ignored or artificially circumvented. We must face them with dialogue, in conditions of comradely equality, and, at the same times make efforts to achieve joint action wherever we agree. Differences do not always start off from the same point, nor perhaps in all cases have they taken

on their final expression.

Most, if not all, of our parties are acting under difficult and in, some ways, unprecedented conditions. There are parties that are illegal, parties facing particularly tough conditions, that do not have the ease to study all the problems. There are parties that were founded recently and have not yet consolidated their identity, other parties that are experiencing problems of crisis or internal dissension. Consequently, it is not easy for all parties in all cases to be able to acquire a comprehensive picture of all modern problems. We all have to do a lot of work to acquire a comprehensive and profound understanding of international developments and new phenomena. No party by itself can give complete answers unless it studies the experiences and views of other parties.

We know that as far as collaboration among Communist Parties is concerned, certain parties invoke negative moments or experiences, or assess negatively the experience of the 20th century. Others express reservations as to the necessity or possibility of having international coordination and united action on a world or even regional level.

Our Party, without overlooking or underestimating one or the other assessment and treating the view of every Communist Party with respect, believes that today it is necessary for us to promote coordination and cooperation between Communist Parties and the effort by Communists to chart a common strategy all over the world, by taking advantage of both the positive and the negative experience of the Communist movement. Mutual information, the exchange of experience and information, simple solidarity are not enough. Common action is also needed.

Progressive people want this. Other political forces who, in some regions in Europe and elsewhere, have developed advanced forms of co-operation are also teaching us this.

In the past, when the Communist movement was united (despite any weaknesses), when the anti-imperialist movement was growing, when the correlation of forces was more favorable, then other broader forces, even the social democrats in some cases, came closer to anti-imperialist positions. Today too, there are significant radical, anti-imperialist forces that will be encouraged when they see that the Communists are rallying together and coordinating their actions.

Communists cannot act effectively unless they

find a way to formulate a common general ideological-political identity which, in our view, should rest on the Marxist-Leninist world outlook and proletarian internationalism. At the same time, there is an more urgent need to study collectively the new phenomena and new developments, to work out contemporary answers and to generalize modern experience.

Even though mistakes were made and deviations and internal problems appeared in the course of building socialism in the 20th century, we should not forget that socialism was built under exceptionally difficult conditions and, of course, without previous experience. We should not lose sight of the fact that it was undermined by imperialism. The October Revolution, the existence of the USSR and the other socialist states changed the fate of working people radically, and for the better, all over the planet. Precisely for this reason, we believe that a common and universal ideological and political identity of the Communists must recognize the role and contribution of the socialism we knew, irrespective of any remarks or criticism of the part of any party.

Our opinion is that there must be a broad discussion, that conclusions and lessons must be drawn regarding the causes of the reversals in European socialist countries and the USSR. Time will be needed, but along the way new facts will certainly come forward that will shed light on what we already know. Nihilism and total rejection will not help in any way.

**ON THE ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS** ■ The present-day image of the working class in many countries and regions, in particular in the most developed capitalist countries, has changed. The contemporary working class and the working class described in *The Communist Manifesto* present differences among themselves. These new features do not alter its revolutionary role and even less do they abolish it as a class. We too are trying to study the composition and the limits of the working class, the behavior of its traditional and modern segments. We are, from one point of view facing new problems because of the turmoil in labor relations, the scourge of unemployment, growing migration and the nationalism and racism that have appeared even within the ranks of the working class. We must make a better study of how ideology and politics can use new technologies and not the opposite, as it is being frequently projected, i.e. how new technologies can use ideology and politics. It is one thing to

think on how we should be linked with the present-day working class and another thing altogether to try and make modern developments absolute, to the point that the working class is now dispersed in the concept of people, nation etc.

In our opinion, views that espouse the idea that the working class has disappeared or changed its role inevitably lead the revolutionary and labor movement to retreat and subjugation to the plans of the imperialist forces.

The view of the CPG is that international social democracy has long evolved as one of the main pillars supporting the capitalist system. It has been shown in many countries that social democracy serves the system more effectively than traditional conservative parties.

Difficulties are caused by the action in numerous countries, of political forces which broke away from the Communist movement, rejecting the scientific theory of socialism. They are evolving or, in numerous countries, have become crystallized as supporter and ally of social democracy, particularly in the efforts being made to present the so-called "center-left" management as an alternative. They offer a pretext and support through their nihilist stance towards the socialism we knew, through their theories of the inevitable adjustment to the "new world order."

Such choices stem from the weight of developments, plus the pressure brought to bear by large masses of the people seeking immediate solutions to their problems. The problem is that such choices create hurdles to the radical and social alliances.

The dividing line goes through the struggle of the workers and the peoples against the monopolies, against the military-political and economic organizations, such as NATO EU, NAFTA, IMF and the World Bank.

**PROPOSALS ON COMMON ACTION** ■ Starting from the position that common action by Communist Parties must be strengthened, on both the regional and world level, we would like to put forward the following proposals:

- Agreement on the organization, within the coming year, of a new international meeting of Communist and Worker's Parties to elaborate on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment which OECD has worked out. It would be a good occasion for us Communists to work out our own answer to the so-called "globalization."

- A Joint Statement of support for the *Communist Manifesto*.

Our main purpose would be to circulate the *Manifesto* everywhere, to bring it into every home.

- To think jointly on joint national campaigns concerning actual problems such as: NATO action, formation of multinational forces of rapid intervention, but also on questions of democracy, solidarity towards banned Communist Parties, towards Communists and other militants suffering persecution and torture.

In this framework, we propose to develop on a broader scale the struggle to defend Cuba.

We could also examine the possibility of a particular meeting against NATO and its expansion, against the rapid deployment forces.

To strengthen in the Balkans and the Mediterranean region the struggle against imperialist intervention.

To coordinate the struggles of those labor unions in Western Europe opposed to the removal of social gains from the working people that is being done in the name of "globalization" and EMU.

To express our solidarity with the peoples who have fallen victims to imperialist agreements and plans such as the Palestinian people, the peoples of former Yugoslavia and the people of Cyprus, the peoples suffering from U.S. embargos and interventions, and the countries building socialism in the particularly difficult conditions of imperialist pressure.

- In a number of regional and international meetings, organized during 1997, the question of mutual information among Communist and Workers' Parties has been increasingly raised. There are concrete ideas foreseeing the foundation of a joint review of the CPs as well as of a system of rapid information for the parties. In case this need is confirmed in our present meeting as well, the CPG is today in a position to submit details concerning the realization including cost and function.

We are convinced that the way out of the present situation is not in having neoliberal or "center-left" governments manage the capitalist crisis. The answer to neoliberal policies cannot be provided with the "cures" of classic and late-model social democracy. Only the struggle that tries to rock the foundations of the capitalist system, only the struggle against the monopolies and imperialism that sets its sights on power can curb the violence of the capitalist offensive today and offer a real way out, revolution and socialism, tomorrow. □



# Forging World Communist Unity

Scott Marshall



On behalf of our Chairman, Gus Hall, and our National Committee, I bring you our warmest fraternal greetings. It is a great honor for our Party to be invited to participate. We consider this conference to be an extremely important initiative. What a truly productive way to help celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Communist Party of Greece and the 150th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*!

The setbacks to socialism removed a big working-class counterweight against capitalism and imperialism. Led by U.S. imperialism, the "new world order" feels free to devour and destroy everything in its path in the name of profits. The IMF and the World Bank dictate privatization, the destruction of labor unions, cuts to social programs, and horrendous poverty for hundreds of millions of working people the world over. So-called free trade agreements divide the world, once again, into dangerous imperialist rivalries, potentially releasing, yet again, the capitalist dogs of war. Without the Soviet Union and a much stronger socialist camp to counter its aggression, U.S. imperialism once again considers itself the world's chief of police, ready to use bombs and troops to make the world safe for monopoly and transnational capitalism.

This includes the continuing use of criminal economic blockades against Cuba, Korea, Iraq, Libya and others. Marx predicted 150 years ago the development of monopoly capitalism, when he said the big fish will eat the little fish. But, of course, he had no way of knowing just how large the big fish could get. The gigantic mergers today dwarf whole countries in their power and wealth. These gigantic mergers and concentrations of capital bring with them a new level of globalization. Indeed, globalization has now emerged as a new form of imperialism. And with the increase in mergers and globalization

comes new ultra-right dangers. As Gus Hall put it recently,

The latest fascist-like political developments and the corporate merger mania are related. Global corporations are the support base for ultra-right forces. The bigger the corporate monopolies, the less democratic, the more anti-union, anti-labor, anti-working class they become.

The new world order has not spared the U.S. working class. The ultra-right and corporate offensive is in full bloom. Union busting, privatization and vicious cuts in social programs are also the corporate and ultra-right program at home. The economic and social crisis facing workers is staggering. The declining standard of living, the destruction of public education, health care and decent housing are accompanied by the capitalist scourge of crime and drugs.

The American working class, Black, Brown and white, bear the brunt of the merger frenzy that concentrates obscene profits and corporate power in the hands of the top one percent. These huge monopoly mergers have meant that, in each month of the past six months, corporate America has cut over 50,000 good jobs in the U.S. – over 300,000 jobs in just six months. Not since Reaganomics in the early 1980's has the rate of corporate job destruction been so high. Today a full 30 percent of the U.S. workforce are temporary workers with no pensions, no health care, no holidays and absolutely no job security. And at the same time a new wave of technological change is poised to throw even more millions out of work.

Along with the ultra-right's jingoism and "America First" great-power chauvinism, comes increased racism and national chauvinism at home. The cuts in social programs, the tremendous loss of good-paying industrial jobs, have meant special hardship and impoverishment for African American, Latino, Native American and other oppressed peoples in the U.S.

But you know what? The specter of Communism is no longer just haunting Europe. No indeed. Today the specter of Communism is haunting the whole

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Scott Marshall is a secretary of the CPUSA National Committee and district organizer of its Illinois district. Address given to world conference of Communist Parties in Athens, June 1998.

world, including the United States of America.

Tremendous change is taking place in the U.S. working class. The American labor movement is shedding years of Cold War class-collaborationist leadership. Perhaps the most stark example of the changes in labor is the action of the last National Convention of the AFL-CIO. By unanimous vote, on a motion put by the leadership, the convention repealed all anti-Communist and all specific anti-Communist Party, USA, clauses and language from its national constitution.

At our January National Committee meeting, Comrade Gus Hall put it this way,

This speaks volumes about the new relations between the Party and the trade union movement, which, in turn, means new relationships with the working class. The rapid decline in anti-Communism and the gravitational pull of Communist ideas and politics is not spontaneous combustion. Our new acceptance as a Party and as Communists is an expression of the changing objective and subjective conditions in our country.

Not since our party helped to organize the basic mass production unions in the 1930s has the labor movement been so open to Communist participation and leadership. Over 20 years ago the United Steelworkers of America challenged Gus Hall when he stated the truth, that he was a founder of that union. Just a year ago that same union, in a public ceremony, gave Gus Hall an award as a pioneer and founder of the steel union.

Today Communists are once again welcome in all levels of labor leadership. Once again a strong left-center coalition in labor is fighting for militant class-struggle trade unionism in the face of capitalist crisis. Our newspaper, the *People's Weekly World*, is rapidly becoming a mass voice on picket lines, in union halls, and in labor's struggles everywhere. For the first time since the Cold War 1950's, unions are buying bundles of our paper for their members and subscriptions for their union offices.

As important and central as the changes in the labor movement are, changes in mass thought patterns go way beyond the organized sector of the working class. The Communist Party, USA, is now recognized, even by our critics, as the fastest growing organization on the left. Our campaign to turn our Party into a mass revolutionary Communist Party is in full swing. Thousands of new members are joining our ranks throughout the country. We

are now rebuilding the Party in the deep South, long held as the special preserve of the most anti-labor and racist sections of the ultra-right. It has been home to the racist Ku Klux Klan terrorists and Newt Gingrich of Georgia, dean of the fascist-like Republicans in the U.S. Congress.

Our Party is deeply involved in the mass struggles of the people. We find ourselves involved in mass coalitions on issues ranging from the fight for jobs and public works projects, to the fight against police brutality, from the fight for peace and solidarity, to the fight against racism and the fight for women's equality, and from the fight to save the environment from corporate polluters to fights for affordable housing, decent education and cheap safe mass transportation, to name a few.

And in all these struggles we are recruiting new members and finding ourselves in demand to help lead and develop the movements.

We are experimenting with many mass recruiting methods to build our Party in these new conditions. For example, many of our Communist Party clubs have had great success with setting up tables on street corners and at factory gates in cities across the country. We sign people up on the spot. Most are working-class people who have never been politically active. But they want to know what they can do to help and they want to know about socialism. Most, not only see the failures of capitalism, but correctly identify the monopoly corporations and banks as the heart of the enemy class. Our challenge is to turn them quickly into Marxist-Leninists, to give them the tools and the science, and consolidate them in the Communist Party.

The Internet has also become a mass recruiting tool for our Party. We recruit dozens a day to the Communist Party and the Young Communist League from our World Wide Web sites and e-mail.

We are also very proud of the Young Communist League, U.S.A. They are one of the fastest growing youth organizations in the U.S.. On high school and college campuses and in neighborhoods across our country, hundreds of new young activists are looking for a socialist alternative as they see no future for capitalism.

What accounts for these changes? Why the decline of anti-Communism and why the new interest in socialism in the U.S. working class? We see a wide variety of factors. Globalization and the tremendous concentrations and mobility of capital are among the most important. Millions of American workers know

they are but a paycheck away from disaster. Insecurity and fear of a new economic collapse and worldwide crisis lurks in the minds of millions.

Many millions now see the monopoly corporations as anti-democratic, and as the source of corruption and crisis. They correctly see the monopolies as the root source of anti-working class and racist ideology. This is not yet full-blown class consciousness, but it is an important foundation for the development of class and socialist consciousness.

Another factor is the new level of technology: there is little doubt that in the early stages of the chips and robots revolution in the late 1980's and early 1990s technology gave capitalism some new reserves. But today, technology is rapidly becoming a source of new, sharper, capitalist crisis. Workers, in all sectors of the economy, see human labor replaced by technology and automation. They also increasingly see the dangers and limitations of technology in the hands of those motivated by greed and profits. Today U.S. biotechnology corporations are patenting and laying claim to DNA and other human genetic material. Can anyone imagine a more horrible scenario

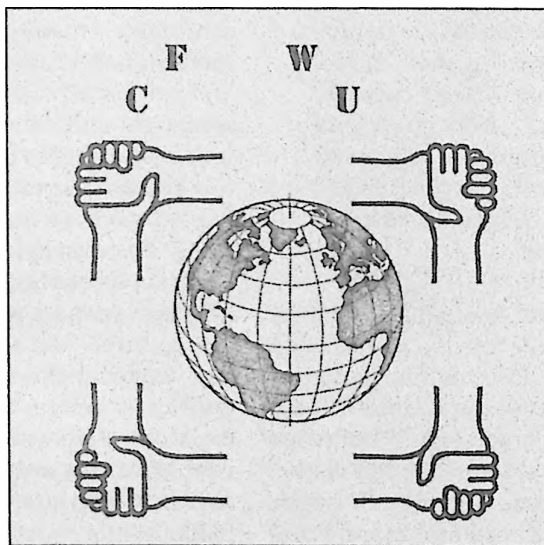
than human genetic engineering in the hands of monopoly capital? Only socialism and the full working-class democracy that comes with it, can safely and rationally use the new technology for the benefit of humankind.

The new levels of globalization, and the increasing ultra-right dangers, underline the great importance of this conference, and many more like it. The increased role of the IMF and World Bank in dictating economic policy demand collective thought and programs on a world scale. The latest developments in technology demand a world collective estimate of the dangers and the economic impact. New levels of cooperation and unity are a must for the world Communist and working-class movements. International solidarity, communication, and joint action must become a greater priority.

A new level cannot be built on old methods. We have to incorporate the latest technology. We must

find the ways to use the Internet in our work.

In the recent past, our Party has made two modest proposals to move in this direction. Jointly with the Communist Party of Canada, we helped initiate the Rednet. It is a project to use the Internet and e-mail to increase communication and exchange of ideas in the world movement. Already dozens of Parties are involved. In particular Party newspapers and journals have benefited by the rapid exchange of articles, position papers and statements. Many more parties and workers' organizations need to become actively involved in using and helping to develop the Rednet.



More importantly, Comrade Gus Hall has proposed to the international movement that we take steps to establish an international economics and technology commission for the world movement. We would like to see steps taken at this conference to set up a working committee on these matters. We also would like to see plans for meetings like this on a yearly basis, sponsored by different parties around the world. Depending on the political situation in the U.S. with the ultra right in Congress, we would like to consider

hosting such a meeting. We want also to make clear that while we welcome regional meetings, we do not see them as a substitute for world gatherings such as these.

We stand with you all in the call for greater unity and cooperation in the world movement. We stand with you all in the call for strengthening the fight against world and U.S. imperialism and the monopoly corporations.

Comrades, there is another important anniversary we would like to mention. This year marks the 100th birthday of Comrade Paul Robeson. In our Party and in the world movement, Robeson was one of the tallest trees in the forest. He was a world figure because he championed the world fight for peace and solidarity. He would have welcomed with all his warmth and passion this world conference and the steps we take towards rebuilding world Communist unity and action. □

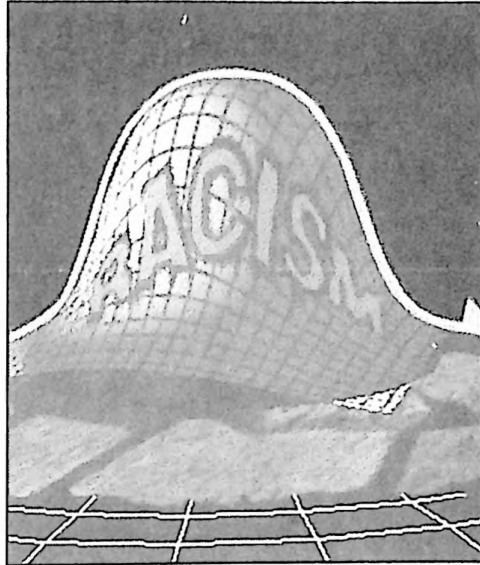
# Racism in Florida

Eric Ray

Ephraim Morales stood almost numb with disgust and fear as his accuser continued to rant at him and threaten his job – a clear violation of the contract between Hartline management (Hillsborough Area Regional Transit) and Ephraim’s union, the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 1593. It was the 7th day of January, 1998. Ephraim, or “Effy,” as he is usually called, was enduring a hearing called on him by Hartline management. He had freely admitted bringing a tape recorder with earphones to work as he would listen to music during breaks. But neither his admission nor his polite tone availed against the threats and harassment that maintenance manager Bill Schnell continued to fire out, charging that Effy had broken company rules.

Effy requested and was denied union representation during his hearing – another clear violation of the contract. Roughly midway into the hearing, Bob Potts, Hartline’s General Manager, entered the room and began to berate Morales. When, in exasperation, Effy asked them why they continued to threaten and question him after he had already admitted what he had done, Schnell quipped: “It’s a German thing.” Effy was suspended without pay until the 15th of January. He was then informed that he had been fired. At the time of this writing, his job is under arbitration.

Hartline is a publicly-owned mass transit bus service. Its executive board members are appointed by the Hillsborough County Commission. Effy Morales had worked for Hartline eight years, beginning in May 1990. Until September of ‘97 he had a spotless record. All of Effy’s troubles just “hap-



Bell Curve pseudo-scientific racism is one of the underpinnings of the new fascist ideology.

pened” to begin only two months after his becoming a union official serving as mediator between management and workers brought up on disciplinary charges. This position often placed him at loggerheads with both Potts and Schnell. Schnell told Effy more than once that he could look forward to special treatment if he would only look the other way and not challenge his actions. Effy stood firm, refusing to give in.

At one point, after he had fallen into disfavor with Schnell, there was a heated exchange during which Schnell referred to Effy as a Cuban.

“I’m not Cuban, I’m Puerto Rican,” Effy responded. “It doesn’t matter,” Schnell returned, “all you damn people are the same.”

Time and again Effy was written up over alleged infractions that were picayune. More than once he was pulled off his job and forced to appear in Schnell’s office to be lectured and reprimanded. When Effy asked why he was being hounded and repeatedly disciplined, Schnell would repeat: “It’s a German thing,” Morales was suspended twice before his hearing in January of this year: on October 15, 1997, and again on December 24, 1997.

If the situation involving Morales were an isolated series of events, then it might be argued that this story only reveals one manager’s dislike for a particular employee. But that is not the case. When one examines the larger picture of what is happening at Hartline, a pervasive pattern of racism emerges. For example: Since Sharon Dent was appointed Executive Manager in July 1990, almost seventy workers have been fired. Out of these only six were white, even though whites constitute a majority of Hartline’s work force. Also, even though African Americans and Hispanics, taken together,

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are a minority of Hartline employees, they are far over and above the majority of those harassed, selected for disciplinary actions and called before hearings. According to Manuel Campe, president of ATU Local 1593, of all the workers called before hearings, police are only requested to be present at those held on African American employees.

Both Campe and the leadership of the union's Latino Caucus have documented numerous examples of racism and sexism at Hartline. The union had made clear in written and face-to-face exchanges with Dent, Potts and Schnell that it will continue to expose and fight these practices while working for the removal of all three of these executives from office.

It would be easy to say that what goes on at Hartline is an anomaly – but it would not be true. Hartline is a microcosm of what is happening in society, generally.

**THE BIGGER PICTURE** ▣ Examples abound everywhere, illustrating the fact that ruling class racism has become more overt and strident.

To cite only a few examples: the crude, racist comments made by high executives and office holders; the torchings of African American churches across the country (along with the foot dragging in the federal investigation); the total lack of consideration Willie Logan was given in his bid for Speaker of the Florida State House of Representatives; the treatment of Blacks and Hispanics by police, poignantly illustrated in St. Petersburg, Florida, not only by the callous, unnecessary shooting of an unarmed Black youth, Tyron Lewis, but also by the exoneration of the policeman who killed him by members of Tampa police department.

Racism is an endemic aspect of this nation's whole legal, judicial system. According to Victor Perlo in *Economics of Racism II*, 1.3 percent of both Blacks and whites are users of narcotic drugs. Yet a Black user is four times more likely to be arrested, eight times more likely to be convicted, and 19 times more likely to be imprisoned than a white!

Another example clearly illustrating that racism is institutionalized, an integral aspect of America's socio-economic system, is the "One Strike and You're Out" policy in public housing. This policy empowers the management of public housing facilities to kick whole families to the curb of the nearest street if one family member or even a house guest or visitor in a family's apartment is merely charged

with a crime by police (no conviction is necessary). A policy aimed primarily at African American and Hispanic families, provisions in One Strike offer monetary bonuses to managers depending on how many people they evict annually.

This policy is the monstrous product of government working in collusion with Big Business. The objective is to devise new ways to bilk taxpayers and raise public housing rents, instilling the corporate propaganda that housing is a "privilege," in order to make public housing projects profitable enough to privatize.

To refute further the notion held by many that racism is not endemic to capitalism but simply arises from some individuals who are confused, mean-spirited, I offer the new welfare repeal law.

It is a fact that the majority of welfare recipients are white. It is also documented that many welfare recipients (almost 40 percent), were already working prior to its creation or submission to Congress as a bill. It is also a fact that the number of children born to welfare parents is roughly equivalent to the general population; 1.5 per family. Yet, not only mainstream politicians, but the Big Business-owned "free" media, all jumped onto the Distort and Bamboozle Bandwagon, ceaselessly repeating choruses that carve into our consciousness images of typical welfare recipients as shiftless, drug-dealing Black males and "irresponsible, promiscuous" Black women. It is an obscene lie, calculated to instill and inflame racist feelings and prejudices in order to build support for cutting life-support programs to America's poor. This cutting, combined with increased competition for jobs, "work-fare" and "right-to-work" (for less) and other union-busting laws, all converge to pour more profits into the coffers of the rich by holding wages down to subsistence levels and by undermining organized labor.

Racism is not natural to human nature as evidenced by the fact that children do not have racist attitudes unless they are taught to have them. Racism is the inevitable spawn of a system which puts profits ahead of human welfare because it serves and intensifies capital accumulation.

Despite the progress made in civil rights through the 1960's and '70's, African Americans are generally still the last hired and first fired, with Hispanics not far behind. The unemployment rate of Black workers has typically been double that of whites throughout modern American history.

However, since the 1980s – when America's

political power structure took a sharp turn to the right – the unemployment rate of African American workers has been two and a half times that of whites. The same racist motives impose especially high unemployment rates on Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian workers. These racist hiring practices force non-whites into the worst job conditions for the lowest pay.

When they can obtain full-time work, Black and Hispanic men, overall, receive only about two-thirds the wages and salaries of white men. Part of the reason for this differential is due to discrimination in the kind of jobs a large portion of non-whites are forced to accept. But pay differentials, overall, are almost the same when the focus is on whites and non-whites doing roughly the same kind of work. Nationwide, this differential yields more than \$120 billion annually to owners and high-level managers in additional or superprofits! This is the primary reason why racism is cultivated, promoted and pervasive in our nation.

As the war between Hartline bus service workers and the appointed management pointedly illustrates, racism is not necessarily limited to the private sector. There are numerous reasons why racist practices – generally far less frequent and pronounced in public sector jobs – occur there as well:

- If the management of a public business/service is not directly accountable to the public or any form of citizen review board;

- If members of high-level management stand to increase their own salaries, bonuses and perks by keeping workers' wages low;

- If upper level management and/or the elected officials who appoint them are in league with sectors of the power elite seeking to privatize that business/service;

- If an effective union to which most of the workers in that particular public service belong, is blocking forces that want privatization.

All of these conditions are applicable to Hartline, but the last two are crucial and pivotal to this discussion.

Holding down the wages of public-sector workers through racist practices, like excessive disciplinary actions and firings of minority workers, exerts downward pressure on the wages of all the other workers in that given public sector service as well. This is how Hartline is able to keep the wages of all its workers at an especially low level, relative to wage levels for other public sector transportation workers

in Florida. Starting pay for a bus driver position is only \$7.65 per hour. The highest wage Hartline's hourly wage earners can receive is \$11.47, compared to \$13 to \$14 top pay per hour for public transportation workers in all other major cities throughout Florida.

Of course, institutional racism enables Hartline's management to use intimidation, disciplinary actions and firings to occupy and drain ATU's time, energy and resources, while depleting its ranks. A second function racism serves in Hartline and elsewhere is to divert workers' attention from the real source of the injustice they suffer and induce them to fight each other. The divisions this creates deprive workers of their single greatest weapon for fighting the bosses – their unity. The ATU has been assiduous in keeping Hartline workers informed and focused on fighting the forces that seek to privatize the bus service.

The crucial role that racism plays in this local manifestation of class war becomes transparent when we realize that many of the most active and militant members of the ATU are Hispanic and Black. The ATU is planted firmly between the management and the "silver ring" it urgently seeks, which is privatization. For three years now, Sharon Dent has used every trick to force a new contract down workers' throats, with provisions giving Hartline the right to hire outsourced and subcontracted labor. Management appointees and the corporate sectors whose interests they represent, ultimately hope to install a private company that could hire drivers at minimum wage, without benefits, to handle daily operations, while Hartline's upper level management retains their "administrative" role and continues to feed at the public trough, snout by snout, with the super-exploitative private company.

The plight of Hartline's workers forcefully illustrates how the fight against contingent, no-benefit jobs, outsourcing and other union-busting practices, and the fight against privatization, are all inextricably bound up with the struggle against racism. Winning victories in any of these areas is tied to winning the battles against racism and for equality.

This understanding can be the basis for bringing community, religious and social justice groups to form urgently needed alliances with organized labor. What the ATU and unions generally are fighting for is in the interests of all workers and oppressed people. □

# The Detroit Newspaper Strike: The Struggle Continues

Amanda Levinson

*On July 13, 1995, 2,500 employees of the Detroit News and Detroit Free Press went on strike against Gannett and Knight-Ridder, who own these papers and had been trying to bust their unions for some time. Over 33 months later, the strike continues.*

*At the forefront of the struggle is Barb Ingalls, a 41-year-old graphic designer who had been working at Detroit Newspapers for one year and one week when the strikers were locked out in 1995. Ingalls is a member of Detroit Typographical Union Local 18 as well as a member of the Communications Workers of America Today her strike job is classified as director for the Sunday Journal with, as she puts it, "a minor in mischief and mayhem."*

*What follows is an interview I had with her on March 14, 1998. "A" is Amanda Levinson, interviewer "B" is Barb Ingalls.*

*To support those still on strike, you can send money to: Detroit Newspaper Striker Relief Fund 450 W. Fort St., Detroit MI 48226. You're also encouraged to visit <http://www.rust.net/workers/strike.html>.*

**A:** What I'd really like is some background information on the strike. What precipitated the strike?

**B:** The bottom line of the strike is that it began on July 13, 1995 at 8:00 at night. Over 2,500 people walked out on strike that night, and scabs were brought in within fifteen minutes of the strike. It's a strike against the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Detroit News*, and the *Detroit Newspapers*. *Detroit Free Press* is owned by Knight-Ridder, the *Detroit News* is run by Gannett, and *Detroit Newspapers* is the evil spawn of the two. We have a joint operating agreement in Detroit, so the *News* and *Free Press* have separate editorial boards, and *Detroit Newspapers* handles all the business aspects of it – the composing room, the mail room, sorting, engraving. Six unions are involved in the strike. We have two Teamster locals, two GCIU locals, the newspaper guild, and the Detroit Typographical Union, which is my union –

Amanda Levison is a journalist.

I'm a printer.

We were forced out. The courts in the United States found them (Gannett and Knight-Ridder) guilty of a lockout – they forced it, it wasn't all up to us. There were a lot of issues they said precipitated the strike. It was staffing levels, jurisdiction, you know, what they could make, who they could give the jobs to, merit pay – but as the courts found, this was really union-busting. They forced us out because they wanted to have a non-union work force in the city of Detroit. They're appealing [the decision] in court. They won't schedule a bargaining session [with the strikers]. They're openly and blatantly in contempt of the law. It's sickening to see these guys operate.

**A:** So you lost your job after you went on strike?



AP photo

**B:** I'm not fired – I'm actually an employee in good standing at the *Detroit Newspapers* (laughs)! I never lack of trying. There's a lot of different opinions on why I haven't been fired, because it doesn't make a lot of sense that I haven't been. And what I think is that I don't even exist to them anymore.

If I make any meaningful move towards the building, they're going to find one of about a thousand different reasons to fire me, but they don't even feel at this point that they have to, because there is so little chance of me reclaiming my job, and that's perfectly fine.

I've been scared a lot. I had one of their goons, one of their security guards try to extort money from me. He was waiting until he saw my husband leave the house and he knew I was alone and then he'd call me and tell me that he had film of my husband doing really illegal things that would get him ten years in jail, and if I didn't deal with him very quickly, we'd have to get together and bargain and talk ... I had to have a trace put on my phone ... It was to try to get money from me, and try to stop me [from striking]. Fear is a daily part of it.

**A:** What sort of things do you and the other strikers do on a daily basis? Are you out there every day? Have other people lost their jobs?

**B:** A lot of people have been fired ... There have been people fired for a variety of things. One guy was fired for improper use of a bullhorn. They said he put it too close to a scab's ear and tried to endanger his health that way. It's insane. They know perfectly well when they fire you for something like that that it's going to be turned over in court ... But that happened the first six months of the strike and the case still hasn't come up yet. So they delay us and it costs us money. Every one of these stupid firings costs us money and sets things back. There are court cases that they figure are going to come up in four years.

I have this book called *Voices of the Strike* that is a book of portraits and essays of strikers that one of my striking brothers did ... and on the cover of it is a photo of a Labor Day rally that we had in 1996 in front of the News building. Now, the News building has automatic doors, and whenever we have any kind of a rally, the first thing that they do in the building is they put these big braces [on the doors], because we love to stand there and make the doors go open and shut, open and shut – it just drives



them nuts. So this is a door that has been rendered completely unusable. No one can go in or out of this door during the rally. We have injunctions against us that we can't have more than ten people in any kind of a doorway. So we have this rally, and we get ... the most prominent trade unionists in the world. They sit down on the steps of the news building for civil disobedience ... It was festive, and in the photo everybody is smiling and laughing and hugging. Every single person in that photo was fired. They went through them one by one. It took up to six months to identify everybody.

**A:** How many people are still on strike?

**B:** Over 1,400 people are still on strike for various reasons.

**A:** What progress do you think the strikers have made?

**B:** We've made enormous progress in the strike. They've had to spend \$650 million to date on the strike – almost a billion dollars to crush us. They're maintaining two completely separate composing rooms right now to do my job – to do the printer's job. The court costs, the lawyer costs, the cost to the city, the anti-union, anti-strike advertising. They're bleeding from a million cuts. Their advertising is down by 50 percent. Their circulation in some areas



is down by 50 percent, and at an average probably 40 percent across the board. You can't maintain those kinds of losses for very long. This kind of thing has seriously hurt them, and it's not getting any better.

**A:** How have you kept going for over two years, day after day?

**B:** I have a really good husband who supports me in every possible way. The people that I'm on strike with – this is the kind of thing that gets to me the most when I think about them. They've been really badly hurt. The devastation to the families of the strikers cannot be underestimated. We've had divorces, we've had drug abuse, we've had alcoholism, we've had spousal abuse ... These people have been doing it for nothing. They don't have this support ... I'm really proud to be associated with them. That's how I go on. I have no excuse not to. You come sometimes in your life face to face with something, and you either do it or you don't. I have dreams about some of the violence that I've seen. We had a guy beaten so badly that you could see his brains.

**A:** Who was he beaten by?

**B:** Goons – three of them. We were at a distribution center, and [the mailer] was doing a little reconnaissance. He left to just walk the perimeter to see what was up and they dragged him aside. They concentrated on his head – he had almost no blows to his body, and they took a two-by-four and they put it on his head and they jumped on it and they beat him with it. And he has uncontrollable seizures, and he's had lots and lots of brain surgery and they can't really do anything. He can't drive, he can't be alone with his children.

**A:** There were people there to witness this?

**B:** They have it on film.

**A:** Were these goons ever brought to justice?

**B:** No, he got an out-of-court settlement for an undisclosed amount of money. They had shields and helmets on, so we don't know exactly which ones they were, and they got away when the crowd finally went after them. So no, no criminal prosecution against them. There is not enough money in the world to be

able to make up for what happened to him.

One of the women in my union ... these goons were sitting in this Ford Explorer filming us – they film everything we do – and she got in front of them and she was waving this sign in front of them. Well, one of them stepped on the gas and tried to run her down. And she jumped up on the hood of the car and grabbed the windshield-wiper wells. They drove six blocks before they stopped. Then one of the goons got out of the truck and started beating her on her chest.

Despite the violence that has been perpetrated against us, we keep fighting. The rank and file refuse to quit, and we're not going to quit. We go in fits and starts. It's really difficult to do, because after two and a half years obviously people have to live.

**A:** What kind of press, if any, are the strikers getting in Detroit and nationally? Are you finding that the community is supportive?

**B:** One of our people went to the Media and Democracy Forum last fall in New York City and met with a couple of people from the *New York Times*, and they just said "It's old, it's boring news, and we're not going to write about you."

Public radio is a really bad joke. In fact, in the local NPR station one of their people is a really prominent scab who crossed our picket line.

We had 100,000 people for a labor march, one of the largest labor marches in the United States last June, and the local station said it was 7,000 people. We have to rely on going door to door. When people find out that we're still [on strike], they're incredulous, they're supportive. We've had people

Continued on page 33



# German Social Democrats Prepare to Take Power: Leading Where?

William Pomeroy

As the European Union enters the crucial stage of its unification process – which began with the formal selection in May of its members deemed ready to shift to the EU's new single currency (the "euro") and with the full use of the euro with all its political ramifications to follow at the end of 1999 – the country regarded as the main engine of the EU, Germany, faces the prospect of a change of leadership in the midst of that transformation.

On September 27th Germans go to the polls in a national election, with most signs pointing to an ending of 16 years of Christian Democrat rule under Chancellor Helmut Kohl and its replacement by a Social Democratic Party government. If that should occur it would mean that the four main countries in the European Union – France, Britain, Italy and Germany – would have what are considered to be left-of-center governments.

It is significant that this relative shift to the left in European politics has not in any way altered or interrupted the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty.

The left of center Jospin government in France and the Prodi government in Italy both cut welfare state spending that benefits working people in order to qualify for joining the euro, while the Blair government in Britain, pursuing an opportunistic half-in, half-out role in the EU, waiting to see if the euro will thrive before joining it, conducts a Tory-like assault on the welfare state in preparation for it. Only the left, the Communist Party in France, the Refoundation Communist Party in Italy, the Communists and the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany, and the Communists and some left-wing Laborites in Britain, oppose the euro and the EU as well.

In none of the national elections in the major EU countries have membership in the EU or submission to the Maastricht Treaty been made an issue. At best, socialist and Labor parties have won power by campaigning against the excesses of right-wing governments in demolishing welfare state benefits, workers' rights and public sectors, but such electoral

campaigns are all done within the accepted context of the EU which is the fountain head of the right-wing policies.

The Kohl government in Germany, as the most vigorous promoter of the EU, its anti-labor essence and the euro, is faced by the contradiction of an economy registering statistical growth while having one of the highest unemployment rates among the capitalist powers, 12.6 percent or 4,823,200 in January.

Since last year enormous demonstrations of the unemployed in nearly 300 German cities and towns, demanding work and job-creating programs, have added to a mounting unpopularity of Kohl, heightened by major strikes last year that defeated government-backed employer efforts to cut severely sick pay, paid vacations and other benefits won by trade union struggle in the past. A slashing of welfare spending to meet qualifications for joining the euro has aggravated unrest.

Polls have shown nearly 70 percent of Germans opposing adoption of the euro, chiefly out of fear that the shift of currencies will worsen unemployment. This was reinforced in February by a joint declaration signed by 155 leading German economists saying that the euro will not solve unemployment, that "the current state of economic affairs is most unsuitable for starting monetary union," and urging "orderly postponement" of the step until the "labor market" problems are improved. The Kohl government rejected the call and the mass sentiment.

With growing popular discontent making prospects bright for the ouster of the Kohl regime in September, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) has shaped itself as the viable alternative. In overall policies regarding the EU, NATO and the Maastricht Treaty, the SPD differs little from the CDU, but it has represented working-class interests on social issues. Now, however, it is scrapping its relatively left image that has had a blue-collar working-class base. That shift is evident in the candidate it has chosen to contest the chancellorship with Helmut Kohl. The choice is Gerhard Schroder, from the right-wing of the SPD.

In the face of it, it is an odd choice. Schroder is not popular within the SPD which overwhelmingly

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William Pomeroy is a contributor to PA.

favors its left-wing leader, Oskar Lafontaine (re-elected the party's chairman at December's annual congress by 93.2 percent of the delegates, 463 to 21). Schroder has been premier of the state of Lower Saxony, governing with a narrow SPD majority. His selection as the candidate to oppose Kohl depended on his showing in the Lower Saxony election held on March 1st. The SPD and Schroder won a sweeping victory, boosting their vote. Lafontaine thereupon stepped aside and handed the SPD candidacy to Schroder.

The argument behind this is that the SPD would risk losing to Kohl and the CDU again (as in the last four elections) by running with a left-sounding leader and program. Kohl has been able to command the political center as well as the right. Schroder's declared position is to expand the SPD's traditional blue-collar support to include the traditionally conservative craftsmen and small business interests. His own connections tend in that direction: he sits on the board of the Volkswagen company. According to European press reports, Schroder wants to be the German Tony Blair who took control of the British Labor Party, moved it far to the right,

and installed a government that has cold-shouldered the trade unions and cosied up to big business. That may be the Schroder perspective, if the SPD wins in September, but the comparison with Blair is too simplistic. For one thing, he does not control the SPD as Blair does his Labor Party. Up to now, Lafontaine holds the party following.

German politics is far more fragmented than in Britain. Kohl's CDU has had to govern with a coalition (with the Free Democrats and the Bavarian Christian Social Union). The SPD, too, would need a coalition partner, the Green Party, but at a Green special pre-election congress in March the party's pacifist left wing voted in a radical manifesto with demands like the dissolution of NATO that would make the Greens a difficult coalition partner for the SPD, especially with Schroder in command.

For Schroder and the SPD, a greater concern is that they may have to rely on the parliamentary support of the Party of Democratic Socialism, the reorganized Socialist Unity (Communist) Party of the former GDR, which has 30 seats in the present Bundestag. It could elect enough seats to deprive a SPD-Green coalition of a majority. □

### Levinson, continued from page 32

call when we're right there and cancel their subscriptions [to the *Free Press* and the *Detroit News*]. But we're working in the dark.

We have radio ads that none of the stations will play. They won't buy them; they say that they're too controversial. We have newspaper ads which only one newspaper would buy. We're under a total media blackout.

I am representing a group called ACOSS, which is Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters, and what's happened is that we got really tired of waiting for the courts, and we got tired of waiting for them to grow hearts - it's not going to happen. So a group of really wonderful people around the country have networked and brainstormed and put these tours together.

Word of mouth is what has kept us alive, and my joke is that if I have to talk to everybody in America one by one, I'll do it.

A: What do you see in the future of the strike and what are the things that you need to really win?

B: I believe really strongly that this strike isn't just about Detroit. It's a national issue about union-busting. So what we need to do is to stay on the road.

We need crews of people out on the road in Arlington, Va. where Gannett's headquarters are; we need them in Miami where Knight-Ridder's main headquarters are; and we need to have people there working the streets and getting publicity and raising hell and having demonstrations and making it embarrassing.

We need to be able to continue the ad boycott and costing them money. We're trying to spark a nationwide boycott of *USA Today*. *USA Today* is Gannett's number one moneymaker. We're also trying to raise money across the country.

That's the story of it, but what's important right now is that the people on strike and a lot of the community supporters have decided that we can't go on like this waiting and waiting for the courts to work.

When they write the history of the strike, and the victory of it, it's going to be because people wouldn't put up with it anymore, and came up with these ways to deal with it and ended it. It's going to end up being the *workers'* strike, and the *workers'* victory. □

#### ON POPULATION CONTROL

I found Don Sloan's article in *Political Affairs* Vol. 77 No. 5, to be very interesting, informative and stimulating. There is, it seems to me however, an important aspect of the "Population problem" that he does not take up. That is the fact that human population will always expand to the limits of the human food supply, and conversely, the food supply places an absolute limit on human population. It has been naively suggested by some people that the solution to the population problem requires a restriction on food production. They suggest that a voluntary reduction of consumption by those with more than enough food, could meet the needs of those with less than enough without increasing production. Eventually, population would adjust without hardship for anyone.

Of course, this is never going to happen, because those with more than enough, in general, live by exploiting those without enough. The best such exploiters can ever imagine is that either through investment or charity, they can provide the poor with the means to stimulate greater food production, i.e., money. Thus, it is not population per se that is the problem, but exploitation. As you point out, the class struggle and its resolution through socialism and Communism, is the only way in this modern world that the problems of population and the environment, which are inextricably linked, can be resolved.

Daniel Quinn is an award-winning author who popularly presents the above naive approach. There is much in his work that is insightful and important. His basic ideas are validated by a large body of scientific work in the fields of paleontology, anthropology and archaeology. Quinn correctly describes the origins of the problem in the development of agriculture, but in my opinion he confuses the technology of agriculture with the social structure of classes and exploitation it made possible. He, therefore, has not been capable of projecting any solution to the problem he so well describes and explains. If one examines his web site, it is filled with the frustration of people who are struck with the power of his analysis but lack a program.

I wanted to bring his work to your attention if you were not aware of it. I think that a synthesis of his ideas and those of Marxism is possible, and would represent a big step forward in revitalizing the theory and practice of the class struggle.

Whether you agree or not, thank you for a very fine article.

*Ted Pearson*

#### SLOAN RESPONDS

I thank reader Pearson for his comments and insight, which basically are on track. We agree that it is historically and functionally destructive to count on the investment of the type that has become known as the supply

side" of Reaganomics as any part of the solution to the so-called population problem. The results of that misguided approach appear when supply-side policies are stretched to their limits and capitalism's predictable and persistent depressions take their place in the system's shifts and swings.

But to suggest that "population will always expand to the limits of the human food supply" violates the basic principle of Marxism. At least until one adds that human exploitative factor. It is more than naive to promote a food restriction to control family size; it is cruel and pejoratively exploitative.

Many Daniel Quinns have offered various interpretations of Karl Marx. I have to obviously agree with Pearson's critique that it is invalid to the point that it becomes false by omission to deny the class-orientation principles no matter what issue is under review - in this case the problem of population control.

Pearson notes that Quinn's web site is lacking a program, without which does indeed make any analysis of a problem vacuous. Those of us who are comfortable with Marxist-Leninist teachings are thus fortunate that we do not have such a gap. The issues of population control must take their rightful place in the philosophical and front line struggles of the working class and will only be solved when some sort of new socialist order takes effect.

*Don Sloan*

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*Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City is Only the Beginning*, by Joel Dyer, Boulder: Westview, 1997, 292 pages

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This is a book with a dual message – one quite reasonable, the other rather questionable. In stark and moving prose, the author presents in numbing detail the present crisis that is afflicting rural areas of this nation. However, this useful portrait makes strained rationalizations that seek to explain why this situation leads all too many to align with the ultra-right, e.g., the militias, the followers of Pat Robertson and the like.

The dire plight of farmers in this nation is no new development, though it does seem that the situation has worsened in recent years. "Depending on how you define the term 'farm,'" writes the author,

rural America has lost between 700,000 and one million small-to-medium-sized family farms since 1980 ... At the peak of this crisis in 1986-1987, nearly one million people were forced from their land in a single 12-month period. ... In Oklahoma alone, the 1996 drought expected to cause the loss of 10,000 family farms. That's one-sixth of all the farms in the state.

What has happened to these farm families? Some have joined the ranks of the working class, toiling in low-wage jobs in the service sector particularly. Yet, what has escaped attention generally, is the epidemic of suicide that has devastated rural areas in recent times. Studies show

that more farmers died from suicide than from any other unnatural cause from 1981 to 1988 ... As a group, farmers were – and likely still are – killing themselves at least three times as often as the general population ... A research proposal from Texas Women's University described the likelihood that a direct correlation exists between the issuance of foreclosure notices and suicides.

This economic crisis has led to other ills.

In Minnesota, a study of 3600 rural adolescents conducted in 1988 found that 'a change in parents' finances' was commonly associated with the onset of stress, depression and attempted suicide. In Colorado, 24 rural mental health centers reported significant increases in child and spousal abuse between 1979 and 1986. An Iowa study showed that rural child abuse increased by a staggering 43.6 percent from 1982 to 1986 due to the stress of the farm crisis.

This epidemic is taking on ever newer twists. There are examples of,

farmers crawling into their equipment and being killed so their families can collect insurance money and pay off the farm debt. They're dying in order to stop a foreclosure. We've had farmers stage car wrecks and hunting accidents. The term "altruistic suicide" has entered the vocabulary.

Who are the beneficiaries of this socio-economic calamity? As the family farm disappears, "agri-business" has gobbled up acres and acres of farm land. The author alleges that

the entire grain supply of the world is basically controlled by a handful of privately held companies: Cargill, Continental, ConAgra, Louis Dreyfus, Bunge, Carnac, Mitsui/Cook and newcomer Archer Daniels Midland ... In 1982 at the beginning of the farm crisis, these companies controlled 96 percent of U.S. wheat exports, 95 percent of U.S. corn exports, 90 percent of oat exports, and 80 percent of all the sorghum leaving the United States.

These monopolies, along with the banks, have placed family farmers in a brutal squeeze that has crushed them economically.

This catastrophe has been far from accidental and dramatically enabled by policies of the Federal Reserve Bank, whose crusade against inflation and its related policy on interest rates has placed farmers in a punishing pincer.

When the rate of inflation is running higher than interest rates, people in debt can actually gain wealth. If a per-



son has a home or farm mortgage at 10 percent and the inflation rate is 14 percent, that person is making a 4 percent return on debt. On the other side, if a wealthy person is making 10 percent interest on investments – such as an interest bearing saving account – and the inflation rate is 14 percent, that individual is losing 4 percent on his or her money ... Inflation is a threat to the wealthy, and in the 1970s they were threatened.

The policies of then Fed chairman, Paul Volcker rode to the rescue of the wealthy, and in the process savaged debt-ridden farmers driven from the land in droves.

Where was the U.S. Congress when all this was going on? During this period,

more than one-fourth of the Congress owned a direct stake in financial enterprises. In 1980, 129 House members and 38 Senators reported that they earned part of their income from stock shares in commercial banks, S&L's and other financial institutions. As a private interest of Congressmen and Senators, ownership of financial institutions far exceeded their holdings in manufacturing, law firms, or oil and gas ... Finance was, therefore, in the front rank of political influence.

Unfortunately, a progressive movement with strength to effectively deal with this crisis in rural areas has not risen. Predictably, this has led to anger being directed inward as suicides and spousal abuse, as well as providing fertile soil for the growth of ultra-right tendencies. The author details the growth of the "Christian Identity" movement and other

groupings that thrive on racism and anti-Semitism.

Timothy McVeigh – convicted of the April 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City, that led to the death of 168 men, women and children – was not a farmer, but the author sees him as a direct product of the ultra-right milieu. McVeigh read *Spotlight*, the notorious anti-Jewish newsletter produced by the Liberty Lobby as well as a Christian Identity newsletter called *Patriot Report*. His "favorite book" was *The Turner Diaries*, a work whose prediction of "race war" has made it a canonical text for the ultra-right.

Here the author stubs his toe as he seems to express undue sympathy for those whose justifiable anger at the farm crisis has spurred them to enlist as foot soldiers in the ranks of fascism. Though the author does not mention it, there has been an even more horrendous crisis that has beset African American farmers, particularly in the Deep South. This has led to a movement that has picketed the White House and brought lawsuits against the U.S. Department of Agriculture; it has not led to these farmers joining the ranks of the fascists. This suggests that the growth of this ultra-right trend in rural areas is far from inevitable.

Still, the fact remains that unless the progressive movement extends its strength in both rural and urban areas, this nation will continue to face the specter of a noxious right-wing movement capable of taking advantage of those victimized by monopoly capital. Ultimately, this is the sober lesson this worthwhile book teaches us. □

Gerald Horne

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