

# Workers Viewpoint

Newspaper of the Communist Workers Party

*Today Grenada, Tomorrow Nicaragua —  
No More Vietnams!*

## Grenada for Grenadans!



Grenadan troops march to defense positions.

WILLIAM NISHIMURA

**A**s if the deaths of how 219 Marines in Lebanon is not enough blood on their hands, the U.S. imperialists want more. Like a scavenger going after a temporarily weakened prey, the Reagan administration has seized on the tragic events in Grenada that resulted in the killing of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and several of his Cabinet in order to crush the Grenadan revolution and restore neo-colonial rule.

On October 25, 1,900 U.S. troops invaded the Caribbean island nation in a two-pronged attack. The main force of Army Rangers left from Barbados to assault the southwestern tip of the country. This is the site of the new Point Salines International Airport under construction and near the two campuses of the St. George's University Medical School where some 500 Americans are studying. Assembling in Panama and Puerto Rico, the second prong of Marine attacked Pearls Airport in the northeast portion of Grenada. Only after the airports had been secured and U.S. troops were on their way inland was the 300-man force from six eastern Caribbean nations brought in.

### Invasion Meets Fierce Resistance

Moments before it fell to the invaders, Radio Free Grenada made a valiant call to the masses to resist. "Grenada belongs to Grenadans, no foreign forces must be allowed to land," it declared amidst the sounds of continuous gunfire. Nurses and doctors were urged to report to the hospital, and people generally were called on to report to militia bases, to come out of their homes and barricade the roads, and to defend the country "by any means necessary."

If the invaders expected to be greeted as the liberators, they were rudely awakened. The Grenadan army, militia and people have put up

fierce resistance and are continuing to do so. "There was more resistance than we thought there would be," said one Reagan official.

Since then, U.S. troops have seized both airports, St. George's University, Radio Free Grenada and the country's power station. At least two Marines have been reported killed, 23 American soldiers wounded and two U.S. helicopters downed. Fourteen of the Cuban workers and advisors in Grenada helping to build the new airport have been killed, several wounded and 200 captured. According to Grenadan representative in the U.S., twelve hundred Grenadans are already dead. The cost in human lives is certain to increase. Grenada covers a mere 133 square miles, only twice the size of Washington, D.C. It has no high, inaccessible mountains nor vast jungle regions. The Grenadans are determined to resist the invasion, and the U.S. is seriously considering committing the lives of more U.S. troops.

### Token Caribbean Role

President Reagan's justification for the invasion is a cut-and-paste job full of half-truths and outright lies. Reagan said he received "an urgent, formal request from the five member nations of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to assist in a joint effort to restore order and democracy," and that "we acceded to the request to become part of a multinational effort with contingents from Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincents."

It is true that some Caribbean leaders, in particular Prime Minister Tom Adams of Barbados, have said that they would welcome U.S. intervention in Grenada. Yet, the U.S. had plans to invade the country with or without Caribbean approval. On the day of the assault, White House and Pentagon officials admitted that over two years ago Reagan ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare contingency plans for an operation against Grenada. Called "Ocean Venture,"

the plan was practiced by Marines and Rangers on Vieques island off the coast of Puerto Rico in August of 1981. Furthermore, according to a CBS News report, the decision to invade was made last week, *before any formal Caribbean request was made*. All the U.S. imperialists were waiting for was an opportunity.

The 300-man Caribbean contingent is a token force designed to give the U.S.-instigated and -run operation a few Caribbean faces.

### Invasion Biggest Danger to Students

Reagan has given basically two reasons for the invasion: first, "to protect innocent lives, including up to 1,000 Americans whose personal safety," Reagan said, was his "paramount concern." Bull! By invading Grenada, the government is actually gambling the lives of American students and other innocents to profit the imperialists.

On the day before the assault, parents of U.S. students at St. George's University Medical School sent a telegram to the President pleading with him "not to move too quickly or to take any precipitous and provocative actions at this time." The telegram was signed by over 500 parents. "Those are our children down there, and we don't want them caught in any crossfire," said Alvin Buxbaum, chairman of the Parents Network and a parent of a medical student himself. The organization is based in Long Island, New York and represents over 700 families of students. There are 650 students at the St. George's Medical School, 90% from the U.S.

Four days earlier, on Oct. 20, vice chancellor of the school, Dr. Geoffrey Bourne met for an hour with General Hudson Austin of the 16-member Revolutionary Military Council, which assumed power after the killing of Grenadan Prime Minister Bishop. Dr. Bourne was assured that students and teachers would be safeguarded. The meeting had been re-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

# WorkersViewpoint

End the Criminal Rule of the Monopoly Capitalist Class; for Peace, Jobs & Equality—  
Fight for Socialism!

Workers and Oppressed People and Nations of the World Unite!

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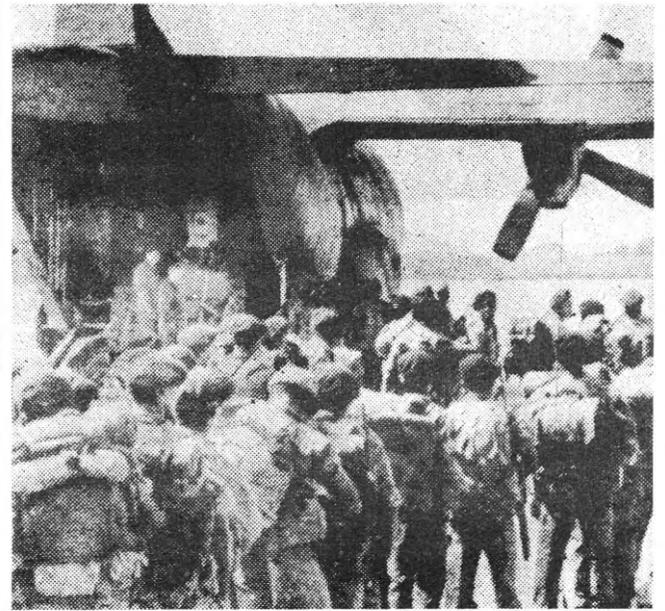
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## Contents



U.S. Army Rangers assemble at Bridgetown airport in Barbados for invasion. See story continuation on page 15

**R**epresentatives of People United For Justice, a Chicano community-based organization, testified before a New Mexico legislative committee on radioactive materials and water resources on September 29th. Their demand for water quality and rights is one expressions of the Chicano people's fight for their land and resources and for self-determination.

**Page 3**

**W**hen the nearly six thousand workers at Milwaukee's Briggs and Stratton lock company voted overwhelmingly to reject the company's latest contract offer on October 1st, they set the stage for a major showdown. Workers are set to strike to confront the B&S's lie that concessions are needed.

**Page 4**

**M**arcia Jackson cuts through the unreality of proclaiming the achievement of having a Black crowned Miss America and of having a Black astronaut in space at a time when millions of Blacks on earth don't have jobs. She also examines the reality facing Blacks in the U.S. as exemplified by the Reagan administration's attempt to turn the Civil Rights Commission into an anti-Civil Rights body.

**Page 81**

**A** renewed debate over the Rosenbergs execution by the government in the 1950s has been sparked by the release of a new book claiming that the FBI was right and that Julius Rosenberg at least was guilty of spying for the Soviet Union. On October 20th in New York City's Town Hall, the book's critics and supporters squared off.

**Page 7**

**A**n unprecedented civil suit has been filed against three autoworkers' union activists for allegedly slandering American Motor's management. Financed and orchestrated by the company, this is an attempt to stifle the right of workers to expose injustice.

**Page 4**

**T**he Chilean people poured out on October 11 for the largest and most militant anti-government protest to date. Besides blasting the Pinochet regime, the demonstrations also exposed cracks in the ranks of the Christian Democrats and the Democratic Alliance.

**Page 5**

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## the Communist Workers Party Stands For:

Only socialism can save America.

The Communist Workers Party (CWP) calls on the American people to unite and overthrow the criminal rule of monopoly capitalism by whatever means necessary.

Our immediate program is:

- The organization and mobilization of all Americans to preserve peace throughout the world, to defend our standard of living and to ensure equality and self-determination for all nations and nationalities;
- The establishment of a people's revolutionary government at the earliest possible moment which would expropriate the monopoly banks, utilities, and factories of the capitalists to put this wealth to the immediate benefit of all the people;
- To consolidate and defend the new government against efforts to restore the capitalist regime; and
- To use all the new government's resources to unleash the creativity and energy of the American people in solving our national problems.

Our long-range program is the development of the material and spiritual wealth of our country in the service of its own people and the people of the whole world—to transform society from one of exploitation, greed, competition and oppression among classes, people and nations to one of worldwide cooperation, mutual respect and prosperity. Our goal is a communist society where the exploitation of humankind has been completely eliminated.

After 30 years of post-World War II economic stabilization, built upon the almost total rip-off of the non-socialist world, the chickens have come home to roost for U.S. monopoly capitalism. A period of unprecedented depression and political destabilization is upon us. The capitalists and their political representatives have no solution except to try to ride it out on the backs of the American people and, wherever possible, the people of the rest of the world.

The misery and suffering of the American people is intensifying, producing ever-wider and more systematic resistance. As the popular resistance places its demands ever more squarely on the capitalist system, the government will squirm, balk, slander and attack the people and our leaders. These attacks will further fuel the resistance and, eventually, bring the majority into conscious, diametric opposition to the rule of monopoly capitalism.

The ruling class has, down through history, used and no doubt will continue to use, armed violence to violate the people's will. Such government terror must be countered by the people's armed might, not by choice but out of necessity to reduce the people's losses. At this point it will be the duty of the CWP and all revolutionaries to lead the American people in insurrection, to create our own government, truly in our own interests.

The socialist government of the U.S. will be the people's progressive and revolutionary organizations enshrined as the new institutions of self-rule. The government of the people will defend our revolution and set about insuring world peace and economic reconstruction.

Through our participation in this government, the CWP will demand complete elimination of covert or direct military aid and interven-

tion to oppressive dictatorships throughout the world and the dismantling of NATO and other capitalist military alliances. We will work to establish broad negotiations with other socialist and developing nations to insure peace and systematic reduction in armaments worldwide.

We will support self-determination, including the right of secession, for the Afro-American, Chicano and Native American nations, as well as Hawaii, and the peoples of Micronesia and the Virgin Islands, and independence for Puerto Rico.

We will also call for workers' democratic control of the factories, mines and mills of this country, and the development of national plans to coordinate production in the best overall interests of the whole people. We will rebuild American industry along with new housing, medical facilities, childcare facilities, mass transit and public works to serve the needs of our people.

We will call for the government to guarantee everyone the right to a job at union-scale wages. We will call for a national health insurance plan and retirement system, free childcare for all who desire it, free education through the college level, housing at no more than 25% of income, and utilities at no more than 10% of income.

We will guarantee the people's right of free speech and assembly, the right to form political parties and unions, freedom of religion and the right to bear arms. We will insist on worker-run health and safety programs and on a program to preserve and expand the quality of our environment and national parks.

We will strive to utilize the resources of the government to produce and popularize the people's revolutionary culture, utilizing the media and arts to combat racist and sexist prejudices and to promote positive images and education.

We will guarantee the democratic rights of minorities, women, lesbians and gays, and the disabled. We will fight for programs to facilitate the full participation of every person in the rebuilding of our society.

All these things and much more are possible under socialism because we, the American people, are truly the masters of our society. We have taken the wealth which the capitalists accumulated off the sweat, blood and suffering of the workers before us. With these resources, and the energy and creativity of our people, anything is possible.

The CWP sets itself the goal of achieving these objectives. Relying on our own experience while integrating the lessons of the most advanced revolutionary experience worldwide, the CWP has developed an integral strategy and tactics to achieve socialism in the U.S. We seek to unite with all progressive organizations, to continuously broaden the united front against the exploitation, oppression and rule of monopoly capitalism. We realize that the revolution is the product of mass struggle, that it cannot succeed until it has won the support of the majority of the American people. At the same time, we uphold the absolute necessity of building up the revolutionary core embodied in the CWP. Only such a core of trained and dedicated professional revolutionaries will have the skill and organization adequate to systematically prepare for and carry through socialist revolution in the U.S.

We call on all revolutionary-minded workers and all progressive people from whatever walk of life to join the CWP and dedicate your life and work to our noble goals.

**Albuquerque, NM**—On Sept. 29, People United for Justice, a Chicano community-based organization, demanded quality water for human needs and not for profit before a joint Legislative Committee of New Mexico on Radioactive Materials and Water Resources. Water in the Southwest has been very precious and limited. Ground water in the South Valley here has become seriously contaminated, threatening the lives of the community.

The Chicano governor has responded by creating a Public Health Emergency Response Team. Anaya said the South Valley represents a "constellation of public health concerns that require a comprehensive and expanded response from state government." He added that recent efforts by a group of South Valley residents to gain support for incorporating the area as a village "demonstrate a widely held view that the area's problems are unique and serious." The proposed team will provide a systematic attack on the serious environmental and public health problems facing the area's some 80,000 residents.

This water issue reflects the continued struggle of Chicano people for their land and resources — a concrete expression for the right of self-determination. The following is the testimony given by Miguel Garcia, a land-and-water rights organizer as well as project coordinator for People United for Justice.

#### Water Rights and Quality

The South Valley is a traditional Hispanic community, comprised of old communal land grants dating back to 1692, with the Atrisco Land Grant being the oldest and largest of the communities, covering over two thirds of the land base of the South Valley. Pajarito and Los Padillas comprise the other neighboring villages in the South Valley. We are one community with a common history and common problems.

**Our community has historically been plagued by contaminated water... This problem has recently been worsened by... dumping hazardous materials... depositing of the city's treated sewage into the Rio Grande, and former stock yards which created vast amounts of nitrogen.**

In past years land and water resources in our community were geared at meeting our immediate needs for food, clothing and shelter. Water was not seen as a commodity but as a natural element for basic human consumption and usage. Institutions such as the mayor-domo/acequia system insured a partial and equitable distribution of water and served as a unifying force in our community.

Our South Valley community is experiencing very serious problems with our water quality and water rights. We are seeing a disproportionate number of water-related illnesses, like giardiasis as well as an increase in contamination-related cases (yellow water, high nitrates, etc.) Most recently our community almost experienced a catastrophe with the possibility of the contaminant PCBs seeping into our water table. This is still not a resolved question. The installation of state monitors wells near the unlined pit where the PCBs were found and supposedly cleaned is a positive step but not enough of an assurance that this poison has not reached the water table.

But what guarantee do we have that such incidents will not occur again when the violators are only given a slap on the wrist. It is unfair for the taxpayers to take the brunt of the cost of this cleanup. We think there should be stiffer laws and penalties on both private and governmental agencies that poison our land water with hazardous chemicals and wastes.

# Water and Chicano Self-Determination

## Southwest struggle for water rights and quality Chicanos' fight for their land and resources

#### Uniqueness of South Valley

The South Valley has a very delicate water table, the average depth being anywhere from 6-10 feet in some of the basin area of the Atrisco area. Our communities' water supply is divided between private wells and city water. Also unique and not necessarily positive, are the many drainage ditches which criss-cross our community. Unlike our "acequias" which have a gradual flow to them, the water in these ditches basically sits on the water table serving as breeding grounds for mosquitos, and occasionally as a dump site for dead animals and hazardous wastes. This contaminated water eventually reaches the water table.

Our community has historically been plagued by contaminated water. The nitrate problem in the Mountain View area has existed for more than 20 years. This problem has recently been worsened due to a culmination of three things: 1) the dumping of hazardous materials into the Tijeras arroyo via Kirtland Air Force Base, 2) regulated and unregulated depositing of the city's treated sewage into the Rio Grande, and 3) former stock yards which created vast amounts of nitrogen. All these eventually found their way into the water table or the Rio Grande which feeds the water table.

Another problem common mostly in the areas where sewer lines were first installed is the foul sewer smell which our private wells are picking up. One conclusion is that our cesspools are the problem. Even though this might be the case in some isolated areas, the real problem is that city sewer lines are leaking those wastes and bacteria are being picked up by our private wells. The contractors assigned to install sewer lines in many instances had to redo an entire line because it was put in wrong.

The solution in the past has been to neglect the problem of water contamination and just "hook up" to city (Albuquerque) water. *This is the fast-kill solution but not the answer to our problem of water quality and water rights, for the more the city takes from our community, the further disenfranchised we become.* The City of Albuquerque is the main expropriator of water in the South Valley. The city has been one of the main culprits in the deterioration of our water quality and rights.

#### City's Water Resource Ripoff

There are real discrepancies in the development of water resources in our community. We are charged an annex tax on our water that we get from the city. Even though it is our own water, from our own community, we end up paying more for our water than a city resident who uses the same amount.

Many people in our community are also being forced to pay for city water that they are not receiving for the simple reason that when city lines ran past their homes meters were installed. Hence people had to automatically pay a set fee per month. As the economic crisis intensifies, people find it harder to hook up to city water. In many of our homes our highest utility bill is not electricity or gas but the water bill.

The city presently has a vast number of wells in the non-incorporated areas of Atrisco. These wells supply much of the city with water. The city puts a price tag on these waters of which revenue we never see in the Valley, but which aids in the development and expansion of the city. The extensive draining of our water table by these city wells is causing our private wells to become sand-locked or dried out. It is how we say in Spanish "se esta esprimiendo la tierra" (the land is being squeezed). This extensive policy is resulting in a subsiding flow into our water table, forming pockets of contaminated water which is not naturally cleansing itself out and of which we are drinking.

Aside from this lies the asbestos problem. Much of the city water lines in the South Valley are made with asbestos material. Asbestos is a carcinogen. *What is this cancer-causing material doing to our water table, our health, our children, our chronically ill?* We have not begun to document or perceive the harmful effects of this material because we have no mechanism that can assure us of a systematic way.

Water resources is the biggest business in our Chicano community of 80,000. Sewer projects, water hookups, and now lift stations, have been the leading industry in the South Valley for the past 10-15 years. Just recently the city water resources department registered a \$7.6 million surplus. We speculate that the majority of this surplus came from inflated water rates in the South Valley and non-water usage from South Valley residents who pay for city water that they are not even using. On top of all these inequities the city has projected 34 more "giant" wells for our community. *What audacity!*

At the beginning of the presentation, we stressed the need to be solution-oriented to our water problems, solution-oriented so we can effect social change. That is why we established a South Valley water hot-line number 873-AGUA, and we came today to present a concrete solution to our water problems.

#### People's Solution

*What do we see as an immediate solution?* To insure quality water in the South Valley, we need a comprehensive water testing/monitoring system where people can go and have their water tested and where field workers can go into target areas and do sampling. We need to nip the contamination, illnesses, asbestos and PCBs problem in the bud. A comprehensive, systematic water testing/monitoring system would do just that. A system that would have a scientific approach towards documenting our problems instead of the helter-skelter or non-existent approach that exists now.

The county will not test your water if it is not sitting on a concrete slab. And the tests they do are only for bacteria, not contaminants. The State (EID) does tests but on a crisis-oriented and sporadic basis, when the harm has been done and when people are suffering.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

# Showdown Against Briggs & Stratton

## Milwaukee workers confront lie that company "needs" concessions

**Milwaukee, WI**—"Same contract, same strike" read the sign held up by a middle-aged worker. He was just one of almost six thousand Briggs & Stratton workers who jammed the Milwaukee Arena on Oct. 1 for a three-hour union meeting that ended by rejecting the company's latest contract offer. Briggs & Stratton workers are members of Local 232 of the Allied Industrial Workers, the biggest union local in Wisconsin, which struck the company August 1.

The company is demanding concessions in almost every area. Briggs & Stratton's contract "offer" is really a demand for workers to give up practically everything they've won in the past 30 years. The company has not addressed the union's priorities: wages and pensions. Instead B&S insisted on a wage freeze and basically no improvements in the pension plan.

### **B&S Demands Rollback To 30 Years Ago . . .**

Moreover, the company is trying to push

workers back to the forced labor conditions they fought against ten years ago. Briggs & Stratton is demanding a rollback of workers' right to reject mandatory overtime, to pick jobs, and to go on voluntary layoff. In 1974 the union struck over the issue of mandatory overtime and won the right to refuse any weekend overtime and some weekday overtime, based on seniority. Workers have been putting in 55 hours a week or more, working twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

Briggs & Stratton also wants to lower rates of pay for future new employees, cut vacation increases for senior employees, and eliminate three paid personal holidays a year. The company also demanded a management rights clause that would give Briggs & Stratton the unilateral right to subcontract out work now being done by union workers. In return for laying down all their hard-won gains, the company had the nerve to offer each returning worker a \$500 "signing bonus." Workers responded on October 1 by voting the offer down two to one.

### **. . . But Company's Profits Are Strong**

Briggs & Stratton is trying to get a piece of the concessions motion that has swept the major industries. Using the usual whines about losses, debts, and imported products, the company is justifying its call for concessions by claiming it needs a "no-cost increase" contract to be competitive. But the union is not buying this—a look at the facts shows that Briggs & Stratton is one of the healthiest companies around. Since 1973, Briggs & Stratton Corporation has aver-

aged a net profit of \$32.8 million a year on average sales of \$471.3 million. Over the last ten years the company has gone on a massive capital improvement program, spending \$239 million. All of this spending was done out of current revenues.

At the very time management was laying its package of takebacks on the bargaining table, Briggs & Stratton voted to give an \$8.1 million dividend to stockholders, including an extra dividend of 22 cents a share on 14.6 million shares. The company has no long-term debt and very little short-term debt. It ranks 329nd on the Fortune 500 list of top U.S. corporations, and a recent report by Dow Jones predicted a rosy future for the company. The report said over the long term the company's solid finances and solid market position should allow even more profitability.

### **Major Showdown Looms**

With this profit record, the company has not only demanded concessions, but has gone a step further and stonewalled negotiations, threatening that this would be its last contract offer. It threatened to fire workers if they rejected the latest offer, which was no different from the concessions demanded in the first place. After the union's overwhelming vote to hold firm, one woman union member commented, "It's job security, job preference. These things haven't changed. We'll be out on the picket line come Monday." Briggs & Stratton is one of Milwaukee's biggest employers, so this promise to be a major showdown for labor in the city. □

—Claire Holland

# AMC Bankrolls Suit Against Union Activists

A lawsuit, financed and orchestrated by top management at the American Motors Corporation (AMC), against three United Auto Workers (UAW) Chief Stewards, is scheduled to go to trial on October 31. Jon Melrod, Tod Ohnstad and John Drew, members of UAW Local 72 in Kenosha, Wisconsin are being sued for \$4.2 million in a libel and slander civil suit filed by five other AMC employees, including 4 ex-foremen and the plant superintendent's son. With the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) even allowing the suit, a blow has been struck against "protected activity" under the National Labor Relations Act. Until now, unions and labor publications have had a relatively free hand to criticize management actions. Previously, management attempts to sue have been considered as harassment and retaliation, therefore the NLRB would order lawsuits dropped.

At issue is whether corporate management can use the Judicial Branch as a vehicle to squelch rank and file outrage over prejudicial behavior and abuses. Clearly, the First Amendment right of freedom of speech is being manipulated by capitalists seeking to use it as a "legal" means of controlling working class resistance. Continental Airlines President Frank Lorenzo is using a similar maneuver in the legislative arena as a ploy to renege on union contracts with pilots and flight attendants and destroy their unions.

### **Caucus Newsletter Exposes Shop Floor Abuses**

"Fighting Times", which is edited by the three co-defendants, is a rank and file newsletter of the United Workers Caucus which spotlighted foreman abuses in the "Scab of the Month" column. Articles featured in the column at the end of 1979 and part of 1980 are the basis of the libel and slander suit being brought by Steve Freeman, David Rutchik, Donald Phipps and Donald Panzlus, all ex-foremen, and Leonard Wohlgeuth, the superintendent's son. One of the articles reported that Freeman call-

ed female workers, who requested a nurses pass because of smoke inhalation, a "bunch of pussies"; another disclosed that he called a black worker a "nigger."

Another ex-foreman was "featured" for refusing a medical pass to a worker and when the latter collapsed in the pit, the foreman continued to run the assembly line right over him for 30 minutes before medical aid was summoned. Every assertion made has ample sources who the three will be calling as witnesses to verify the "Fighting Times" resolution to, first and foremost, print the truth.

### **AMC Complicity in Suit**

Since September of 1980, the lawsuit has been winding its way through the legal system. Attention has been fine-tuned on it since secret memos, directly implicating AMC's top Detroit management to the financing and engineering of the lawsuit, were discovered last March at Kenosha corporate offices. Turned over to the NLRB, an AMC Vice President had to admit AMC's funding of the suit. AMC's campaign of harassment and discrimination against Drew, Melrod and Ohnstad is particularly glaring as the company itself has had to remove the two key plaintiffs from their salaried positions because of the *very same behavior documented in "Fighting Times."*

With the undeniable proof of AMC's role, in April, Region 30 of the NLRB issued a blistering reprimand to the corporation, ordering AMC to stop funding the suit and to direct their attorney and his plaintiffs to withdraw the civil lawsuit. Additionally, the NLRB called the AMC-instigated lawsuit the culmination of 10 years of harassment and discrimination aimed at squelching Melrod and his supporters' union-protected activities.

### **Supreme Court Overturns Precedent**

A recent Supreme Court decision has opened the door for supervisory personnel to file lawsuits for libel and slander against workers who criticize them. The original precedent is a

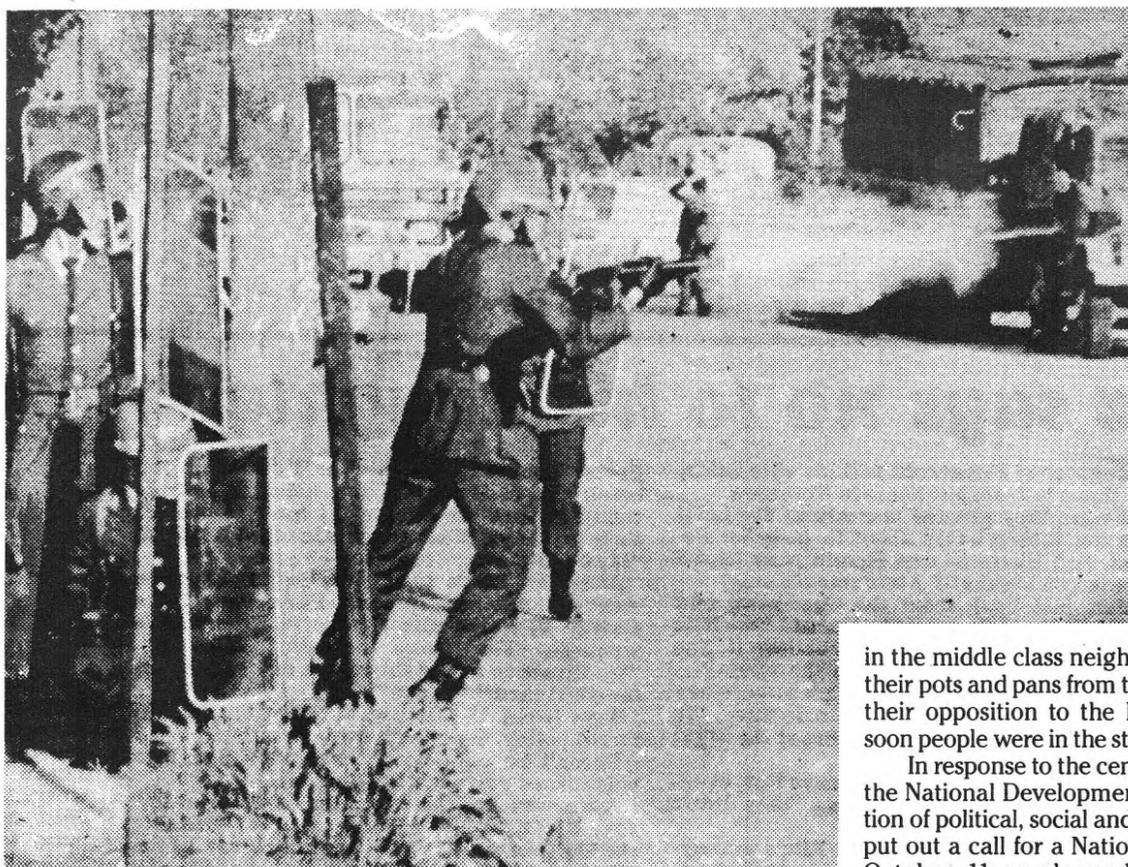
case called *Bill Johnson's Restaurant* which was overturned on appeal last May. That NLRB ruling refused to allow supervisors to sue union members for libel and slander as the suit was considered retaliation against the workers' protected activity. Now the Supreme Court decision says that the NLRB cannot automatically assume that the workers' criticisms of management are protected activity. Since this ruling, the NLRB decided to review all its pending Bill Johnson Restaurant-type cases. In the case of AMC and the three union activists, the NLRB has stepped side and is allowing the original lawsuit to go to trial at an estimated expense to three defendants of \$15,000.

### **Dangerous Ruling for Working Class**

The hard-fought rights of the working class are being "legally" taken back. Once again the courts have demonstrated that they protect the interests of capitalists. The court's ruling on the appealed Bill Johnson case is a means to sharply curtail the ability of unions, union members or those trying to organize unions. Because it seeks to suppress both the spoken and written word of criticisms of management, it is an extremely dangerous ruling for all progressive movements. Slrfsy zu.D. Dyrri id yrdyinh yhr esyrtd; yhry hsr gilrd s linrl snf dlnsfrt duiy shsindy zuniyrf Dyrreleotkrtd zlovs! 1397 because of articles published in the union newsletter.

Recognizing the need to beat back this attack on the labor movement, many activists in Milwaukee have been organizing support, including fundraising affairs to defray legal costs. Contributions can be sent to the: Union Free Speech Defense Fund, 217 E. Michigan, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202, Payable to: Attorney Alvin Ugent

Spurred on by evidence of AMC's financial backing of the suit, labor activists, civil libertarian groups, and others concerned about Freedom of Speech guarantees, have become active in broadcasting the case and the implications of it to all those engaged in progressive struggles. It is essential that the perspective be broadened beyond the particulars because we can be sure that other capitalists will use this repressive measure to crush resistance. National attention will be turned to Racine, Wisconsin when the trial opens on October 31.



## *“Ten years of misery enough!”*

*Chile: largest, most militant anti-government protest ever*

in the middle class neighborhoods, to bang on their pots and pans from their balconies to show their opposition to the Pinochet regime. But soon people were in the streets in large numbers.

In response to the centrists' announcement, the National Development Project, a left coalition of political, social and human rights groups, put out a call for a National Day of Protest on October 11 as planned. They went out to organize in the shanty towns and poorer sections of the cities and were able to mobilize the largest demonstration in the 10 years of the fascist Pinochet dictatorship. Just 24 hours before the scheduled demonstration the government issued the permit.

### **“Ten years of misery enough”**

Among the speakers was Jorge Lavandero, former Senate president and a rally organizer, who said that people had come out in such large numbers to “tell the dictatorship that 10 years of persecution and misery were enough” and that soon Chile would emerge from “this long night of anguish and pain.”

During Lavandero's speech, the crowd erupted with cheers when Rudolpho Seguel, the young leader of the Copper Workers Union, arrived on the speakers' platform. Seguel has been arrested twice this year for his organizing activities. His most recent arrest sparked a wave of work stoppages at Chile's state-owned copper mines.

Also speaking at the rally was Fabiola Letelier, sister of the late Orlando Letelier, Foreign Minister in the Allende government, who was murdered in Washington in 1973. Ms. Letelier, a lawyer and human rights activist, charged the government with “terror against the people” and with “selling out the country to foreign capitalists.” She specifically pointed to the International Monetary Fund's plan to impose an austerity program on Chile, saying “while people slowly die of hunger, new credits from abroad are used almost entirely to repay debts incurred by powerful economic and financial groups.”

Many people who took part in the rally carried portraits of the late Marxist president Salvador Allende and chanted his name through the course of the demonstration.

### **Cracks in Ranks of Christian Democrats**

Among the 40,000 demonstrators were many people who identified themselves as members of the socialist and communist parties as well as other left organizations. But there were also many Christian Democrats and other centrist parties represented despite the fact that the Christian Democrats and the Democratic Alliance both officially refused to endorse the rally — evidence of the growing dissatisfaction and frustration with the Christian Democrats' inability to win reforms from the Pinochet regime through negotiation. It is unlikely that any concessions will be won in that way and more people are beginning to see the futility of limiting the struggle to negotiations alone. As the movement to oust Pinochet grows, it will be up to the left to lead the people to a real victory and real democracy. □

LOUISE FALCONE

**O**n October 11, more than 40,000 people gathered in Santiago, Chile for what turned out to be the largest and most militant of the monthly National Days of Protest. The protests did not end with the rally though. They continued in Santiago and other cities, as did the clashes with police, and lasted for the next two days. During the three-day period, 300 people were arrested, many more injured and five killed, one of them a police corporal. The death toll since the monthly demonstrations began in May now stands at 69.

In addition to demonstrations, there have been reports of clashes between students and police on three university campuses in Santiago as well as in the poorer sections of that city. In the San Miguel section of Santiago at least three people were seen throwing home-made bombs at the town hall.

Students also took to the streets in Valparaiso, 60 miles west of Santiago and in Concepcion, 320 miles south of Santiago. Fighting between police and students also broke out repeatedly in the days prior to the demonstrations in many areas.

### **Days of Protest Too Hot for Centrists**

In late September the centrist coalition (the Democratic Alliance) that had organized the previous Days of Protest announced that they would not organize another demonstration. They were apparently intimidated by the governments' refusal to issue a permit for another rally and by their own inability to control the militancy of the crowds.

These days of protest had begun with the Democratic Alliance calling for people, mainly

## Land Fight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 :

Why does the South Valley merit such a comprehensive system? For one, all people should have assurances of good quality water in an advanced technological society. But what is particular to our community is the shallow water table, coupled with a dense population (80,000 people at the least). On top of this we have had case histories of water contamination and a disproportionate number of water-borne diseases. Our children deserve better.

We cannot continue to allow the degradation of our health and standard of living of our community. We cannot tolerate the undue economic hardships which this problem is creating, for even though our community is a proud and traditional one, it is an impoverished one as well.

We cannot be complacent with studies on and about our problems. We need resources, material and human, to deal concretely with our water problems. A comprehensive *water testing/monitoring system* whose services are directly accessible and of no cost to our community is just that. We are willing to work with the legislature in securing this project for our community. □

# Gauley Bridge

They came from all over the South  
from the red clay of Georgia  
and the hills of West Virginia  
from the woods of Alabama  
and the North Carolina farmland  
they came  
hunger and hope etched on their black faces  
sons of slaves  
of soldiers and sharecroppers  
from all over the South they came  
with nothing but the hard muscles in their arms  
and the dreams in their vacant pockets  
they came by the hundreds  
during the sorrow years of the Great Depression  
looking for a chance  
at a place called Gauley Bridge.

Black men came down  
with shovel and pick ax and hammer in hand  
to the mountain that towered over the town  
a brooding monolith  
that seemed to drain the light from the sky  
They came to rip its guts open  
to crush its innards  
and carve a tunnel through its cruel and fathomless belly  
Union Carbide had decreed that the mountain must die  
so that the mighty waters of the Kanawha River  
could run through  
and the electrical currents would flow  
and the gold would flow  
into the glimmering company vaults

Joseph Lee looked up at the mountain,  
his enemy and his salvation,  
its shadow fell across his burnished face  
and he smiled as he thought of the good things  
he would be able to buy his wife and child  
smiled at the good feel of the weight of the pick ax  
at his side  
and at the clean green rolling hills of West Virginia.

He was herded into a shack ten feet by twelve feet  
huddled into the corner with his family  
crowded into a shanty of rotting wood  
with twenty seven other men, women and children  
just as desperate and flushed with promise,  
feeling lucky to be making thirty cents an hour  
at a time when even white folks were starving  
and the rich were going insane

that night, he slept  
deep and soft  
amid the snores and the rasps  
and the hawking of the old men  
the smell of sweat sweet and bitter  
his son's breath a gentle wind  
against his ear.

And as dawn crept its way over the mountain  
Joseph Lee woke to the clanging of bells  
and screaming whistles  
and the shouts of the white foremen  
He gathered himself and his pick ax  
and kissed his woman goodbye  
her face as silky as Carolina blossoms  
With a wave of his hand  
he joined the long line of men  
down into the darkness  
that echoed with the sounds of steel on steel  
and the gasps and grunts of the workers  
who swung their hammers  
in gleaming arcs above their heads  
into the crags of rock  
the pieces flying all around them  
tiny meteors that showered their hands and their faces  
while gasoline-powered trains slithered  
glittering in swings of lamp light  
belching carbon monoxide  
like dragons spitting poison and fire



And then the dust,  
thicker than the morning fog in the forest  
thicker than the smoke from wet wood in the fireplace  
thicker than the steam from an old woman's tea kettle  
so thick he could not see ten feet in front of him  
so thick it was like a thing alive  
wrapping its swirling fingers around his throat  
his nostrils burned  
and big tears ran down his face  
as the dust seeped into his mouth  
and into his skin  
he choked as the silica ate away  
at his swollen lungs  
and he ran towards the air and the light  
pushed along by crowds of panicked workers

At the mouth of the tunnel  
silhouetted against the morning light  
the foremen stood with pick handles held high  
beating them back  
the tunnel filling with cries and curses  
and the obscene sound of wood on flesh

Down there in the dark and the dust  
Joseph saw men drop dead  
on their faces on the mountain

floor  
the vomit and the shit running out of them  
like the life that ran out of them  
they died so fast  
the company had to hire an undertaker  
to bury the bodies in a nearby field  
(the best business he had ever had)  
fifty dollars per corpse  
three bodies to a grave  
the dirt thrown over their unseeing eyes  
into their open, silent mouths  
in a field fertilized with blood  
in unmarked graves  
without a prayer  
ashes to ashes  
dust to dust

Down there in the dark and the dust  
angry and afraid  
Joseph swung against the enveloping walls of stone  
and his pick ax began to get as heavy as the mountain  
began to take on the weight of the earth  
his muscles strained and stretched  
the veins pulsed in his neck  
like the cables under big city streets  
and he wanted nothing  
but to curl into the corner of shack  
around his woman's warm body  
and sleep a long, sweet sleep

The dust billowed around him like drifting clouds  
the singing of the steel sounded far away  
like something he had heard in a dream  
and he remembered when he was a boy in Alabama  
he and his big brother would run to the water hole  
that only they knew about  
they used to climb up on a palisade  
ringed by poplar trees that swayed  
in the waves of summer heat  
the juice from the peaches they had stolen  
still running down their chins  
he would leap out over the crystalline water  
the light blinding him for a moment  
as he floated in the massive air  
he felt for a single second  
like a bird flying into the sun  
and smiling

Joseph Lee hit with a soft splash  
his pick ax still held hard in a trembling fist.

Finally  
the company began to sell respirators to the workers  
for two dollars and fifty cents  
and the supervisor said,  
"I wouldn't give two dollars and fifty cents  
for all the niggers on the job!"

but then  
the supervisor died  
and the foremen died, too  
their skin as grey as metal  
their eyelids heavy with dust  
learning too late  
the true meaning of equality.  
From all over the South they had come  
looking for a chance for themselves  
and their families  
looking for the brightness of morning  
and finding endless night  
and the mountain still sits  
melancholy and imposing  
as it sucks the light from the sky  
and the river still runs its ragged way  
through the quiet, haunted land  
and the grass grows tall and green  
in the wind-bent fields  
and almost no one knows what happened  
fifty two years ago  
near a small town in West Virginia  
almost no one knows what happened  
down there in the dark and the dust  
at a place  
called Gauley Bridge.

Antonio Rodriguez

*Author's note:* While Joseph Lee is a fictional character everything described in the poem really happened. In the end, four hundred and seventy six black men died at Gauley Bridge. One hundred and thirty three were buried in unmarked graves by the Kanawha Power Co., a subsidiary of Union Carbide. The families, to this day, have received no compensation, and the stories goes relatively untold.

# The Second Rosenberg Execution

book debate exposes anti-communism of neo-progressives

May Quan

With the recent publication of the book, *The Rosenberg Files*, the Rosenberg controversy has raged anew amidst the New York City literati and progressive intellectuals. Burning accusations have been exchanged from *The Nation* to *New York Review of Books* and back again to the *New Republic*. Searing condemnations have been printed on the pages of *New York Magazine* and reviewers from *The New York Times* have lauded the new book as the "definitive" work on the guilt or innocence of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed by the U.S. government in 1953 for alleged Soviet espionage.

## Debate Draws Packed House

Why is the book so controversial? Its authors claim that after sifting through the 200,000 pages of released documents from FBI files, they found a "compelling evidence" that, after all the mass outrage over the Rosenbergs' execution, at least Julius was indeed "guilty."

The controversy culminated on October 20, 1983, in Town Hall, New York City in a formal debate sponsored by *The Nation* and *The New Republic*. The pro-innocence view was represented by Walter and Miriam Schneir, authors of the book, *Invitation to an Inquest*, which has served for years as the main source material for Rosenberg supporters. The guilty view was represented by the authors of *The Rosenberg Files*, Ronald Radosh, Joyce Milton and researcher Saul Stern. Elizabeth Holtzman, liberal district attorney from Brooklyn, was moderator.

All of Town Hall's 1,500 seats were sold, leaving some 8,500 people without seats to tune into radio station WBAI to hear the live broadcast. The question of the night: Were the Rosenbergs framed?

## Significance Not What's Said But Who Says It

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, two communists, were the only Americans ever to be executed on a conspiracy charge. On June 19, 1953, they were electrocuted for "giving the secret of the atom bomb to the Russians." Their main accuser was Ethel Rosenberg's own brother, David Greenglass.

Everyone in the debate concedes that Ethel was brought into the case by the FBI solely to pressure her husband into admitting that he was a part of an espionage conspiracy. Everyone agrees that there was no "smoking gun," no tangible proof of espionage, no secret radios, no code books, no false or even real passports. Everyone agrees that it was McCarthyism that put the Rosenbergs to death, in a trial in which the judge accused the Rosenbergs of being the cause of the Korean War. Furthermore, while the Rosenbergs were executed, the U.S. government already knew that Klaus Fuchs, a British scientist, had already passed on to the Soviets all the technical data on the bomb and that the Soviet government was already involved in their own advanced scientific studies on the atom bomb.

What is different about the Radosh book is that they claim that before they had begun their investigation for the book, they believed in the Rosenbergs' innocence. In fact, they had participated in the Rosenberg Defense Committee before and after the couple's execution.

All three involved in the book have credentials as part of the progressive intellectual strata. Joyce Milton has written for both *The Nation* as well as the *New Republic*. Radosh, a professor of history at Queensborough Community College, was a former member of the Communist Party, U.S.A. and has written several "radical" books. Saul Stern, a free-lance writer, was a former editor of *Ramparts* magazine, itself a target of FBI investigation. They claimed complete objectivity in writing the book.

## Book Raises FBI Credibility

There was no doubt the debate was heated between the Schneirs, Radosh, Milton, and Stern. Victor Navasky, editor of the *Nation*, Michael Meeropol, one of the Rosenbergs' sons, and Marshal Perlin, in particular using his trial lawyer techniques, added to the emotional tenor. The audience itself erupted often into boos or cheers alternately. One particular confusing point of the debate was the battle of the tapes. The Schneirs have charged that Radosh/Milton never actually conducted all the interviews they have claimed to have done. The Schneirs then played tapes of interviews with three former Communist Party members who recanted their statements in Radosh's book. Meanwhile, Stern retorted by playing interviews with the same three Party members. The upshot ended up proving both right. The authors had indeed spoken with the three over the telephone, but whether the interview took place before or after the book was written, whether the three knew they were being interviewed at all, and the context in which their statements were made — this remains in question.

However, significant points were made. First, Miriam Schneir pointed out, since there was no tangible proof of espionage, the entire case against the Rosenbergs rested on the evidence of a string of informers. To revive this government evidence is to attempt to raise the credibility of a group of already discredited informers, some of whom were career anti-communists who hopped from Un-American committee meetings to hearings testifying against alleged communists.

Secondly, the Schneirs said the Radosh case rested on the credibility of FBI documents. Of the documents, only some 200,000 pages have been released after a bitter fight by the sons of the Rosenbergs through the Freedom of Information Act. Even these released pages were censored while tens of thousands of pages are still being held secret by the FBI.

Radosh said he believed people should be able to rationally discuss the Rosenbergs without a battle of ideologies. Yet Radosh immediately launched into a bitter, half-hour anti-communist tirade including accusing the Communist Party

of belatedly initiating the campaign to defend the Rosenbergs in 1952 in order to divert world attention away from the "monstrous horrendous" purge trials going on in Czechoslovakia at the same time. He quoted Irving Howell saying anyone who supported American communism "helped to befoul the cultural atmosphere." The "better world" of socialism, he said, included the Moscow trials, the deaths of millions in forced labor and Stalinism. This from a man who claims to be objective and who doesn't want the issue to become a battle of ideologies?

## Radosh Revives Cold War Hysteria

In today's political climate, an almost repeat performance of the McCarthy-type redbaiting, the Rosenberg case is but one of a series of issues used in an attempt to divide progressive intelligentsia and civil liberties activists. First was the event in New York City in support of Solidarity in which author Susan Sontag denounced her former beliefs in socialism, Poland and the Soviet Union. Then there was the issue of Soviet dissidents in which some took up the anti-socialist cry. The book, *The Rosenberg File*, has provided the latest platform with which to polarize intellectuals rightward and to proclaim a safe spot from which to espouse radicalism while denouncing Marx, the Soviet Union, and victims of government repression. In fact, James Weinstein, editor of *In These Times*, and a former suspect in the alleged Rosenberg espionage ring, seized on the opportunity of the Radosh book release to say he thought Rosenberg guilty too.

After Reagan's inauguration, a series of so-called liberal Democrats began shifting their positions on the issues, like Ed Koch, to become the hard-line neo-Democrats, little different in substance from Reagan. We are witnessing the same battle positions being taken among some progressives.

Radosh said, "Robert Meeropol does a great job of portraying the American left as an agent of a foreign power. Who was responsible for that image? How far from the truth was it? After all it was the Communist Party policy of slavish adherence to Moscow that made the Communist Party suspect to the eyes of Americans. The Rosenbergs helped perpetuate one of the greatest lies of this century, helped destroy whatever possibility there might have been for a resurgence of serious radicalism in America. Belonging to the Communist Party was really a tragedy because it took the activity and exhausted the energy of well-meaning people in a cause that was unjust and destructive as much as anything the FBI did to the left."

## Blaming the Victims

The weakness of the debate was the question itself: were the Rosenbergs guilty or innocent. The question is almost an academic one since the U.S. government, despite the flimsy circumstantial evidence, still convicted and then executed them. The real issue then and now is the ruling class' attempt to whip up anti-communist hysteria in order to intimidate popular dissent and to justify aggression abroad and repression at home, and what stand justice-loving people will take. This point was not hammered home enough, although Radosh did a good job of exposing himself.

To introduce the possibility, in the name of "hard evidence," that these government informers were really "decent informers," that the FBI was right — in just this one case — is to truly make the Communist Party the guilty one, while the U.S. government, even though it executed the Rosenbergs, the lesser criminals. This view is borne out by Saul Stern's and Ronald Radosh's cries of "Left McCarthyism!" The problem is that the crimes (whether they existed or not) were not equal then, nor are they equal now.

The Radosh book has been praised by Reagan ideologues such as George Will. The book, they say, "debunks" the "leftwing myth" about the reactionary nature of the U.S. government. For a group of formerly progressive colleagues to atone for the U.S. government is to make Radosh, Milton and Stone better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself. And the tune of recanting your former "left" views has not changed so much since McCarthy's days either. □

# Reagan's Anti-Civil Rights Nominees

MARCIA JACKSON

**D**espite a Black Miss America and the first Black in space, the bourgeoisie's real attitude toward the Black community is best illustrated by the recent attack on the Civil Rights Commission (CRC) by the Reagan administration. This attack occurs under the rubric of the new "colorblind/racial neutrality" policy. This policy promotes chauvinism because it scapegoats Blacks for the worsening economic crisis in America. In a more sophisticated way of blaming the victim, Reagan and his "liberal" allies have discarded the loathsome term "reverse discrimination" and replaced it with the nicer-sounding "colorblindness." But the result is the same.

This policy regards affirmative action as preferential treatment "discriminating" against whites. A corollary to this policy as advocated by the Reagan-appointed Black Chairman of the CRC, Clarence Pendleton, states that government social programs for which Blacks and whites gave their lives have hurt the poor and minorities because they have made them lazy and dependent on the government. Pendleton employs an invidious analogy in comparing minorities to "junkies addicted to drugs."

## Affirmative Action Gains Being Wiped Out

The immediate result of this is that the Labor Department plans to wipe away affirmative action regulations for companies that do business with the government. In August, the Justice Department filed a friend of the court brief urg-

ing the U.S. Supreme Court to allow the Memphis Fire Department to dismiss and demote Black employees with less seniority than whites, even though Blacks had been hired under a court order in settlement of a race discrimination case brought in 1977. The sinister reasoning behind the Justice Department's actions was not really the seniority rule, as the Department admitted that layoffs would have a "disproportionate adverse effect on Blacks." Instead, the Justice Dept. claimed that the action inherently denies "innocent whites their rights to equal protection under the Constitution."

Within the government, Blacks are increasingly becoming persona non grata. According to a Congressional study of federal agencies, 4,727 government employees were laid off in 1981. Members of minorities were dismissed at a rate 50% greater than whites. The study showed that the number of layoffs doubled in 1982 and hit hardest were upper-level minority employees. In 1982, in proportion to their representation in the federal workforce, two minority workers were laid off for every white laid off.

The purpose of the policy in terms of the CRC is to implement this reactionary program in all areas of government and private industry, reduce the amount of suits and complaints on civil rights violations received by the Justice Dept. due to good investigative work done by the CRC, discharge (as was done at the EPA) those progressive activists who have aided the people's movements, and to eventually do away

# BLACKS AMER

## Black Astronaut/ Miss America Proclaimed

MARCIA JACKSON

**T**he Civil Rights era of the 1960s, despite all the changes it effected on the American cultural and social scene, produced neither a Black astronaut nor a Black Miss America. Yet suddenly last month, both occurred.

### Two Firsts

In early September, Guion Bluford became the first Black American in space. On September 17, Vanessa Williams of New York was crowned the first Black Miss America. Another Black woman, Suzette Charles of New Jersey, was chosen first runner-up. Both "firsts" were immediately acclaimed major historical events by the media. These events also elicited glowing, hopeful comments from several prominent Black leaders. Of the two events, it remains Miss Williams' victory, however, that has drawn the most raves.

Shirley Chisholm, former Congressional representative from Brooklyn, and Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, lauded the selection of the first Black Miss America as a major breakthrough against racism in this country. Ms. Chisholm even went on to say that the win demonstrated that "the inherent racism in America must be diluting itself. . . thank God I have lived long enough that this nation has been able to select the beautiful young women of color to be Miss America." Benjamin Hooks likened the crowning of Miss Williams to Jackie Robinson's breaking the color barrier in major league baseball. Even President Reagan concurred in these views. He was the first to call, congratulate, and invite Miss Williams to the White House.

Conversely, others like Congress of Racial Equality President Roy Innis called the selection "a bittersweet victory which is a small step forward but a giant step backward." According to Innis, despite the great personal achievements of Miss Williams and Miss Charles, they were not

really representative of Black America because they were "closer to Mediterranean or Latino types than to classic Black features." Innis labeled the whole affair a media event that denigrated the Black-Is-Beautiful struggle of the '60s and '70s. Responses generally ranged from viewing the crowning of Miss Williams as a fulfillment of the American Dream, proving America is still the land of opportunity, to a pyrrhic victory at best, with Black America getting the same old racist song and dance. Remarkably unaddressed in all the various examinations of these events is the question of why now? And do these "firsts" forecast a change in attitude, treatment, or the condition of Blacks by the government?

### Black Freedom Struggle Paves the Way

For almost 40 of its 62 years, the Miss America pageant barred Black contestants. Correspondingly, the U.S. space program admitted no Black recruits until the 1960s. During the late '50s and '60s, however, the Civil Rights Movement along with the independence struggles in



Guion Bluford Jr. (third from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

with the Civil Rights Commission altogether. The CRC has been called the "conscience of the nation" on civil rights. But now the African-American community, the women's movement, the gay movement, and other minorities will definitely suffer as their "voice" in the government is eliminated.

#### History of the CRC

The Civil Rights Commission was created in 1957 during the Eisenhower administration. It was a result largely of the Civil Rights Movement. By law it is supposed to be an independent, bipartisan entity. Among its six members are members of both political parties. The CRC was created as a temporary agency to be reauthorized by Congress periodically. Its stated role is to investigate civil rights complaints and evaluate them against current laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, age or handicap. Members do not serve any fixed terms and the panel has no enforcement powers.

The commission served a positive role in the battle against Jim Crow segregation. But its beginnings were rocky. Even then racist Senator James Eastland from Mississippi tried to use his position on the Judiciary Committee to stop its creation. Over the next ten years, civil rights leaders were able to use the CRC to prod a reluctant Justice Department to act on the manifold instances of disenfranchisement occurring in the South. The CRC recommendations on voting rights in 1959, 1961, and 1963 helped frame the

Voting Rights Act in 1965. CRC reports aided Blacks in beating overt discriminatory hiring and promotion practices in the civil service. CRC conducted hearings in the South during which the violence and brutality against civil rights workers were widely publicized. And once again it was used by the movement to press the Justice Department, which was spending more time investigating marchers and civil rights workers than protecting them from the Klan and racist sheriffs, into action against the racists.

So throughout its history, the CRC, with its hearings, research, and state advisory committees, has collected facts and submitted recommendations to Congress and the President concerning details of equal protection and enforcement of federal laws and policies. The recommendations of the CRC often become the law of the land. Federal courts, including the Supreme Court, have used CRC reports as authoritative sources in civil rights cases.

#### Reagan Cleans Out CRC

In its 25 or more years of existence, the CRC has never had any members fired by the President. The most notable appointments to the Commission in the '70s occurred during the Nixon administration after Theodore Hesburgh resigned and Nixon replaced him with Arthur Fleming. In early 1982, however, President Reagan sacked Chairman Fleming and Vice-chairman Stephen Horn and replaced them with Clarence Pendleton Jr., a former official of the National Urban League, and Mary Louise Smith,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

# S IN RICA & the reality unreality

## Perpetuating the Negative Image of Black Women

Beauty pageants generally promote obsolete sexist views of womanhood. Sexual attributes and conformity to the prevailing western standards of beauty rather than intelligence and talent make up the yardstick by which women have been judged for years. The nose jobs and other surgical improvements contestants have undergone to win are even more gross indignities to womanhood. These pageants are further extensions of the socio-economic role the capitalist system imposes on and ascribes to women. Women are viewed as primarily necessary for reproduction, sexual objects of desire, homemakers, etc.

Yet at certain times, as with other capitalist cultural institutions, even beauty pageants assume a far-reaching political significance transcending their original intent. In 1976, when Cindy Breakspere, the reigning Miss Jamaica Bikini and Miss Universe Bikini, was crowned Miss World, her victory was heralded through the third world. Miss Breakspere's victory mirrored the growing ascendancy of the third world on turfs (like the UN) once dominated by the ma-

for capitalist/colonialist power. It also represented a blow against social and cultural imperialism.

#### TV's Negative Image of Black Women

The crowning of Miss Williams, however, drew mixed reviews in the Black community. Miss Williams' comments about not really owing anything to the Black community but that she has to represent America in general drew a lot of angry comments from many Blacks calling local Black radio stations. For African-American women, progress and success have always been interwoven with that of all their people. Even with the superficial symbolism of a Black Miss America, high murder rates, declining social assistance, lack of jobs and training for employment, high infant mortality rates, high morbidity rates, and the calculated destruction of the Black family have forced Black women to get out there and struggle. Black women have never followed the bourgeois precept that women should be seen and not heard. The lives of Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Sandy Smith, and others are testament to that.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



from right) is America's first black astronaut.

# Reagan's Nominees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

a former head of the Republican National Committee. This was only a start of moves repeated throughout those agencies created as a result of mass struggle, namely the EPA, the Dept. of Education, the CRC and others.

With the greater centralization of the government, these agencies will either be eliminated or so cut to the bone that they are ineffectual. Reagan's passage of an act outlawing any "squealing" by government workers of these agencies leads to even more tightening up and general house cleaning measures to discourage or eliminate future Daniel Ellsbergs or Hugh Kaufmans from aiding the progressive movement. In the case of the CRC, these steps take on another purpose. These measures, joined with the colorblindness theory, justify the changes now being made at the CRC, and as such, are a concentrated expression of the wholesale government assault on African-American people.

## Packing the CRC with Reagan Think-Alikes

On the very day the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 8-1 against the administration-supported granting of tax exemptions to private religious schools practicing racial discrimination, the Reagan administration and its "liberal" allies launched another assault on civil rights. The administration targeted the CRC, with its present members being the most vocal advocates of affirmative action in the government, for extinction.

This has translated into the removal of Dr. Mary Berry, Ms. Blandina Cardenas Ramirez, Carter administration appointees, and Rabbi Murray Saltzman, appointed by President Ford. Only Jill Ruckelshaus, wife of the EPA head, would remain of the commissioners in place since 1980. The administration, still reeling from the angry letter and report issued by the present commission last year indicting the administration for its failure to uphold the civil rights of minorities and women, reportedly fired these commissioners at the urgings of Clarence Pendleton. Pendleton asked the President to give him more conservative support. The President immediately nominated four so-called liberals to replace these members, including a staff secretary.

The administration's last attempt to secure commission seats for Reagan appointees was repulsed because the nominees were known as blatant racists with no civil rights credentials. This time, the four Reagan nominees were cleverly chosen to take advantage of their liberal histories. These new nominees include John H. Bunzel, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, and a former President of San Jose State University. Bunzel was a well-known JFK and Humphrey supporter. Robert Destro, another nominee, is an assistant law professor at Catholic University and former general counsel to the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. Linda Chavez, up for the position of staff assistant to the CRC, is a Hispanic and a former federal employee of the Carter administration. She is presently an assistant to American Federation of Teachers head Albert Shanker. Morris Abram, the nominee with the most impressive civil rights record, was a civil rights lawyer who defended Black voters in Georgia in the 1950s and '60s, even arguing before the Supreme Court to gain Black political participation in the South. He is a past president of the American Jewish Congress, the United Negro College Fund, and Brandeis University.

But a closer look at the philosophies of these nominees shows that their real credential is their agreement with the scapegoating views advanced by the Reagan administration. Hispanic

and Black groups' opposition to Linda Chavez stems from her AFT-shared position on bilingual education that maintains that the federal government should not require bilingual education be implemented in local school districts. Robert Destro once told a Senate Committee that "if the Civil Rights Commission were to go out of existence today, it would not be missed." John Bunzel shares this view. He even urges that the last days of the CRC be used to study why Blacks can't keep up with whites and score so low on standardized tests. And he suggests we study why the Chinese and Japanese do so well. Both ideas are conceived to pit white against Black and minorities against each other. In the end it too blames the victims. Abrams, who counts among his friends Senator Moynihan, author of the major blaming-the-victim theses of the "Black Matriarchy and Benign Neglect," has amassed tremendous support among old-line Jewish leaders for his opposition to quotas. He even managed to get a letter from Daddy King — Martin Luther King, Jr.'s father — saying Abrams is a genuine friend of Black America. The administration, through Abrams' many acquaintances among these old-line Jewish leaders, has tried to drive a wedge between the Jewish community and the Black community. Hyman Bookbinder of the AJC reiterated his opposition to quotas and thus his support for the nominees. Nathan Perlmutter, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, vigorously and loudly defended the nominees as friends of civil rights on the pages of The New York Times and other major publications.

## Redbaiting is being used to discredit Dr. Berry and the CRC.

She has been on the administration's hit list since she confronted a representative from the Justice Dept. at a conference on racially motivated violence over a year ago, condemning the Department's failure to follow through on cases of racially motivated attacks. Dr. Berry extracted an admission from the Justice representative that "the Constitution does not give you the right to walk down the street unmolested."

## Attack on CRC Temporarily Stalled

In August and September several events helped rebuff these attempts to destroy the commission. These include the successful March on Washington and the work of a coalition of civil rights organizations that pressured the House into passing HR2230 to extend the life of the commission beyond its September 30 expiration date and forbid the firing of any commissioner except for cause. The bill, it is hoped, will "re-establish" the independence of the CRC from the executive branch in particular.

This is not to say that the House is a reliable friend of Blacks. It voted for the cutbacks in social services and concurrent rise in defense spending that is further impoverishing Blacks and all Americans — actions that make some of the work and beliefs of the CRC (support for affirmative action, etc.) *academic* because each increase in defense spending takes away jobs and social services for Blacks. Nevertheless, the bill is important in building a movement against the system and beating back racist scapegoating tactics. The bills remain to be ratified by the Senate. The Senate has put off a committee vote on the nominees until after the 10-day Columbus Day recess, at the urgings of several Republican leaders.

Another disappointment for the administration is the broad Jewish participation in the March on Washington, despite the refusal of the major Jewish organizations such as the AJC and the ADL to endorse or participate. This also helped blunt the government's scapegoating schemes. But now the administration has resorted to other tactics.

## The Redbaiting of the CRC

In late September, William F. Buckley, Ben Wattenberg, Ed Koch, and Albert Shanker all charged the present members of the CRC with being "extremists." Wattenberg and Buckley, hoping to take advantage of the anti-communist sentiments created by the downing of KAL 7 by the Soviet Union, labelled the most vocal member of the commission, Dr. Mary Berry, a "Marxist-Leninist." Evidence for this accusation was a book she co-authored with Yale University historian John Blassingame entitled "Long Memory: The Black Experience in America." With quotes and statements taken out of context, these four called Berry a "communist" unfit to sit on the commission. Shanker of the AFT called her a "fan of schools in Maoist China" because she returned from a trip there in 1977 with praise of certain aspects of the Chinese educational system.

The redbaiting is being used to discredit Dr. Berry in particular and the CRC generally as presently constituted. Dr. Berry has been on the administration's hit list since she confronted a representative from the Justice Dept. at a Rutgers University conference on racially-motivated violence over a year ago. Using statistics and evidence gathered by the CRC and other independent Black and white scholars and lawyers, Dr. Berry condemned the Justice Dept.'s failure to follow through on the thousands of cases presented them on racially-motivated attacks, the lack of enforcement of present anti-Klan and civil rights laws, and the Department's reactionary stances on affirmative action. She also criticized the use of the Justice Dept. to pursue Black political activists instead of the racists. Two cases discussed at the conference showing the Department's posture were the Klan shootings in Greensboro, North Carolina and Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1979 and 1980, respectively. Berry extracted an admission on the part of the Justice Dept. representative that "the Constitution does not guarantee you the right to walk down the street unmolested." She said enforcement under both the Carter and Reagan administrations has been dismal and going backward.

As Dr. Berry noted in an editorial page article in The New York Times, entitled "Sabotaging Rights," the CRC's real crime is that it has "challenged Mr. Reagan who has professed support of civil rights while advocating or promoting methods and machinery designed to undermine civil rights enforcement." And while the window-dressing provided by the crowning of Miss Williams and the journey into space of Mr. Bluford is being used to cover the dismantling of the CRC, the battle to maintain the CRC in its present composition is not over. Already the government has been forced to retreat on the King Holiday Bill and several other issues because of the heightened political activity of the African-American people.

## Battle Still Not Over

Fortunately, the CRC has not halted its criticisms of the Reagan administration despite the redbaiting now underway against its most outspoken member. Last week the commission issued a 190-page report stating that two years of fiscal austerity and staff reductions (read Reaganomics) have seriously eroded the enforcement of civil rights by the government. The report pinpointed a noticeable decline in enforcement at six agencies: the Departments of Justice, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Even the number of employees at these agencies declined over 21% to 6,575. With Senate committee hearings due to decide on the President's nominees or the bill HR2230 sometime this week, the CRC has kept up its fighting image. No amount of window-dressing, smokescreens, or Presidential protestations of standing for the rights of African-Americans has fooled the masses of people.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

# Reagan's Nominees

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At the same time, Democrats like Walter Mondale have sought to reall the Civil Rights Movement in their campaign speeches. They have also attempted to exploit the public's negative perception of the Republican Party as anti-Black. The Democrats have even jumped on the anti-apartheid bandwagon through the Solarz bill and the Berman amendment that collectively curtail U.S. investment in South Africa. The Democrats' actions have been just as sinister. Fearing the tremendous momentum resulting from Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaign, the bourgeoisie has employed old liberal George McGovern to divert and siphon off progressive white support for a Jackson campaign.

Both parties have been put on the defensive by recent political events such as the Washington mayoral victory in Chicago and the increasing Black voter registration. Jesse Jackson's recent trip around the world, during which he condemned both parties for their criminal treatment of African-Americans, received major coverage in the overseas press. He reiterated these sentiments in his domestic speeches. But the capitalists have no answers — they can't grant any concessions. At most, they can only applaud and promote symbols such as the first Black astronaut and the first Black Miss America!

Even with the sending of the first Black astronaut into space, the U.S. lags behind the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. sent a person of African descent into space three years ago. America has had Blacks in its space program for over 21 years, but only chose now to send a Black into space. And the man that was picked, Guion Bluford, Jr., a Vietnam veteran, almost didn't make it. In several articles written about him, he tells of how teachers warned him he'd never make it to college. They told him Blacks should not set their sights so high. But Bluford persevered. And in spite of an America that steers African-American men exclusively into the military as foot soldiers, sports, or entertainment as the principal means of advancement, he chose to pursue a career in a scientific/technical field that is nonetheless defense-related.

Miss Williams, the new Miss America, was one of four Black women in this year's contest. Her family was the first Black family in the tiny middle-class township of Millwood, New York. She maintains that she never suffered any discrimination although she "always felt like I had to work 150% harder to achieve success." Unlike the past Miss Americas, Miss Williams displayed an intelligence and thoughtfulness uncommon to Miss America contestants. Her support for the ERA, right of women to abortion if they so choose, for making Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a national holiday and anti-nuclear arms stand distinguished her from the other contestants.

For these reasons her later naivete over the fact that suddenly two Black finalists existed when for over 62 years, even during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, none made the final selection process, is surprising and disappointing. And when Albert Marks, the pageant chairman of the board, said that Miss Williams' crowning "proves that you can be tops in America without regard to your color. . . I can assure you that this young lady got there on her merits," he confirms the American credo of being the "land of opportunity." His comments subscribe to the prevailing attitudes advanced by the Reagan administration and those, from Senator Daniel Moynihan to Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, who call for a policy of "colorblindness."

## The Ultimate Unreality

The ruling class will try to use Miss Williams to foster the illusion that the U.S. is indeed the land of opportunity and is colorblind, as she

tours the world as the country's goodwill ambassador. Bluford is already touring the college campuses and high schools to drum up support and interest among Blacks for the U.S. space/defense program, a program that is part of the military budget sucking our neighborhoods dry. In this sense, the bourgeoisie's victories are really window-dressing to disguise the real essence of the bourgeoisie's treatment of Blacks.

The crowning of a Black Miss America at a time when Black mothers cannot feed their children, having one Black in space when millions of Blacks can't find jobs on earth — this

is proclaimed as proof of the gains African-Americans have made. This is the ultimate in unreality. Yet despite the glowing comments of some prominent Black leaders, the masses of African-Americans are not misled. The government's, especially the present administration's, list of crimes against African-Americans is endless. The attack on Black elected officials who chart independent courses, like Eddie Carter of Tchula, Mississippi, and the administration's support of federal tax exemptions for private schools that engage in racial discrimination, are just two recent events that have been beat back by groundswells of protest. □



This first black Miss America, center, poses with the runner-ups.

# Black Women

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

But the slanderous images with which we have had to contend for centuries still persist today. Ironically, this was evident because just as the pageant was occurring, a group of entertainers and artists, including actor Sidney Poitier, writer Maya Angelou and other Blacks and Hispanics, went before the House Energy and Telecommunications Subcommittee to denounce TV's negative portrayals and lack of portrayals of Hispanics, Blacks, and other minorities. One example was the implausibility of there being no Chicanos or Mexicans on *Dallas*. Maya Angelou noted that "the data simply support the fact that Black artists do not work in film and television." Those who do appear conform to certain images and are only acceptable in specific roles. And those roles and images are fashioned for Blacks by the Hollywood movie moguls, marketing experts, etc., and perpetuate racist stereotypes.

On television, the roles reserved for Blacks include those of Man Friday (TC on *Magnum*), buffoons of various stripes and sexes (George Jefferson, Neil Carter's maid on *Gimme A Break*, and the new show *Sabu*). Working class Black families are nowhere to be seen. The only respectable Black characters appear on the show in which all other Blacks and Hispanics are criminals, gang members, prostitutes, or pimps, namely Mike Warren and Taureen Blaque on *Hill St. Blues*. The only good Blacks are cops, agents, etc., in the government's employ. Women have undoubtedly fared the worst. The mini-series *Shogun* and other movies still show Asian women as exotic and submissive. On TV., Black women are invariably whores or heavy-set mammy types.

## Black Miss America Draws Double Reaction

Again it seems that Blacks are acceptable only in certain roles, types and with certain looks. As thousands of African-American men and women noted in phone calls to radio talk shows and in letters to editorial pages of various Black publications, a poor Black woman with dark skin, an Afro or cornrow hairstyle rather than a fair-complexioned and straight-haired

woman of middle-class background would never win Miss America. I believe many of us were really hurt by the remarks of runner-up Suzette Charles who maintained that she was not Black because her father was Italian. For many of us, it recalled an earlier period when some lighter-skinned Blacks would say they were Indian, Latino or anything but Black. Are these women truly representative of today's African-American women, most of whom are proud of their African heritage, not ashamed of it?

Still other women linked the crowning of Miss Williams and the second place showing of Miss Charles as two more insults in a long line of indignities dealt Black women. Most folks seemed to be saying that in America's eyes the beautiful Black woman is still limited to one type. Yet the years of mainly forced and enforced miscegenation have made us truly a people of the rainbow. And the differences in treatment accorded different skin-colored Blacks was a quantitative one by the slave-master and then the capitalist to keep us divided as a people.

Sister Lena Horne noted that through all her years in Hollywood the beautiful Black woman was whatever type was closest to the white ideal. And even then the fair-skinned and the dark-skinned were treated abominably. Fair-skinned actress Dorothy Dandridge was primarily portrayed as the tragic mulatto who because she was supposedly part-white and part-Black could only be a prostitute or a temptress. Remember has as Carmen and Bess? The dark-skinned Black woman was always cast as the Mammy type like Hattie McDaniel. Both actresses could never become leading movie stars in the mold of an Ava Gardner or Lana Turner. Lena Horne recalled the ultimate indignities done her in Hollywood in her one-woman play *Lena* when she lost out on a major role in the film *Pinkie* to white actress Jeanne Crain. The play was about a Black woman trying to pass and later come to grips with her Black heritage. Light-skinned or dark-skinned, the Black woman has been the object of scorn and ridicule by the white media, the image-makers.

## "Blame the pageant, not Black women"

In reviewing the Miss America contest, J. Morris Anderson, executive director of the Miss Black America pageant, noted "if you put all of them (the Miss America contestants) in the same bag, they would fit into the same mold, physically and culturally." In the Miss Black America pageant the diversity of Black womanhood is celebrated. Contestants include sisters of all colors, shades, hairstyles and class backgrounds.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

# Black Women

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

The pageant came into being during the '70s, partly in response to the continuing negative portrayals and racist exclusion of Black women. But mainly the pageant appeared as a reinforcement of national pride. As such, contestants could not be silly bubbleheads but talented with a certain commitment to African-American people.

It is an insult to say that we must wait for white approval to assign a value or label to anything. One need only look at how Bo Derek's wearing of cornrows in the movie *10* suddenly made the cornrow a somewhat acceptable hairstyle in the eyes of whites. But Blacks have known and worn cornrows for years in the style of our African ancestors who originated the style centuries ago.

Many Blacks still believe a light-skinned mate is qualitatively better than a dark-skinned one, a notion pushed in both some Black and white media, unfortunately. So you have a talented singer like Stephanie Mills attempting to "straighten out her nose" because she believes a flat nose is ugly and would hold her back from making it in the business. And you have her being actually proud of the fact that she knows nothing about Martin Luther King or Malcolm X.

As Joseph Lowery, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, commented, "Blame the pageant, not Black women for taking years to recognize that intelligence, talent and beauty are not exclusive properties of any racial or ethnic group." From W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey to Marian Anderson and Cicely Tyson, Blacks have been proud of their heritage and their variety. Our continued struggle in the different movements and the presentation of positive, strong Black images to our children are the only ways to defeat the negative views used against all women, especially those of color. Ultimately it will take the destruction of the capitalist system that gains by perpetuating these stereotypes to give us the best chance to wipe them all out. □

# Black Astronaut

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

the third world changed all that. These movements put America on trial before the world. This "land of the free" had to start practicing what it preached, at least in appearance. The U.S. ruling class, still economically and politically able to make concessions due to the relative stabilization of capitalism, was forced to erase all visual legal vestiges of racial segregation. Black faces began appearing in places where they never appeared before.

At that time a Black figure in certain positions had more meaning for the African-American community as whole since we viewed our struggle as a fight against Jim Crow and for integration. We would later call many of these people — from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall to Government Information Office columnist Carl Rowan — "tokens" and even worse, "Toms." But getting these Blacks in high positions were concessions.

And just like all other reforms wrested from the capitalist system, such as the Voting Rights Act, open admissions, the Civil Rights Act, and affirmative action, to name a few, they did help some African-Americans "break through" in several fields once closed to us. On the surface even such lily-white cultural and technical/defense institutions as the Miss America Beau-

ty Contest of NASA opened up to minorities. Thirteen years ago, Cheryl Browns, Miss Iowa, became the first Black contestant in the pageant. Yet no Black contestant even made finalist. In 1962, Ed Dwight, a Black, was appointed to the space program by the late President John F. Kennedy. Dwight did not stay long. Racism, rampant throughout American institutions, forced him out a few years later. Clearly, "opening up" really meant that a few Blacks could nominally participate but never lead or win.

With the '70s came the worsening economic plight of African-Americans. We found that even with Blacks holding positions across the board, our lives got no better. As Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and the Black Panthers stated, our problem was the system itself. The agenda for the following decades had to be liberation and not token integration.

## Reacting to Grassroots Uprising

This viewpoint has been reinforced over the last two years by the changes in social security, unemployment, welfare and other social service agencies' regulations. These changes have resulted in harsh cutbacks that have hit all Americans hard. But they have hit the Black community the hardest. Resistance to these cutbacks has more and more assumed the form of a greater participation in electoral politics. In particular, the victory of Harold Washington in Chicago and the as-yet unannounced Presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson has spurred renewed fervor for political activity. As with the Black Liberation Movement of the late '60s and early '70s, this increasingly organized political activity encourages political movement among other, previously ignored, sectors of the population such as the Chicanos of the Southwest. It also impacts on white America. Now it will be polarized to take stands on sticking with the same old garbage shoveled out by the two major parties or work and vote for a Black candidate.

The Democratic and Republican parties are reacting to these events too. But the government — due to the rapid destabilization of capitalism since the '70s — can and will no longer give any real concessions to deal with the problems of unemployment, education and the like. In fact, both parties united in transferring monies once earmarked for the social services to the already-bloated military budget. To maintain the capitalist system, the parties, as representatives for the capitalist class, must undermine or deter all opposition to it. As always this involves the dual tactics of the carrot and the stick.

## Window Dressing to Appease the Masses

Both Democrats and Republicans give the appearance of responding to the misery of African-Americans. The Republican administration of Ronald Reagan is perceived by most Americans as being anti-Black and unsympathetic to the poor. Thus far, the administration has appointed Blacks supporting the President's policies to head the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, the Civil Rights Commission, and other areas of government. A flurry of Black political activity pushed the Reagan administration to file its first school desegregation suit against the state of Alabama. After Jesse Jackson and other civil rights leaders planned to carry out massive voter registration drives in Mississippi, the Justice Department asked a federal court to enforce the Voting Rights Act in two Mississippi counties. Reagan has now even promised to sign into law a bill mandating January 15, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, as a national holiday when the bill passes Congress.

At the same time, Democrats like Walter Mondale have sought to recall the Civil Rights Movement in their campaign speeches. They have also attempted to exploit the public's negative perception of the Republican Party as anti-Black. The Democrats have even jumped on the anti-apartheid bandwagon through the Solarz bill and the Berman amendment that collectively curtail U.S. investment in South Africa. The Democrats' actions have been just as sinister. Fearing the tremendous momentum resulting from Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaign, the bourgeoisie has employed old liberal George McGovern to divert and siphon off progressive white support for a Jackson campaign.

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Black voter registration. Jesse Jackson's recent trip around the world, during which he condemned both parties for their criminal treatment of African-Americans, received major coverage in the overseas press. He reiterated these sentiments in his domestic speeches. But the capitalists have no answers — they can't grant any concessions. At most, they can only applaud and promote symbols such as the first Black astronaut and the first Black Miss America!

Even with the sending of the first Black astronaut into space, the U.S. lags behind the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. sent a person of African descent into space three years ago. America has had Blacks in its space program for over 21 years, but only chose now to send a Black into space. And the man that was picked, Guion Bluford, Jr., a Vietnam veteran, almost didn't make it. In several articles written about him, he tells of how teachers warned him he'd never make it to college. They told him Blacks should not set their sights so high. But Bluford persevered. And in spite of an America that steers African-American men exclusively into the military as foot soldiers, sports, or entertainment as the principal means of advancement, he chose to pursue a career in a scientific/technical field that is nonetheless defense-related.

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## The Ultimate Unreality

The ruling class will try to use Miss Williams to foster the illusion that the U.S. is indeed the land of opportunity and is colorblind, as she tours the world as the country's goodwill ambassador. Bluford is already touring the college campuses and high schools to drum up support and interest among Blacks for the U.S. space/defense program, a program that is part of the military budget sucking our neighborhoods dry. In this sense, the bourgeoisie's victories are really window-dressing to disguise the real essence of the bourgeoisie's treatment of Blacks.

The crowning of a Black Miss America at a time when Black mothers cannot feed their children, having one Black in space when millions of Blacks can't find jobs on earth — this is proclaimed as proof of the gains African-Americans have made. This is the ultimate in unreality. Yet despite the glowing comments of some prominent Black leaders, the masses of African-Americans are not misled. The government's, especially the present administration's, list of crimes against African-Americans is endless. The attack on Black elected officials who chart independent courses, like Eddie Carthan of Tchula, Mississippi, and the administration's support of federal tax exemptions for private schools that engage in racial discrimination, are just two recent events that have been beat back by groundswells of protest. □

# Reviewing *Devil On The Cross*

## Ngugi's new novel dedicated "to all Kenyans struggling against neo-colonialism"

**BARRY RODNEY**

*The following is a review of Devil on the Cross, a new novel by Kenyan revolutionary Ngugi wa Thiong'o recently translated into English. It has stirred much debate and interest among various anti-imperialist forces in the U.S. — Editor.*

With the publication of *Petals of Blood* in 1977, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o firmly established himself as not only one of the best writers in Africa, but as one of the most politically conscious and committed writers in the third world. With the publication of his latest novel, *Devil on the Cross*, which is dedicated "to all Kenyans struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism," it is almost certain that the same bourgeois critics who praised his earlier work will issue forth with the same charges that are, and always have been, made against any writer who dares to use his art to explicitly and consciously expose the struggles of exploited peoples against a system that exploits, brutalizes, and degrades them, especially if the system that is attacked is capitalism. The charges are familiar: "didactic," "simplistic," "moralistic," "sentimental," "primitive," etc.

Thematically the two works are essentially the same in that they both explore the nature and effects of neo-colonialism in Africa. Yet, they are fundamentally different in style and presentation. The most radical difference is that while *Petals of Blood* was written in English, and primarily directed towards either a Western audience or the English-speaking national bourgeoisie or petty-bourgeoisie in Anglophone Africa, *Devil on the Cross* was originally written and published in Gikuyu, the language of the largest tribal group in Kenya, and later translated by the author into English. This indicates that its primary audience is intended to be the workers and peasants of Kenya, who, throughout the colonial period, despite the massive "educational" efforts of the English-speaking colonizers, have retained their native language and culture. (Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian novelist, would mislabel Ngugi's choice of languages in this case "ethnocentric," but that debate is beyond the immediate scope of this review.)

Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike (the so-called "Boleka-ja" — meaning "Come down, let's fight" — critics from Nigeria), in their work, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, are perhaps correct to argue that "language is not

the crucial factor in determining the national or regional literature to which a particular work belongs," but it is also true that one's choice of language in a colonized country is a difficult political and cultural problem that cannot be dismissed lightly. And this fact is underscored by the number, and the intensity, of debates that have occurred, and continue to occur, around this issue in Africa and other third world countries where imperialism has forced a foreign language (and culture) upon indigenous peoples.

### Ngugi's Earlier Novel

*Petals of Blood*, like *Devil on the Cross*, is specifically concerned with, but not limited to, the social, political and economic developments and institutions in post-independence Africa. Ngugi is particularly concerned with exploring how the oppressed workers and peasants who fought so hard and long in Kenya for liberation from colonialism lost everything after the granting of independence and quickly found themselves again oppressed and dispossessed, this time by neo-colonialism. On another level, the novel explores the effects of industrialism, urbanization, and imperialism upon the pre-capitalist economic, social and cultural formations in rural Kenya.

Munira, one of the principal characters in the novel, asks: "What caused things to happen?" And this is the perspective from which we, the readers, are forced to view the fictional, yet real world of neo-colonial Africa that Ngugi confronts us with — "a world in which one could only be clean by wiping his dirt and shit and urine on others. A world in which one could only be healthy by making others carry one's leprosy. A world in which one could only be saintly and moral and upright by prostituting others."

One of the devices that Ngugi skillfully uses in this work to engage the reader in the search for answers is to use the Western form of the detective novel, and, in this context, he presents us with an intriguing "crime jigsaw puzzle." The novel opens with the murder of three of the "leading" citizens of the town of Ilmorog, the setting of both of the works we are discussing, and we follow the lives — not only of the four protagonists, Munira, Abdulla, Karega, and Wanja, who are suspected of the murders — but of Ilmorog itself as it grows from a small, pre-capitalist communal village to an industrial center built by the workers and peasants, but owned and controlled by "Imperialism: capitalism: landlords: earthworms. A system that bred hordes of round-bellied jiggers and bedbugs with parasitism and cannibalism as the highest goal in society."

We, of course, uncover the identity of the murderer and solve the crime; but, and more importantly, we are in the process exposed to the harsh, filthy and brutal reality of imperialism in post-independence Africa, and come away from the novel with many of the answers to Munira's question regarding the hows and whys of neo-colonialism. We also come away from the novel with a vision of the future. Abdulla's adopted son Joseph, near the end of the novel, returns home from school and tells his father who had participated in the Mau Mau movement: "You fought for the political independence of this country: I would like to contribute to the liberation of the people. . . . I have read about the people's revolutions in China, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Angola, Guinea, Mozambique. . . . Oh yes, and the works of Lenin and Mao. . . ."

Despite the fact that the subject matter and political perspective of *Petals of Blood* is fairly explicit, the novel was primarily written for a Western audience. And the work, unlike *Devil on the Cross*, reflects this fact. It is a long and

complex work operating on several levels of meaning, full of allusions to writers and works in the English and American literary traditions, including William Blake and Walt Whitman. Although, it should be noted that the references to these two writers are used, within a Western context, to add political depth to the novel.

### Literature for Whom and the Choice of Language

Mao Tse-Tung in his "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art," correctly argued from a Marxist/Leninist perspective that "the first problem is: literature and art for whom?" and answered that socialist "literature and art are first for the workers, the class that leads the revolution," and secondly for the peasants. It is clear that Ngugi wa Thiong'o has squarely faced the problem of "for whom?" posed by Mao in 1942, with respect to his literary work, and has, with the publication of his latest novel, *Devil on the Cross*, in Gikuyu, made a conscious political choice that is bound to have a major impact upon the debates that are being waged over this issue in Africa and the rest of the third world.

In his collection of political and literary essays, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*, Ngugi stated that: "denied language and a common culture, deprived of political and economic power, and without the corrective of an unbiased, and all-sided, educational system even after 'freedom' was regained, the uprooted black population looked to the white world for a pattern of life." As a corrective to this, he argued in an earlier essay that: "We want to create a revolutionary culture which is not narrowly confined by the limitations of tribal traditions or national boundaries but looks outward to Pan-Africa and the third world, and the needs of man." But warned that, "The national, the Pan-African, and the third world awareness must be transformed into a socialist programme, or be doomed to sterility and death." And this is what he has consciously set out to do in his most overtly political novel to date.

One aspect of Ngugi's latest work is, as we have already pointed out, the choice of language. Karl Marx observed in his work, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that "a beginner who has learnt a new language always translates back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can freely express himself in it only when he finds his way in it without recalling the old and forgets his native tongue in the use of the new." The danger implicit in this statement is obvious: once a language has been learned well enough to use it to create works of fiction, the culture and ideology that is imbedded within the new language is also assimilated, and unless the greatest care is exercised these too are translated into the new work. The other danger, not dealt with by Marx, is the fact that in such countries as Kenya, the choice to write in the colonizer's language means that the artist, at least as far as his work is concerned, turns his literary back to the most exploited and oppressed, those who have not been "assimilated" into the new culture and society that has been imposed on the colonized country, particularly the marginal workers and peasants.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Ngugi is concerned with exploring how the oppressed workers and peasants who fought so hard and long in Kenya for liberation from colonialism lost everything after the granting of independence and quickly found themselves again oppressed and dispossessed, this time by neo-colonialism.

# Devil on the Cross

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

## Devil on the Cross

*Devil on the Cross*, a shorter and much less complex work, is set in modern-day Kenya. Its narrative structure is a departure from that used in *Petals of Blood*, and is much closer to the oral tradition found in pre-colonial Africa. This seriously undermines the form and structure of the Western eurocentric novel that was imported into Africa through the educational system, a system designed to rob the colonized of their indigenous, and potentially revolutionary, history and culture; a system designed to educate those who could afford to pay the fee — “the African elite (the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie) whose self-appointed task is to make colonialism work” (*Homecoming*). “Colonial institutions,” Ngugi observed, “can only produce a colonial mentality.”

In this work the exploiters of “independent” Kenya, the comprador and national bourgeoisie, and the neo-colonial state they have helped to create and brutally maintain, are explicitly and dramatically exposed to those whom they exploit. It also exposes the role that the imperialist powers, the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan, play in the continued exploitation and corruption of post-independence Africa.

### A “Devil’s Feast”

A “Devil’s Feast” is being held in Ilmorog to select and honor experts in theft and robbery from among the ranks of the national and comprador bourgeoisie. The event is sponsored by their international benefactors in the advanced capitalist countries. And we, as readers, follow the lives of six travelers from Nairobi, who are witness of the event as it unfolds: Wariinga, the heroine of the novel, who is returning home after being fired from her job because she refused the sexual advances of her employer; Wangari, a heroic participant in the Mau Mau struggles against colonialism — penniless and dispossessed in neo-colonial Kenya; Muturi, a militant, tough and politically conscious worker who has been fired from his last job for organizing a strike; Gatuiria, a nationalist, who teaches music and is attempting to compose a symphony that will encompass and express the entire

history of the people’s struggle against imperialism; Mwireri wa Mukiraai, a petty-bourgeois businessman who will be a participant in the contest; and the bus driver, Mwaura, a lumpen-proletarian who is a paid enforcer (and killer) for the national bourgeoisie.

Juxtaposed against the four revolutionary characters stands those who are vying for the honor of being crowned the best thief and robber in Kenya by the imperialists, and the whole imperialist system of theft and robbery that is responsible for the enslavement of Africa and the rest of the third world. The characters that confront us at the “Devil’s Feast” are little more than caricatures that come close to allegory, and this aspect of the novel is sure to incite the wrath of the Western literary critics, who like their characters to be “rounded,” “dynamic,” “complex,” and “ambiguous.” But, within the context of the novel, the African oral tradition, and Ngugi’s intended audience, the characterizations of the competitors are inherently correct and structurally sound.

### Characters Represent Traits of Classes

For example, one of the contestants, Nditika wa Nguunji, a representative of the comprador bourgeoisie, is described as being: “very fat. His head was huge, like a mountain. His belly hung over his belt, big and arrogant. His eyes were the size of two large red electric bulbs, and looked as if they had been placed on his face by a creator impatient to get on with another job. His hair was parted in the middle, so that the hair on either side of the parting looked like two ridges facing each other on either side of a tarmac road. He had on a black suit. The jacket had tails cut in the shape of the wings of the big green and blue flies that are normally found in the pit latrines or among rotting rubbish. . . . His hands rested on his stomach and he patted it gently, as if beseeching it not to stick out towards the people with such arrogance.”

During the course of his testimony, we learn that Nguunji is a landlord who brags that “most of the laborers who dig up the grass on my farms are the very people who once took up blunt swords and home-made guns, claiming they were fighting for freedom.” He concludes his presentation by stating: “We all fought for freedom in different ways, for different sides. What’s wrong with the way things are? Let’s all forget the past. All that business of fighting for freedom was just a bad dream, a meaningless nightmare. Let’s join hands to do three things: to grab, to extort money and to confiscate. The Holy Trinity of theft: Grabbing, Extortion and Confiscation. If you find anything belonging to the masses, don’t leave it behind. . . .”

Each of the participants, as they give their testimony, receives the applause of the audience, except for the petty bourgeois businessman Mwireri wa Mukiraari, who, in his presentation, states that: “We, the national experts in theft and robbery, should not join hands with foreigners to help them to seize our national wealth and carry it back to their own countries, leaving us only a few crumbs, the price of the heritage they have taken from us.” He argues: “Let’s not be their spies, their watchdogs, their disciples, their soldiers, the overseers of their lairs and stores in our own land. Let them leave us alone to exploit our own national fields.”

Upon hearing this, pandemonium breaks out, not only among the representatives of the imperialists from the United States, Western Europe, and Japan, but among the comprador bourgeoisie, who threaten to kill him on the spot. Before this occurs a recess is called, and we learn later that the bus driver Mwaura is hired to arrange a fatal accident for the unsuspecting Mwireri. The author uses Mwireri to expose the historical and political limitations of the African national bourgeoisie, and the fallacy of those who argue against socialist revolution and for a peaceful transition to economic and political independence in third world countries via independent capitalist development.

Enraged by the obscene spectacle of the proceedings, Wangari, the patriotic but naive heroine of the Mau Mau movement, notifies the local police and demands that they arrest the self-proclaimed thieves and robbers of Kenya, only to find herself thrown into jail for daring to challenge the black exploiters, pimps, and despoilers of her people. Muturi, the class conscious worker, organizes the workers and peasants of Ilmorog to attack the participants, but first the police and then the army intervenes and breaks up the demonstration. During all of this, Wariinga is radicalized, and the novel ends with her shooting and wounding two of the participants of the Feast, killing Gatuiria’s father who seduced her as a child, and preparing for “the hardest struggles of her life’s journey (that) lay ahead. . . .”

Marx and Engels always placed a high value on literature. And Engels, like Marx, particularly admired the works of Balzac, from whom he had learned more about the history of French society than “from all the professed historians, economists and statisticians of the period together.” The same thing is also true of the novels of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and anyone wishing to understand neo-colonialism and its impact upon third world countries and peoples should set aside for a few hours the histories and statistics, and critically read these two novels. □

## REMEMBER THE GREENSBORO MASSACRE

Park Slope United Methodist Church,  
8th Street and 6th Avenue, Brooklyn, New York

Join with us to honor the lives and sacrifices of the Communist Workers Party 5 on the fourth anniversary of their assassinations at the hands of the Klan, Nazis and government agents on Nov. 3, 1979.

### BILL SAMPSON

Shop Steward, Amalgamated  
Clothing & Textile Workers  
Union, Local 1391, Greensboro, N.C.

### SANDI SMITH

Chairperson, Textile Union  
Organizing Committee  
Greensboro, N.C.

### JIM WALLER

President, Amalgamated Clothing  
& Textile Workers Union, Local 113T  
Haw River, N.C.

### CESAR CAUCE

Leader, Duke Hospital Organizing  
Committee, Durham, N.C.

### DR. MIKE NATHAN

Chief Pediatrician  
Community Health Clinic, Durham, N.C.

### SPEAKERS

### DALE SAMPSON

Greensboro Justice Fund,  
Widow of Bill Sampson

### DR. PAUL BERMANZOHN

CWP member critically  
wounded on Nov. 3, 1979

MUSIC BY THE HUMAN CONDITION

**Nov. 3, 1983 Thurs. 7:30 PM**



The Orlando Valore family in Slickville, PA. Pfc. Terry Valore (left) was injured in the Beirut bombing and 2nd Lt. Orlando Jr. is now in Grenada. Bring the Marines home!

## Grenada

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

quested by school chancellor Dr. Charles Modica, whose office is in Bay Shore, Long Island. School spokesman Arthur Massolo said that when the campus ran out of water on Thursday ("not unusual on the island"), the army arranged for two fire trucks to bring in water. "We are in contact with people inside the new government and so far they have been very cooperative," said Massolo.

In spite of all this, the U.S. government still proceeded with the invasion.

Chancellor Modica had been in regular contact with officials of both governments and had even helped three U.S. State Department officials enter Grenada on October 22. Upon hearing of the invasion, Dr. Modica said, "I am still extremely concerned for the safety of the students. I think the President has taken some very unnecessary action in view of the fact that those students could have been lifted out of there today and tomorrow with arrangements we had made with the U.S. Embassy and the Canadian authorities." Modica said that students and teachers are more endangered by the invasion than by any threat from the Grenadan government, and that if any are killed or wounded, "President Reagan should be held accountable."

### U.S. Twists Law to Suit Own Order

Reagan's second reason for the attack was to restore "law and order" and "governmental institutions. . . where a brutal group of leftist thugs violently seized power, killing the Prime Minister, three Cabinet ministers, two labor leaders and other civilians, including children." The U.S. imperialists are always fond of citing "law and order" whenever they can twist the law to serve their own order. In this case, the U.S. government is in violation of international laws. The invasion violates the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS). The Charter (Treaty of Rio) prohibits any "state or group of states" from intervening "directly or indirectly, for any reason whatsoever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state" by "armed force" or other means. This clause can be overridden only by a two-thirds majority. Both the U.S. and Grenada are signatories to the treaty.

When asked why the U.S. bypassed the OAS, Secretary of State Shultz said the legal basis for the invasion lay in the 1981 treaty which established the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). That treaty calls for "arrangements for collective security against external aggression." But even with this the U.S. is in outlaw territory. First, neither the U.S., Jamaica nor Barbados are members of the OECS, though Grenada is. Thus, the OAS Charter should take precedence in U.S.-Grenadan relations. Second, despite government "suspicions" of Soviet and Cuban involvement in Grenada and the accusations made by the media and the AFL-CIO — no U.S. official has seriously justified the invasion as due to an external threat. Shultz himself admitted that this "is not the basis of this action on our part.

Finally, the OEC's treaty says that the decision among the seven member states to take collective security measures must be "unanimous." Obviously, Grenada did not agree to the invasion, but neither did St. Kitts-Nevis or Montserrat. The real reason the U.S. did not consult the OAS is the fact that the Reagan administration would never have gotten the necessary two-thirds support for an invasion.

### U.S. to Restore Neo-Colonialism

Reagan is playing on people's confusion over recent struggles within the Grenadan leadership to disguise the imperialist intent. The government the imperialists would restore in Grenada is that of British governor-general Paul Scoon. Scoon, appointed by Queen Elizabeth II, is a Grenadan citizen whose role as the Queen's representative in the Commonwealth nation has obviously been limited in revolutionary Grenada. The majority of Grenadans are Black and English-speaking, the descendants of African slaves imported to work the French-owned sugar and spice plantations. It became a British colony in 1783 and gained formal independence in 1974. According to Reagan officials, Scoon will be put in power and will in turn appoint a provisional government for the country. The imperialists are trying to manipulate the worldwide confusion over the circumstances of Prime Minister Bishop's death to crush the revolutionary movement and people that lived for and to restore neo-colonialist rule.

More dangerous than the government's justification for the invasion, and feeding into it, is a view that blames the victims of U.S. imperialist aggression and excuses the invasion by portraying it as somehow preventing more bloodshed in Grenada. But what did happen in Grenada prior to the U.S. invasion?

Clearly there were disagreements within the New Jewel (acronym for Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation) Movement, the ruling party which took power in 1979. Contrary to media reports, the Oct. 16 statement of the NJM Central Committee says that the differences were *not* over political and economic policies and direction. They say the leadership was united on a program to develop Grenada on the socialist road based on the concrete conditions faced by the country, of which the building of the new international airport for tourism was an important part. The struggle within the leadership has been over the principle of "collective leadership" and has been ongoing during the past year, the document states.

What makes this issue so emotionally volatile is the murky circumstances surrounding Bishop's and other leaders' deaths. Bishop was immensely popular among the Grenadan people. The 39-year-old Bishop became a revolutionary under the influence of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s. He was once a member of the African Liberation Support Committee. With a vision of a post-colonial Grenada based on human needs, Bishop

once said, "But I don't think that can be done in the system we have got now, which as far as I am concerned, is inherently exploitive." He studied in London for a while and returned to Grenada in 1970, setting up a law practice with Bernard Coard. Bishop became an active organizer among the workers and poor, and was an early leader of the New Jewel Movement. In 1973, his father Rupert was murdered by police during a demonstration against then-Prime Minister Sir Eric Geary. Bishop was elected to Parliament in 1976, and in March of 1979 replaced Geary when the NJM took over and formed the People's Revolutionary Government.

Grenadan representatives in the U.S. maintain that despite Bishop's and other leaders' deaths, the party would still have been able to sort things out and resolve the differences to the masses' satisfaction given adequate time. The U.S. invasion robbed the New Jewel Movement of that time.

Prior to the Revolutionary People's government, Grenada had an unemployment rate of 49%, 55% of the population was illiterate, there was no university, only one high school was built in the preceding four centuries, and 77% of every dollar spent in Grenada was taken out of the country by U.S. or Canadian corporations. Under the revolutionary government, joblessness has been cut to 14%, illiteracy is down to 3%, there is now St. George's University, and the completion of the new airport would have brought in much needed foreign exchange through increased tourism. These gains would not have been possible without communist leadership. To capitulate to imperialism and denounce the revolution because there are unexpected twists and turns, difficulties and mistakes is like throwing the baby out with the bath water. It can only condemn the Grenadan people to untold misery, suffering and bloodshed.

### Caribbean Elections Upcoming

For four years, the U.S. imperialists have tried to isolate revolutionary Grenada economically and politically. For two years they have been waiting for an opportunity to attack it militarily. They have their chance and are doing so. This is a particularly timely moment for the U.S. to invade Grenada. Within the next 18 months, elections are scheduled for nearly every country in the Caribbean, with one or two exceptions. With its revolutionary leadership, the Grenadan economy was already stronger than most of its eastern Caribbean neighbors. St. Lucia and Antigua are among the poorest countries in the world. Dominica is the poorest English-speaking nation in the hemisphere. With the completion of the new airport nearing, Grenada was on the verge of being a model of economic development in the region.

Grenada's prestige would have affected the outcome in elections throughout the Caribbean Basin, especially where left-wing candidates are running. The outcome of elections in Surinam this year is an example of the trend the imperialists want to stop before it grows into a wildfire. This also explains in part why the Seaga government in Jamaica is so vehemently anti-Grenada — Seaga faces a serious challenge from the left.

At the same time, the U.S. attack on Grenada was inevitable; it was only a matter of time. The Caribbean, along with Central and South America, is the last area of the globe where the U.S. imperialists still maintain a sizeable foothold and where they can still reap megaprofits by superexploiting the people and resources. This is why imperialism must try to stamp out the fires of revolution where they exist and prevent them from igniting where they aren't yet apparent. Today, the U.S. has invaded Grenada, tomorrow, it could well be Nicaragua.

How many more Vietnams must there be? How much more blood must the people of the world shed to be free to determine their own destinies? How many more U.S. soldiers must die in far-off lands fighting people they don't know or hate, for a system which uses them as cannonfodder, a system that is politically, economically and morally bankrupt? No More!

**GRENADA FOR GRENADANS!**

**BRING THE MARINES HOME!**

**TODAY GRENADA,  
TOMORROW NICARAGUA —  
NO MORE VIETNAMS!**

# Mayor Carthan Is Free!

## Tchula mayor gets early release, but attacks on Black elected officials intensify

MIKE ALEXANDER

**T**o the joy of people in Mississippi and throughout the country, Mayor Eddie James Carthan of Tchula, Mississippi, is home again after being released from federal prison in Montgomery, Alabama on Oct. 13. Carthan, who has spent almost 13 months behind bars, was released after U.S. District Judge Walter Nixon granted a motion by defense attorney Johnnie Walls and former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark to reduce his three-year sentence for "lying to an FDIC bank."

Nixon reduced the sentence to eight months and 21 days, which meant Eddie would have had to remain in jail until early December. However, according to federal authorities, he was eligible for "early release" because of "good time" acquired at the prison where he has been since last March. Under Nixon's order, Mayor Carthan must now spend a year on "unsupervised probation."

Typically, local media reports depicted the government as "benevolent" and "merciful" for granting early release to a "convicted felon." A bigger lie has never been told.

The all-out attempt to frame Eddie Carthan, send him to Mississippi's gas chamber last November, and make him an example of what happens to Black elected officials who fight in the interests of Black and poor people, was blunted only by the determined resistance of Eddie Carthan and the Tchula 7's supporters around the country. In the course of the struggle, Mayor Carthan became a national symbol of the long fight of Afro-American people for self-determination in the South, against the kangaroo courts and racist violence that are being used once again to thwart their battle for basic rights.

When noted Black poet Maya Angelou led the 400,000 marchers at the Lincoln Memorial in a moment of silence for Mayor Carthan on Aug. 27 at the historic March on Washington, it crystallized the fact that Eddie Carthan would not be forgotten, but would continue to grow in the consciousness of all justice-loving people, spurring the movement forward.

### Carthan Refused to Be Broken

On Sept. 1, when the motion for reduction of sentence was argued, Judge Nixon heard testimony from, among others, Shirley Carthan,

Eddie's wife, who has struggled to maintain the family's convenience store and raise their three young daughters under intense pressure since Eddie's incarceration, pressure made worse by an audit by the Internal Revenue Service.

Current Hinds County Supervisor Bennie Thompson, himself the object of grand jury scrutiny when he was elected the first Black mayor of Bolten, Mississippi, and now publicly called "uncooperative" and "isolated" for standing up for the rights of his constituents as a member of the Board of Supervisors, also testified, as did Black Mayor Robert Grey of Shelby. Nixon noted the receipt of hundreds of letters and petitions urging that Mayor Carthan be freed.

In the motion, Walls and Clark pointed to the tremendous suffering heaped upon Eddie's family, including his father who is hospitalized with cancer and was unable to visit Mayor Carthan or help support his family. Most importantly, they maintained that Eddie Carthan is innocent, and was indicted four times, including for murder, after he became mayor at age 27 and worked to improve the lives of Tchula's poverty-stricken 80% Black majority.

Assistant U.S. Attorney James Tucker argued that the motion should be denied on the grounds that Carthan "still, as of today, maintains his innocence. That's ample, in and of itself, to deny a motion for reduction of sentence." In other words, Carthan refuses to be broken, so he should stay in jail. But it is precisely because he refused to give in to the government's massive assault, and people everywhere rallied to his defense, that Eddie Carthan is still alive and now reunited with his family and friends.

He returned home to a town that's once again firmly under the control of the white minority. There is only one Black on the Board of Aldermen now. There is little difference between Tchula and Johannesburg, South Africa.

### Attacks on Black Leaders Intensifying

Mayor Carthan's release comes at a time when the government is actually intensifying its attack on Black leaders in Mississippi. The week before Carthan's release, a state jury of 11 whites and one Black acquitted Percy Hall, a Black, of the cold-blooded murder of Pertis Williams, a Black candidate for supervisor in Lincoln County who was slain on Aug. 15. Williams, along

with other Blacks, had challenged the county's redistricting plan, and was attempting to become the only Black supervisor in the county.

According to state senator Henry Kirksey, Williams' murder was a political assassination, a point confirmed by Hall's speedy acquittal by a nearly all-white jury in a county that's 30% Black. Kirksey said Hall actually waited for Williams to arrive at Williams' place of business (premeditation), shot him once in the chest, walked over and pumped four more slugs into his back. The prosecutor was a former assistant of the man who handled Hall's defense. The lone Black juror was once convicted of a felony himself and had served time at the state penitentiary at Parchman, which should have disqualified him for jury duty.

Kirksey telegraphed the Justice Department calling for an immediate investigation into the jury selection process in Mississippi. The Justice Department has already denied a request by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, among others, to investigate Williams' murder.

Meanwhile, in Claiborne County, Black county attorney Everett Sanders prepared to go on trial Oct. 19 for allegedly "giving advice against the interests of the county" to three Black school board members who are being subjected to recall proceedings initiated by whites trying to regain control of the public school system. Sanders, and former school superintendent John Noble who was charged with embezzlement, were both indicted by a grand jury that was 65% white in a county that's 70% Black.

On Saturday, Oct. 15, at a rally in Port Gibson, Miss., in their defense, a host of Black leaders including Senator Kirksey, Supervisor Thompson, National Black Organizers' Conference co-convenor and Delta Ministry Director Owen Brooks, attorney Johnnie Walls, Shelby, Miss. Mayor Robert Grey and others pledged their support. All pointed out that any Black official who is committed to improving the lives of Black people will come under attack. Further, they each have the determination and capability to rally Black people to fight back.

They made it clear that the full-blown attack on Black elected officials in Mississippi is not going unchallenged. As Owen Brooks said, "We are engaged in a struggle for survival." □

## PHIL THOMPSON

### SPEAKING ON

## JESSE JACKSON '84

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