

# BREAKTHROUGH

POLITICAL JOURNAL OF  
PRAIRIE FIRE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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**1868**

US GOVERNMENT FORCED TO RECOGNIZE SOVEREIGNTY  
OF GREAT SIOUX NATION IN FORT LARAMIE TREATY



**1973**

US GOVERNMENT INVADERS INDEPENDENT OGLALA  
(SIOUX) NATION AT WOUNDED KNEE

**SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION  
FOR INDIAN NATIONS!**

**INSIDE:**

The Guardian Sets Out to Build  
Itself a Party (PFOC Critique)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Editorial Statement  
Introducing *BREAKTHROUGH* No. 2  
by Prairie Fire Organizing Committee .....p. 1
2. On the Conviction of Leonard Peltier  
with a reprint of a support statement by the  
Native Study Group of Vancouver, British Columbia.....p. 4
3. The *Guardian* Sets Out to Build Itself a Party  
a PFOC critique — First of a series .....p. 9
4. The *Guardian* on Women's "Emancipation":  
—A proposal to move backwards  
by Flynn and friends.....p. 15
5. *BURNING SPEAR*  
reprints from the African People's Socialist Party  
on Bourgeois Ideology on the Left  
and on Women in Struggle .....p. 22
6. Assata Convicted  
with a message from Assata .....p. 31
7. Lenin on Guerrilla Warfare .....p. 34
8. A Comment on Puerto Rico Solidarity Work  
by some members of PFOC .....p. 40

## WHO WE ARE

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC) is a young and growing communist organization situated in the white oppressor nation in the United States. Our politics, revolutionary anti-imperialism, are rooted in dialectical and historical materialism, the science and ideology of Marxism-Leninism. PFOC is committed to building socialist revolution, which is the essential first step toward a worldwide communist society. To achieve this ultimate goal requires the total destruction of imperialism, opportunism and revisionism, and white and male supremacy. Meanwhile there must also be a revolutionary communist party or parties within the US in order to bring about the defeat of imperialism. We define party building as the central task for white communists at the present time. Our political journal, *BREAKTHROUGH*, is joining the struggle for revolutionary anti-imperialist, Marxist-Leninist politics and practice as a necessary part of building communist organization.

We understand that all forms of struggle, including armed struggle, are necessary to bring down US imperialism. PFOC's view of working class organizing in this period is to situate ourselves where white and male supremacy and privilege can be clearly identified and struggled against, and where white workers can be won to unite with national liberation struggles and women's struggles. We want to win white working class women and men to understand that these struggles—and their victories—are critical and leading blows against the US imperialist state. It is only through the development of a revolutionary anti-imperialist consciousness and movement in the oppressor nation that we will be able to successfully participate and lead our class to take part in the world-wide revolution that is currently being

cont'd to p.48

# INTRODUCING BREAKTHROUGH NO. 2

## PRAIRIE FIRE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The major content of our first issue of *BREAKTHROUGH* (Mar. 1977) was the Provisional Political Statement of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee. We see that statement as a significant contribution to the two line struggle that is raging in the left, especially the white oppressor nation left, in the United States.\* Our statement is a contribution *for* revolutionary anti-imperialist, Marxist-Leninist politics and *against* the opportunist, revisionist, white and male supremacist politics that dominate the white left today.

We published our Provisional Political Statement to break through the jumble of political positions that exist now in the white left. Through painful experience over the past couple of years we have learned that it is possible to give many forms of left cover to opportunist politics. At bottom, however, there are only two political lines to choose between for women and men who are serious about socialist revolution.

Either we unite with the forces inside and outside the US fighting for national liberation, sovereignty and self-determination, or we fail to support the leading forces for world-wide revolution and socialism. Either we confront head-on US imperialism's system of white and

male supremacy in all its economic, political and ideological forms, or we don't. Either we fight for women's liberation and revolutionary women's leadership by combatting all forms of male supremacy and chauvinism or we will have failed to attack a major pillar of US imperialism. Either we struggle against gay oppression by fighting the system of male supremacy throughout the whole structure of imperialist society or we help perpetuate anti-gayness and women's oppression. No other political stand will lay the basis for building revolutionary class struggle in the white oppressor nation, or provide the possibility for uniting with the leading struggles of oppressed nations and women against the common enemy—US imperialism. No other politics can attack the structures of white and male supremacy that have historically led the white left to choose opportunism over revolution. These are not abstract questions. These are the choices which Viet Nam, Wounded Knee, Attica, Boston and Soweto have confronted us with. These are the politics which national liberation movements and leaders have raised most consistently and sharply within the United States.

Response to the publication and politics of *BREAKTHROUGH* No.1 is in its early stages, but it is encouraging. Many people have welcomed the presentation of an anti-imperialist line and the reaffirmation of the priority of national liberation struggles within the white left. Responses show that

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\* Another significant contribution to the two line struggle is the pamphlet "The Split of the Weather Underground Organization" recently published by the John Brown Book Club.

our Statement has begun to challenge the prevailing understanding of male supremacy within the white left. The other side of the response (presently larger in quantity) are the denunciations from those who feel threatened by these politics. This also is a sign that we are hitting the target in challenging opportunism. But it is also an indication of the depth and pervasiveness of opportunism in our movement and a reminder of the amount of struggle, work and commitment that are necessary to assure its defeat. We reject the criticisms of those who denounce us as sectarian and divisive for taking a strong stand against opportunism. But we accept and support criticisms that we need to learn to fight better and harder for revolutionary politics.

Overall we think issue No. 1 of *BREAKTHROUGH* was a positive first step and we will continue to circulate it and discuss its contents. But we are only at the beginning. We must extend our struggle against opportunism, responding to those forces that are leading the attack on anti-imperialist politics. We must develop and apply more fully our anti-imperialist analysis to the current situation of the US, the oppressor nation working class and movement. We must improve the way in which we present and struggle for our politics. We must help publicize and support the thinking and statements of Third World revolutionaries. Issue No. 2 of *BREAKTHROUGH* attempts to move forward in these areas. We also understand that line struggle only starts with the contents of our journal. Fighting for these politics in practice is the critical test of our commitment and capacity to unite with other revolutionary forces. Third World comrades have pushed us strongly to take up this responsibility.

There is no lack of opportunity to take up the fight. This is a critical period in US history and white revolutionaries face pressing choices. US imperialism, dying from the victories of national liberation and socialism around the world, is lashing out and intensifying its repressive attacks against national liberation struggles inside

the US: the stepped up FBI COINTELPRO assassinations of Native American and other revolutionary leaders and the brutal imprisonment of revolutionary leaders like Assata Shakur Sundiata Acoli, Leonard Peltier, the RNA Eleven and Geronimo Pratt; the increased threat to Native American resources contained in the US government's new "energy crisis" rip-off program (oil, coal and uranium); the frantic deportation and harassment of Mexicano and other undocumented workers by the Immigration and Naturalization Service police via its pass system, and the threat of more repression in the form of a computerized country-wide ID system; the attempt to revise relations with Puerto Rico and incorporate it more fully into the empire as a permanent colony; the strong-armed evictions of Asian people from their communities; the increasingly reactionary role of the Supreme Court through its reinstatement of capital punishment, the overturning of affirmative action in the California Bakke decision, and the denial of disability payments to pregnant women; the building of new maximum security prisons; the continued murder of Third World youths in their communities by police occupation forces; the unceasing attacks on Third World women in the prisons and in the communities like Joan Little, Inez Gargia, Dessie Woods and Yvonne Wanrow; the massive forced sterilization campaigns against Puerto Rican, Native American, Chicana, and Black women; the renewed activity of KKK lynch mobs and the incarceration of the Camp Pendleton 14. It is this reality of stepped up genocidal efforts to crush national liberation which Carter *et al* are desperately trying to cover with new form of double dealing strategies.

The Carter administration is moving it the right faster than Nixon and Ford were able to. It employs talk about the New South, and the neo-colonialism of Andre Young, to cover its increasingly belligerent and aggressive world politics. "Human rights" are cynically pushed while Carter is demonstratively flying in Air Force



Strategic Command airships, diving in submarines, and threatening to use atomic weapons on North Korea. We should take these signals seriously and fight harder to understand and oppose these mad-dog imperialists and to expose all their tricks.

These are issues on which white revolutionaries must take a correct stand, fighting on the side of the oppressed peoples and exposing and denouncing all maneuvers of empire and opportunism to keep the white working class objectively functioning on the side of the imperialists.

As Chairman Mao said, imperialism, in the end, is a paper tiger. The national liberation struggles in the US will be victorious. And because these national

struggles lead the class struggle in the US, their victories will push forward socialist revolution in the US white oppressor nation. At this time, we in the oppressor nation need to organize and develop a much stronger politics and movement for support and solidarity with national liberation movements, with political prisoners, with the women's liberation movement. We need to support the decisive campaigns and main actions. We need to expose the increasing reactionary moves of the ruling class and its imperial state headquarters on the Potomac. The articles and statements in this issue of *BREAKTHROUGH*, we believe, will contribute to moving the struggle in this direction.

## SUBSCRIBE!

We want to build the circulation of *BREAKTHROUGH*, political journal of PFOC. The journal will be published on a bi-monthly basis, and we will also be continuing to distribute issue No. 1 containing our provisional political statement (with a major section on women's oppression and liberation).

"The Split of the Weather Underground Organization: Struggling Against White and Male Supremacy" is also available. We would like to build up a network of bookstores, organizations, and individuals who will carry or distribute *BREAKTHROUGH*. If you're interested, please get in touch.

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# **ON THE CONVICTION OF LEONARD PELTIER**

**with a reprint of a support  
statement by the Native  
Study Group of Vancouver,  
British Columbia**

Leonard Peltier, an American Indian Movement leader, was found guilty of two counts of murder by an all-white jury in Fargo, North Dakota on April 18. The charges arose from the deaths of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Oglala Reservation in South Dakota on June 26, 1975. An Indian man, Joe Stuntz, also died in the shooting that occurred that day, but no one has ever been charged with his murder.

Two FBI agents had gone to the home of the Jumping Bull family in Oglala on the day of the shooting, allegedly to serve warrants. The FBI later admitted that they actually carried no warrants at the time.

The trial of Peltier was a railroad dominated by the Judge, Paul Benson. Judge Benson rejected virtually every motion and claim of the defense, making it impossible to expose the manufactured and tampered evidence. Much of the testimony was revealed only at closed hearings which the judge did not allow the jury to hear.

At one such hearing, Myrtle Poor Bear, whose three affidavits were the pretext used for Peltier's extradition from Canada, revealed that FBI agents had coerced her into signing affidavits which stated that she had seen Leonard Peltier murder the agents. Over and over on the stand, she said she was afraid. "I'm scared of the government, of the FBI." Mrs. Poor Bear said that the FBI had promised her a new name, given her money, and promised to move her out of South Dakota. She said she had signed the affidavits without knowing what was in them, because the agent told her that she and members of her family would be harmed if she refused. The FBI kept reminding her of Anna Mae Aquash, a Native woman activist, in whose murder the FBI was implicated and which it attempted to cover up.

Myrtle said she had never met Leonard Peltier, and that she had actually never seen him prior to that day in court. At the close of the hearing, Judge Benson ruled that Poor Bear's testimony was irrelevant, that she was not believable, and would only confuse the jury. Similar testimony from other Native people was similarly discounted and excluded by the Judge. His biased rulings lay the basis for an appeal by Leonard Peltier's defense.

After his conviction, Peltier was moved to South Dakota Penitentiary. He was sentenced, in June, by Judge Benson, to two consecutive life sentences.





credit: Indian Nation

*Leonard Peltier, in custody, greets supporters before his extradition hearings.*

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee is reprinting this article, written by the Native Study Group during the period Leonard Peltier was facing extradition from Canada, because we believe that Leonard Peltier's case is an important one to take up at this time. It is important to share the Native Study Group analysis of the case. The lengths to which the government has gone make clear the threat they see in Leonard Peltier and the Native American struggle for sovereignty.

In both his trial and the preceding extradition case, Peltier raised the issue of jurisdiction.

"Jurisdiction and the racism of the Federal Crimes Act are issues of the foremost concern at this time. This federal attempt at political persecution is cloaked and hidden by the law and order rhetoric of the federal propaganda machine."

"I raise the issue of jurisdiction. I am entitled to a trial by my peers in the community I

am accused in."

As John Trudell of the *Leonard Peltier Defense Group* has said: "What the government did to Peltier is the way that an oppressor must work, because Leonard represents the sovereignty that the Indian people speak of."

From the outset, Peltier's case has been another attack on the Native American peoples and their national liberation struggles. The use of the FBI as an occupying army, the singling out of Peltier as a revolutionary leader and his frame-up and judicial railroad are part of the US attempt to retain control of Native land and resources, and to turn back the tide of the Native American struggle for sovereignty.

**FREE LEONARD PELTIER AND ALL  
NATIVE AMERICAN PRISONERS OF  
WAR!  
SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETER-  
MINATION FOR INDIAN NATIONS!**

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*This hand-out is put out by the Native Study Group in support of the organizing efforts of the American Indian Movement Legal Defense Committee. For further information on the activities of the Committee contact: Vancouver Indian Center, 1885 Vine Street Vancouver, B.C. Canada. Reprinted by permission of the Native Study Group.*

#### **Leonard Peltier, Political Prisoner**

Leonard Peltier is a native patriot who is presently a political prisoner in Okalla. He is being held there until the Canadian government decides whether or not it will hand him over to U.S. authorities.

Leonard participated in the resistance to the 1973 U.S. military intervention on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. At that time, U.S. forces surrounded the Wounded Knee community and conducted a bloody siege lasting over two months.

U.S. authorities still maintain a military presence on the reservation. They continue to harass, intimidate, unjustly imprison, and assassinate many of those who took part. Moreover, their attacks have broadened and, all across U.S., Indian activists are being victimized. The focal point of political repression is the American Indian Movement. It is the only large, grass-roots native organization in U.S. and Canada and it played a major supportive role in the resistance at Wounded Knee. It also was instrumental in organizing the 1974 native people's caravan which was brutally clubbed down when it reached Parliament Hill. Many of its members are political prisoners, such as Leonard. Some of them, such as sister Anna Mae Aquash from Nova Scotia, have been murdered by the U.S. State.

The charges which Leonard would face, if he returned to U.S., stem from the deaths of two FBI agents. These agents and a brother named Joe Stuntz were killed last year on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in a shoot-out started by the FBI. At the time of the trouble, Leonard was not in South Dakota, but this does not alter the danger he faces if he is extradited. Given the political climate in South Dakota, and the fascist attacks being made on the American Indian Movement, there is no way Leonard could have a fair trial. It is unlikely he would live to see trial.

### **To Understand the Aggression Against Native People We Must View Our Struggle In Its World Historical Context**

Nothing in the world takes place in isolation. This has been the case ever since the peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Americas were subjugated by European imperialism. Since then, imperialism (the multinational corporations and their government lackeys) has divided the world into oppressing and oppressed nations. The class and national struggles which have grown out of this situation act as a major influence on all developments in the world. We must examine how these struggles are changing the world. We must see how we are being affected.

### **What Is the Principle Force of the Change that Is Taking Place in the World and What Is the Nature of This Change?**

The main force that is changing the world is the masses of people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They have been the main source of profits for imperialism and the main contributors to the "development" that exists in the oppressing nations. People in the oppressing nations would deny this. They would say that *they*, with their machinery and technology, are the main producers in the world. But, their machinery and technology are products of international robbery and murder that has been going on ever since the birth of this so-called civilization.

After the war, many oppressed nations (colonies) attained "independence" but their economies were still under foreign control. Consequently, they still got poorer and the oppressing nations still got richer. They learned that at the bottom of political independence is economic independence. To cut the economic ties with imperialism they had to rely on the masses of the people. If the masses were to be mobilized to conduct a long people's war against imperialism the new society they fought for had to be organized around *their* interests and *they* had to be in control. The leadership that has arisen out of national liberation struggles is a revolutionary leadership. It seeks to do away with capitalist exploitation and construct a social order based on the people's needs. The struggle for national liberation necessarily becomes a struggle for socialism—a struggle to advance mankind.

The list of formerly oppressed nations which have achieved victory is growing—China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, South Yemen, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola. In scores of other nations the struggle against imperialism is developing rapidly.

### **How Is This World Revolutionary Process Affecting the Native Internal Colonies?**

Liberation movements are threatening and cutting off imperialism's supply of cheap raw materials. The most important of these are energy materials. Areas of plunder such as the Mideast are developing "political climates unsafe for further investment". Venezuela, another energy supplier, has been the scene of guerrilla activity since the Cuban revolution. Angola, the

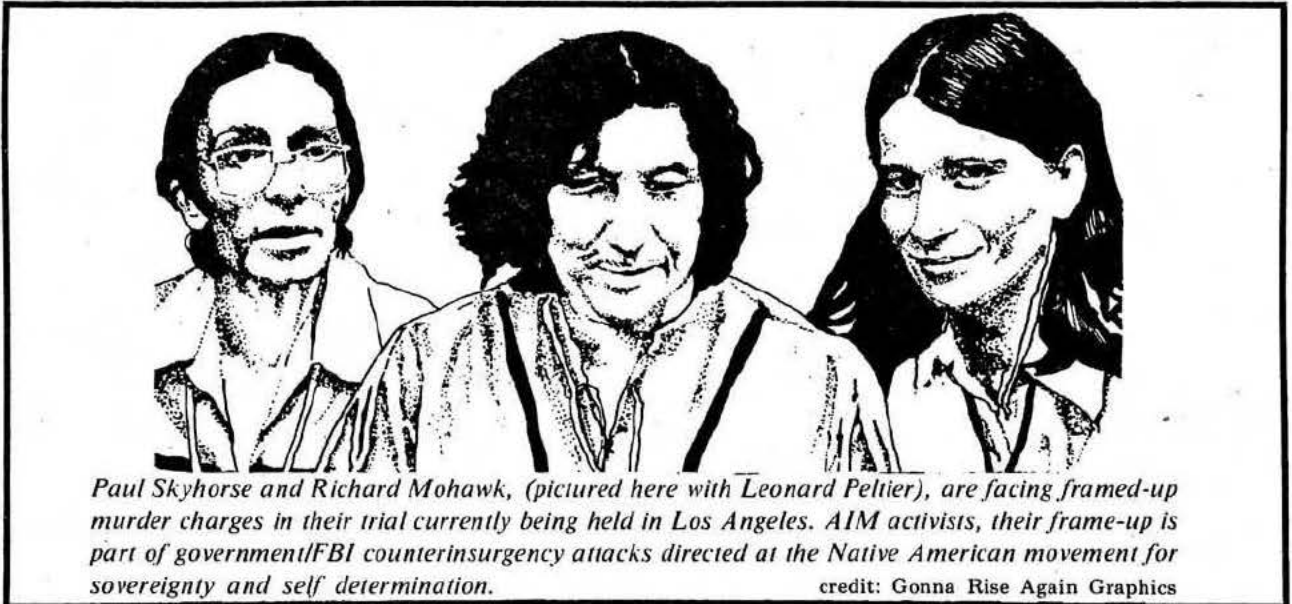


main supplier of oil to Canada, is now independent. It has seized control of foreign investments and it is only a matter of time before imperialism is kicked out altogether.

Even before the "Middle-east Crisis" of the 1960's, imperialism was redirecting its exploration capital into the energy-rich "Canadian" north. This is why it has become important for imperialism to make a "land settlement" with the native internal colonies. In an attempt to contain our struggle for self-determination in the framework of a business transaction, imperialism has created "responsible" native representatives.

This native elite is on top of things only because it is standing on the money imperialism has invested in our politics. The imperialists hope to cash in on their investments when it comes time to "negotiate".

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation covers 7,000 sq. miles of territory and is rich in oil, gas and coal. To gain access to these resources, imperialism bought the elected leader, Dick Wilson. When the Sioux people tried by democratic means to remove him, they were con-



fronted, at Wounded Knee, with imperialist violence.

As we have seen from Vietnam, there is no turning back the tide of national liberation. We can conclude that the aggressive moves against us can only increase.

### **Do We Give Up? No!**

Things are looking up. With each victory achieved by our brothers in the rest of the world, imperialism gets weaker and more isolated. It is losing control of raw materials and hundreds of millions of people who used to slave for next to nothing. It is losing super-profits. As this happens it loses its ability to subvert our struggle with its blood-money. It becomes less able to mis-direct and smother our movement with meaningless, but costly, concessions.

### **How Does the "Whiteman" Fit Into Our Strategies?**

The native question in North America is not only a class question but also a national one. Some of us have (temporarily or permanently) become separated from our land bases and "integrated" into the lowest stratum of the Canadian or U.S. working class. This does not alter the fact that native people have a history of internal colonization by Canada and U.S., are still subject to colonial rule in their land bases, and therefore, have an inalienable right to self-determination *including secession*. Nor are reservations or reserves the boundaries of our homelands. These boundaries have yet to be determined and can only be determined by the history and needs of native people. Whether self-determination can be attained before, in conjunction with or after social revolution in Canada and U.S.; whether it can be attained as regional or local autonomy within the Canadian and U.S. nation-states or separately as independent nations, are questions of strategy which have yet to be decided and *can only be*

*decided by the native people themselves.*

One thing is certain. The North American people are a factor which we must consider in planning our strategies. Except for the north, the native internal colonies are segmented and surrounded. The super-settler population is here to stay and cannot be made to return to Europe.

We cannot assume that the white people will support us. We must struggle to educate and lead them in a progressive direction. The white people constitute a privileged class of workers in the imperialist system. Their privileges (nice things, fat pay checks, political liberties, etc.) are dependent on the existence of imperialism and the robbery of oppressed nations. When liberation movements threaten their privilege (as is now beginning to happen) we can expect that their immediate reaction will be to protect that privilege. This would be dangerous for the native internal colonies. We have seen, from racial atrocities and massacres committed in recent history, that imperialism is capable of total degeneracy and that workers from the oppressing nations have time and again been accomplices.

We must convince these workers that it is useless to go and fight for imperialism. They will just get killed, as in Vietnam, and the people of the oppressed nations will win anyway. We must convince them that, in the long run, this system is no good for them. When the subject nations are gone imperialism will turn on *them*. Imperialists have no loyalty to nation or race. They merely use national and racial contradictions to maintain their domination. They respect only profits and will exploit and oppress anybody to get it. Right now imperialism is using the carrot (reformism) tactic on them but, after the carrot, comes the stick (repression). We must be able to show the Canadian and U.S. workers that our struggle for self-determination is also a class struggle and that our enemy, and the enemy of the people of the oppressed nations, is also their enemy. If they join in repressing us they would be strengthening imperialism against themselves.

It is important for us to try to mobilize the Canadian and American people to support the struggles of the oppressed nations and to support *us*.

### **Stand Up and Be Counted**

Due to the propaganda from the imperialist media, some people are reluctant to support Leonard. Some people think that Leonard *is* a criminal. Let us hear his own words as he spoke recently in the courtroom:

"When colonial white society invades and occupies our territories, these are not called criminal acts. But when the native people stand up and resist, those acts are considered criminal. But these are not crimes. These are political acts in which our people stand for their rights of self-determination, self-dignity, and self-respect against the cruel and oppressive might of another nation.

"Indian people are being attacked and murdered on our reservations and on the streets of the United States and Canada and yet no one is being called a criminal in the courts for the commission of these crimes. I know that the criminal is white racist society."

Brothers and sisters, these are the courageous words of a patriot, who, like all patriots, is motivated by great love and concern for the people. The imperialist media would have us believe that this man is some kind of gangster with low motivations. His only crime is that he dared to stand up and oppose the imperialist State and the corporations. He dared to struggle for self-determination for native people. He and many others are doing so. Can we, then, let the State railroad and kill him? No! Nor can we let the State carry out its repression against the American Indian Movement. The state has already caused too many deaths. We must stand up and be counted or this system will think that it can railroad us all and take what it wants. Brothers and sisters, let us use this attack to strengthen our resistance and build our unity.

and build our unity.

**U.S. AND THE FIGHT OF NATIVE PEOPLE TO SELF-DETERMINATION!**  
**OPPOSE ALL ATTACKS ON A.I.M.!**  
**FREE LEONARD PELTIER!**



# THE GUARDIAN SETS OUT TO BUILD ITSELF A PARTY:

## A PFOC Critique—1st of a Series

The *Guardian*, a weekly paper of significant national circulation, has been promoting a series of articles on the subject of party-building. Beginning on Dec. 1, 1976, this series has included articles by Irwin Silber; the staff statement titled "The Fight for Women's Emancipation" (Mar. 9); and comments from the Potomac Socialist Organization (PSO) and from the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee.

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee has decided that our national leadership collective together with the comrades responsible for our journal, *BREAKTHROUGH*, will prepare and publish a critical review of this series. At a time when many revolutionaries have come to agree that party-building is our primary task, the *Guardian* is delegating to itself a major role in the party-building debate. The views of the *Guardian* reach many serious anti-imperialists and revolutionaries, who have come to rely on the paper as a source of news and comment on international politics and liberation struggles. Editorially, the *Guardian* has taken positions on a number of liberation struggles with which we have substantial, though qualified, agreement as an organization. This has been the case in support and solidarity activity around the struggles in Central and Southern Africa—Angola, Mozambique, Zaire, Azania, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless it is Prairie Fire's analysis that the general line of the *Guardian*,

especially its position on party-building, propagates a view of imperialism that leads away from revolution and blocks real party-building. The *Guardian* follows a very common revision of Marx' and Engels' work by identifying the main contradiction of capitalism/imperialism as that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, or as they sometimes say it, the imperialist bourgeoisie and the "working class as a whole." This disastrously wrong definition is the main theoretical basis of the recent series of articles on party-building. By this wrong definition, the *Guardian* avoids the contradiction fundamental to capitalism at all its stages including its final stage, imperialism, which is the contradiction between social production and private appropriation. By substituting one form of the class struggle for a scientific understanding of the fundamental contradiction of capitalist/imperialist society, the *Guardian* places itself in opposition to a correct understanding of the class struggle as it has been transformed under imperialism.

In the early history of capitalism, the fundamental contradiction of capitalism was most clearly expressed in the conflict between proletariat and bourgeoisie and the class struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie became the main revolutionary drive of that period of history.

Imperialism has changed the content and form of class struggle world-wide. As whole nations, their people, states, resources and cultures have been subjugated to reap profit for a small number of oppressor

nations, the superprofits of empire have been used to maintain national supremacy in advanced capitalist/imperialist countries and to subvert the revolutionary strivings of the working class. Lenin, building on Marx' and Engels' analysis of the British working class in the British empire, wrote *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, to define this distinct stage in the history of capitalism. In *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism* and many writings and speeches after 1915, Lenin further developed this analysis of imperialism and of the growing revolutionary forces throughout the world.

Lenin saw that the primary contradiction of capitalism in its imperialist stage is that between a small number of oppressor nations and the large number of oppressed nations containing the majority of the world's people. Imperialism is not only monopoly capitalism, as the *Guardian* states, but also it is a parasitic and moribund (dying) capitalism. A handful of nations are living off the exploitation of a larger number of oppressed nations, and imperialism as a system is dying as these oppressed nations rise up to liberate themselves and seize control of their resources, political and economic life, and culture. Just as the revolution in Russia broke the

weakest link of the chain, so Lenin maintained in his later writings, that national liberation struggles of oppressed nations had moved to leadership in the world proletarian socialist revolution against the entire capitalist system.

Understanding Lenin's analysis of the effects of empire on workers in oppressor nations is especially important for white communists in the US. In order to struggle against opportunism and great-nation chauvinism, that is, to take the only revolutionary stand, oppressor nation workers must support, with concrete aid, struggles for self-determination waged by oppressed nations—especially those of nations subjugated by their own oppressor nation. This means supporting the right of oppressed nations to conduct their own national liberation struggles and to decide their own political strategy and goals.

The *Guardian* articles reveal the disastrous effects of adopting Silber's wrong analysis to the revolutionary process in the US. The refusal of the *Guardian* to deal seriously with the nature and consequences of the imperialist history of the US is covered by a flood of words about Marxism-Leninism and anti-revisionism. Therefore its liquidation of anti-



*Vietnam Veterans Against the War in Miami, 1972 — an organization that demonstrated support for the Vietnamese war of national liberation. Our history in solidarity with the Vietnamese is a positive step toward fighting US subjugation of all oppressed nations inside the US and around the world.*

credit: LNS



imperialism becomes an active pushing of opportunism and economism and an attack upon the content of Marxist-Leninist science. The *Guardian's* extensive coverage of revolutionary events is thus converted into a cover that obscures Irwin Silber and editor Jack Smith's essentially white supremacist, male supremacist and anti-anti-imperialist approach to politics.

Below is a summary of some of the major ways that the *Guardian* series attacks and undermines party-building and revolution in the name of Marxism-Leninism and party-building.

These points will be developed in greater depth in subsequent articles, beginning with the critique of the *Guardian's* position on women's oppression and liberation in this issue of *BREAKTHROUGH*.

I. The *Guardian* bases its analysis on the fanciful idea that imperialism exists only outside the borders of the United States, and evades the fact that the history of the US is the history of empire, the history of the subjugation of the Native American, Black, Chicano, Mexican, and Puerto Rican nations. Thus Irwin Silber does not even mention the issue of oppressed nations within the current borders of the US, but he bases his article on their non-existence, substituting the vague phrase "nationally oppressed people". This enables him to assume without any show of proof that there is a "multi-national" working class in the US, and that it is a settled and agreed fact that there must be a "multi-national" communist party in the US. The reality that numerous Black, Mexican, Chicano, Native American, Puerto Rican and oppressor nation organizations and individuals reject these "facts" is simply ignored. All efforts by revolutionary forces to seriously apply the principle of self-determination in order to overcome the historic white and male supremacy of the US Left is completely beneath the notice of the *Guardian's* party-building experts.

II. Irwin Silber declares that the issues of national and women's oppression are only matters of democratic rights related to clearing the way for the "real"

revolutionary struggle of the "whole working class". In a stroke of the pen, the national liberation movements that have been leading the revolutionary process within the current borders of the US are reduced to a fight for civil rights, equality before the law. Similarly, the sweeping and powerful movement for women's liberation that is a leading revolutionary force within the oppressor nation is also gutted of its revolutionary essence.

III. The *Guardian* gives lip service to Marx-Engels-Lenin's analysis of the impact of empire on the working class of the imperial states. But it limits this to a small unimportant group of labor aristocrats and never presents any of the major statements of classic Marxism-Leninism on the entire subject. In this way Marx, Engels, and Lenin are revised, buried and falsified on the entire subject of monopoly capitalism/imperialism and the strategic nature of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles worldwide and for the US.

IV. In this series the *Guardian* subordinates anti-imperialist struggle worldwide and in the US to "pure" class struggle of the "multi-national" working class in the US. And though Irwin Silber constantly talks "politics" and "political line", his conclusions constantly reduce to economist, reformist, opportunist organization in command. Nowhere in the whole series does he offer any definition of the political content and basis for a revolutionary anti-imperialist politics and strategy for the US. He omits the question of armed struggle and the responsibility of communists to prepare it. He offers nothing with which to counter the counter-revolutionary violence of the state: And next to nothing about the role of repression or the role of political prisoners.

V. The *Guardian* line on women's oppression and liberation is not even progressive as compared to the revisionist CPUSA. In the past the CP recognized, if only in a limited way, the revolutionary potential of women's struggle and leadership. The *Guardian's* statement does not analyze the male supremacy of the system; it merely substitutes that term for the more

subjective term "sexism". Their statement is marked by male supremacy and crudely sexist remarks; women are still seen as reserves to be caught with bait. We include in this issue an analysis of the "Women's Emancipation" piece as our first specific analysis of the major parts of the *Guardian* series.

VI. The party-building line of Irwin Silber is an organization-first, opportunism-in-command line. To hide this, the question of where parties come from is mystified. The first column of the first article (*Guardian* Dec. 1, 1976) declares that Party-building only begins with the formation of the Party. Communists can't really exist until then, nor real truly Marxist-Leninists. (Who then is Irwin Silber?) In column 3 of the same piece, Silber has it that without communists and Marxist-Leninists there cannot be a Party. So with this chicken and egg impossibility, where does the party really come from? This is not just an editorial slip, for in a later article Silber knocks down the preconditions for organizing a party offered by Potomac Socialist Organization without giving any alternative. Silber really has a conception of Marxist-Leninist theory and the Party dropping from the skies into receptive heads—or into one receptive and prophetic head like his own. Because he never refers to theory as generalized experience of world revolution and of the history of the US, the whole thing becomes a total riddle and mystery. This gap is due to the fact that Silber can't or won't face the consequences of analyzing US history scientifically. He doesn't even attempt an evaluation of the history of the 60's and 70's, the old and new left. He only takes cheap shots without defining the motion. He is not the only one. Almost none of the numerous present crop of party-builders even pose the critical question: Why is there no revolutionary Communist Party in the US 56 years after the first one appeared? Why is the labor movement still under the effective control of agents of the ruling class? How long will we tolerate these evasions that count upon our stupidity instead of dealing with painful reality?

In sum, the *Guardian* is either evading or dishing up the most superficial answers to all the hard questions. It analyzes none of them, ignores world experience and changes and lumps all kinds of things higgledy-piggledy.

Irwin Silber offers his own shallow dictat in place of facts and analysis. If someone objects, then they are guilty of some original sin. Without any detectable embarrassment, he berates others for lack of seriousness and for snide remarks. Consider the insulting banality of the opening of the entire series on Dec. 1. "Everyone wants a party. Or so they say." This is debate?

Still we take all this seriously; revisionism and white and male supremacy have cost us very much. All of us who are trying to learn to be more serious and scientific are forced to work our way through all this jumble of stuff. For Irwin Silber and the *Guardian* didn't invent it all. They just serve it with new garnish. The source is the bourgeoisification of our movement by the system of capitalist empire. We have to deal with it, not ignore it.

Since the *Guardian* is now promoting organization, and delegates to itself a major role in the debate on party-building, it has had to print its reasons for this new role. We have examined the *Guardian's* line in order to get beyond its issue-by-issue sugar-coated opportunism. By doing this it can be demonstrated that the general line of the *Guardian* party-building pieces is a revision of Marxism-Leninism. The *Guardian* avoids just what is needed: scientific analysis of the fundamental contradiction of imperialism and its primary manifestation at present in the struggles for national liberation of oppressed nations waged against oppressor nations. Above all, the *Guardian* avoids shedding light on the history of the US, internal and external, as an expanding world empire.

Since the *Guardian* liquidates the historical development of imperialism within the US, it ends up treating it only as a policy. As a result, the subjugation of Indian nations and Mexican/Chicano



nations, the forging of a Black nation through centuries of slavery and struggle are denied as a leading revolutionary force; they are not considered at all in the series. For the *Guardian* they do not exist. So the struggles of these nations for self-determination are denied also; instead the *Guardian* mumbles vaguely about nationally oppressed peoples in the US but denies them nationhood as surely as does the ruling class.

The *Guardian's* denial of the existence of the oppressor nation founded and maintained on conquest and white supremacy is reinforced by its denial of the revolutionary character of struggle for women's liberation; for the oppression of women is also essential to the generation of super-profits in the imperialist system. The exploitation and oppression of women is based on both unwaged work in the home and on waged labor in the job market. Added to this is the institutionalization of women's oppression in the laws, schools, hospitals, etc. throughout the imperialist system which culminates in a whole system of male supremacy and male chauvinist ideology. All of which brings tremendous profits and power to the imperialists. The struggle for women's liberation and against male supremacy

and the system of male supremacy has different characteristics in oppressed and oppressor nations. Revolutionary strategies for liberation must take this into account.

For all these contradictions the *Guardian* substitutes the movement of the working class, as a whole. It reduces the struggles for national and women's liberation to struggles for equal rights before bourgeois law within a general movement of all the workers against the bosses. This incredible white and male chauvinism toward revolutionary national and women's struggles has another expression in seeing the trade unions as the primary organizations of working class struggle in the US. These are the same unions whose leadership and activity are dominated by white men, and which are openly dedicated to fighting for a larger share of imperial superprofits, which refuse to face not only the divisions in the working class, but the fact that there are working people of different nations within the US.

Once the *Guardian* denial of revolutionary anti-imperialism is laid down, then the struggles for Black liberation, Native American sovereignty and Mexican/Chicano and Puerto Rican liberation, as well as women's liberation,

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**"This is precisely why the central point in the Social-Democratic programme must be the distinction between oppressing and oppressed nations, which is the essence of imperialism, which is falsely evaded by the social-chauvinists, and by Kautsky."**

— Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (after October 16, 1916).

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and for women's leadership is therefore a revolutionary struggle that attacks the imperialist system.

Like all struggles under imperialism, the struggle against the oppression of women

are actually all regarded as detracting from the working class struggle.

All the revolutionary, internationalist and anti-imperialist content of the class struggle in the US is carefully eliminated

and liquidated from the *Guardian* series. The struggle of nations against imperialism, the role of the state in enforcing imperial rule, exploitation, oppression, and genocide takes a back seat to the economic struggles of the "working class as a whole" against the monopoly capitalists (as waged by the trade unionists). The armed might of the state is not mentioned, nor is the just and necessary use of revolutionary violence. Instead "the economic struggles

light years from these constructs. Any attempt to build a revolutionary party this way is futile and will subtract from that goal.

The *Guardian's* line is not the revolutionary way—it should be defeated and replaced with a revolutionary anti-imperialist politics and strategy for party-building. This is the main objective of these criticisms of the theory and politics of the *Guardian*.



credit: What Have Women Done? SF Women's History Group

Women protest the forced sterilization of at least 200 women, mainly Black and Chicana, at the Los Angeles County Hospital. "... the struggle against the oppression of women and the system of male supremacy has different characteristics in oppressed and oppressor nations."

of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is the most concentrated form of class struggle." (*Guardian*, Mar. 16, 1977, p.21 column 1.)

Thus the *Guardian's* party-building politics are nothing but the crudest sort of economism. Such a line on class struggle in the US has its basis in white and male supremacy and can only come about through revision and falsifying of the science of Marxism-Leninism. Silber's and the *Guardian's* method is anti-historical and non-materialist. It substitutes word-and quotation-juggling for analysis of reality. The real world is thousands of

This is why we stated earlier that the *Guardian* uses its international reportage to cover its opportunism on party-building and revolution. Following the formal conclusion of the party-building series, Irwin Silber has turned to criticizing "Euro-Communism" and even revisionist, economist positions on working class organizing. In a later article we will show that this turning on fellow travellers of opportunism is no change in politics. It is simply more cover, an attempt to cope with the new and growing challenge from the left.

## —A Proposal

## to Move Backwards—

# THE GUARDIAN ON "WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION"

The March 9th issue of the *Guardian* contains a statement which they present as their "Marxist-Leninist position on the question of women". Upon reading and studying the *Guardian's* presentation we find it necessary to dispute many of their conclusions.

The *Guardian* article, entitled "The Fight for Women's Emancipation," is not a historical analysis dealing with the role of women in society and in the revolutionary movements—which are the main ingredients in the development of a revolutionary outlook on women's oppression and liberation. Actually the article is more like an advance promotion of the *Guardian's* plan for organizing women into the revisionist party which the *Guardian* clearly feels that it is destined to lead. The timeliness of the *Guardian's* article must also be examined. In their thirty years of publishing, the *Guardian* has never had a statement on women's oppression and liberation. Now, at a time when women's revolutionary leadership is growing in strength and numbers in both the women's movement and in the white left, the *Guardian* chooses to deal with this most critical question. We feel that through their positions the *Guardian* exposes their true aims — to co-opt women's narrow definition of "class struggle" for the US white working class.

The *Guardian* begins its "analysis" by stating that "Historically, the women question has been a test of every revolutionary movement." Later they explain to us how it is that "women's emancipation was inextricably bound up with the historical destiny of the working class." Most of us can read these formulations and think to ourselves that they sound right. Closer examination and thought reveal that these are tricky substitutions for the positions that Marx, Engels, and Lenin laid out. Lenin wrote: "the proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women"; "the experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it." "There can be no



socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it." Marx stated: "Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment." In short, Marx and Lenin concluded that there can be no revolution without the liberation of women. None of this seems to figure into the *Guardian's* revisions of Marxism-Leninism.

Cited in the article are many of the abuses and inequalities daily heaped on women. Facts such as women constituting 40% of the total US work force, but on the average only earning 56% of what men's wages are; sexual segregation on the job; the double shift of waged labor in the workplace and unwaged labor in the home are all given as the basis for the *Guardian's* conclusion that "these are the concrete circumstances in the economic base of capitalist economy which *objectively* (our emphasis) unite the women's movement with the struggle for the overthrow of capital." And this is where the *Guardian's* concrete analysis of the material basis of women's oppression ends. The *Guardian* stops at this point because to continue on and analyze and determine why these conditions exist—would mean dealing with how imperialism profits indirectly and directly from the *oppression of women* in the home and in the workplace. It would mean confronting *male supremacy* head-on. The *Guardian* would have to deal with the institutionalization of women's oppression in the schools, hospitals, courts, jails and the welfare system. Further, if the *Guardian* squarely and honestly examined women's experiences within these institutions and compared them to that of men's, they could no longer evade the fact that there are economic, legal, psychological, physical, and sexual power/privileges that men have over women in US society. This would mean taking up the question of men's real stake in the maintenance of women's oppression—not as just the "petty privileges" or "illusory rewards" the *Guardian* would like us to believe are all that are gained by men. Recognizing male supremacy as a prin-

*White women played a leading role in solidarity and support of the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people.*

credit: John Bremner Free You



cial form of competition in the white working class would mean that the fight for women's liberation would have to be viewed as a central part of the revolutionary struggle in the US. And most of all, it would mean that there can be no unified or winning movement without an attack on women's oppression and male supremacy—because these are in fact major pillars and bulwarks of US imperialism.

These are the conclusions that must be drawn from any serious analysis of women's economic, social, and political position and role in society. And these are precisely the conclusions from which the *Guardian* shrinks. The *Guardian* substitutes talk of men's "petty privileges" which divide the working class for actually fighting male supremacy and male privilege. The *Guardian* briefly mentions the super-profits that US imperialism gains from the oppression of women, yet it does not conclude that women, as waged workers in the workplace, and as unwaged reproducers and maintainers in the home, are both direct and indirect sources of essential super-profits for US imperialism. In other words, the oppression of women is extremely valuable to imperialism. Movements to struggle against this super-exploitation in the home, on the job and in all US institutions constitute an extreme threat to US imperialism, and are revolutionary struggles.

The *Guardian* ignores these facts because it does not want to conclude that the struggle for the liberation of women, and the struggle against male supremacy, is a leading force in the world revolutionary movement; that is, one of the main components of a revolutionary class stand. Instead, the *Guardian* substitutes the struggle for democratic rights of women, something it believes cannot be conceded by US imperialism because of super-profits. But, because of their unwillingness to recognize the actual revolutionary nature of women's struggles and leadership, the *Guardian* takes an attitude of 'Oh well,' at least this "helps to clear the battlefield of obstructions." And then they misuse Lenin to tell us that when women see

clearly that their problem is due to capitalism and not lack of rights, then we will all get down to the real fight. We agree that defeating imperialism, seizing state power, and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat are the ultimate aims of the revolutionary movement. Yet, we disagree that the battlefield can be cleared of obstructions. We don't even understand how the *Guardian* comes to that conclusion. If (as the *Guardian* says they believe) women's oppression is profitable to US imperialism, then how can imperialism equalize things between women and men (what the *Guardian* calls democratic rights)? The struggle for women's equality is not a struggle that can be won under bourgeois rule, and this is one place that we agree with the *Guardian*. What we don't agree with is that women's fight against their oppression is just "limited reform and consciousness-raising." We believe that women's struggle against oppression and for liberation is anti-imperialist and leading in the revolutionary class struggle among white working class people.

The *Guardian* covers all this by vague talk of super-profits, and the "double oppression of working women (and the triple oppression of working women of the oppressed nationalities)". With one hand the *Guardian* refers to the differences between the oppression of white and Third World women through the use of quantitative phraseology such as "double" and "triple"; yet on the other hand, nowhere in the article do we see any concrete analysis of the qualitative differences in the situations of Third World and white women. In fact the differences are liquidated.

This is all a smokescreen for long established practice and politics of the *Guardian*. The *Guardian* undermines the struggles of what it vaguely calls "the oppressed nationalities" within the US, by denying and opposing their struggles for national liberation. It continually subordinates these national struggles to the "real" struggle of the "U.S. multi-national working class." The *Guardian* wipes out the existence of oppressed nations within

the borders of the US. And when it talks of white chauvinism, it denies that the white working class gains material privileges from the super-exploitation of Third World nations inside the US and around the world. National liberation struggles and the demand for self-determination are reduced to "democratic struggles" and the "special demands of minority workers." All of this serves the *Guardian* as a model for this phony stuff we are now being handed about the struggle against women's oppression and the fight for the liberation of women.

The struggles being waged for national liberation, self-determination (which also includes Native American struggles for sovereignty) by Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and Mexicanos in the US are principal forms of class struggle within the US at this time. Combined with the struggles for national liberation around the world, they lead the world-wide proletarian revolution. No amount of talk about democratic rights, the multi-national working class, or fancy schemes contrived to build a united front of the multi-national working class and the nationally oppressed peoples of this country can change these facts or sugar-coat history. But they do serve our cause by revealing the white supremacy and opportunism of forces like the *Guardian* and whoever else masquerade as bearers of Marxism-Leninism, but who really use talk of anti-imperialism as a cover for blatant revisions of revolutionary anti-imperialist politics and struggle.

The *Guardian* revises precisely those Leninist principles about the characteristic features of imperialism that it claims to uphold. Unlike and contrary to Lenin, the *Guardian* maintains that to talk of oppressor and oppressed nations, to talk of the system of white supremacy which serves to give economic and social privileges to all white people in the US while keeping Black and Third World oppressed nations super-exploited, is to detract from the "real class struggle" — which, as the *Guardian* sees it, is limited to the struggle of the "multi-national working class." At this point it becomes clear just what

kind of class struggle the *Guardian* is really talking about. It is not what is reported in the internationalist news and analysis, which attracts many people to read the *Guardian*. What is really dear to the hearts of the editors of the *Guardian* is trade union struggle, reformist economic struggle—the struggle of the Sadlowskis.

From reducing the struggles of oppressed nations to the struggle for democratic rights and multinational unity, the *Guardian* moves on to liquidate the revolutionary struggles against women's oppression to a question of the unity between men and women.

Trade unions and workers' organizations are given the primary responsibility for not conducting a struggle to win the male workers' support for the "democratic demands" of women. But what about the failures of the revolutionary movements in the white left? *Where is the Guardian's self-criticism for its failures to support the struggles for women's liberation?* No mention is made of women's withdrawal from the white male dominated left in the '60's because of men's failure and downright resistance to dealing with women's oppression, women's leadership, and fight for liberation. The *Guardian* first blames the trade unions for not supporting women's rights enough, twisting the relationship between the revolutionary movement and the masses, and blaming the workers for the revolutionary movement's own backwardness and failures.

All this serves to cover for the *Guardian's* criticism of what it thinks is the "real" problem: the white women's movement, with its "go-it-alone strategy." This is a term we became familiar with in I. Silber's party-building series where he uses the same word to put down revolutionary nationalist forms of organization, in order to deny Black and Third World nations the right to decide what forms of organization are appropriate for their struggles. It all adds up to a repudiation of the Leninist principle of self-determination. When applied to the women's movement it is a denunciation of women's right to an autonomous women's movement, and wipes out the importance





El Paso, Texas 1973: Farah strikers demonstrate to protest the police murder of 11 year old Santos Rodriguez.

"Farah, Oneita, and J.P. Stevens were not just struggles about union concerns, but struggles against Black, Chicana and other Third World women's super-exploitation."

of women's leadership in the revolutionary movement and the anti-imperialist content of the women's movement.

We are told that the real story of women's struggles is not to be found in legal reforms or in the "sensationalistic" sexual liberation themes for "sexual preference", but rather in the enormous numbers of women playing central roles in union struggles and immediate "class struggles," (which, given women's overwhelming exclusion from unions, is a questionable factual statement to say the least). These rewrites of history omit the fact that the "groundswell" of activity that the *Guardian* refers to — Farah, Oneita, and J.P. Stevens — were not just struggles about union concerns, but struggles against Black and Third World women's super-exploitation as nationally oppressed women.

These statements also reveal a blatant ignorance of the struggles that have been waged by the white women's movement. Sneers at "sexual liberation" by the *Guardian* are made to wipe out the revolutionary content of women's struggles for power and control over their bodies

and sexuality in male supremacist US society. These remarks are objectively anti-lesbian slurs. The *Guardian's* use of quotation marks around sexual liberation reveals that they don't believe in sexual liberation and makes us wonder if they have any analysis of the material basis of women's oppression at all.

The *Guardian's* statement ignores the fact that historically women's oppression has been rooted in the need to control women's reproductive functions to maintain bourgeois class interests, or in other words to maintain the continuity of men's property throughout generations. Virginity, marriage, fidelity, and heterosexuality have all served to keep women's sexuality and consciousness tied to their reproductive capacities.

Lesbianism is a statement that women do not have to be dependent on men. It is a statement that sexuality doesn't have to be based in the home, dependent on men because of our biological abilities to bear children. The *Guardian's* faulty analysis of the material basis of women's oppression is no accident, since they never do a forthright analysis of the family—its role in

the oppression of women, and the differences between the families of whites, and those of Black and Third World oppressed nations.

It is no surprise that the *Guardian* ignores all this, because as many of the *Guardian's* letter-writers have concluded, the *Guardian* denies the existence of gay oppression and basically only mentions the issue when it decides to grant homosexuals a place inside communist organizations as another concession to democratic rights.

It is also no surprise that the *Guardian* has no understanding of gay oppression, and in particular of lesbian oppression, since it has never taken a critical look at the role the bourgeois nuclear family plays among white people as a structure of women's oppression. The *Guardian* refers to the working class family as an "institution for survival and defense." Here again, they make no distinctions between the families of oppressed nations and those of whites.

We would agree with the *Guardian* that defense of the family for Black people and all Third World peoples is a critical necessity. Historically, imperialism has tried to tear apart families of Black and Third World peoples as part of a genocidal attempt to destroy national culture and identity, and ultimately destroy nations of peoples of color. This is one thing. However, among white people the family has played quite a different role. What the *Guardian* cites as a reason to defend the family—that it "remains the basic economic unit of society"—is precisely what is wrong with the family. The family remains an isolated, privatized economic unit whose purpose is to maintain and reproduce the workforce—a very *social* function indeed. The oppression of women in the double shift has roots in women's definitions in the home. To truly wage a struggle against women's oppression, we have to struggle against the role women are forced into in the home, and the very structure of the nuclear family in the oppressor nation.

The rest of the *Guardian's* remarks about the white women's movement and the role of women in the revolutionary struggle

amount to exaggerations and contempt. And we see that once again the white women's movement is accused of something that the rest of the white revolutionary movement is supposedly not guilty of—white supremacy (which the *Guardian* equates with racism). Bourgeois feminism is targeted as the main danger of opportunism in the white women's movement. This only serves to cover the *Guardian's* refusal to deal with history—that, in fact, not fighting white supremacy and male supremacy are the main forms of opportunism in the white left, and for that matter in all social movements of white people, including the white women's movement.

And finally the *Guardian* pays lip service to the fact that there is some revolutionary content to women's struggles, after it has tried its very best to tear down and bury this reality.

#### HOW DOES THE GUARDIAN SEE THIS REVOLUTIONARY CONTENT?

The working class will liberate women. *Men will cement class unity between women and men workers according to the Guardian.*

With men taking up the fight for women's special and democratic demands, there is no need to have an autonomous women's movement, there is no need to fight male supremacy and male privilege, and most of all there is no need for revolutionary women's leadership. Here again, the *Guardian* turns history on its head—THE FACTS ARE THAT THE LEADING FORCE FOR WOMEN IN THE US HAVE BEEN WOMEN. WOMEN THROUGH THEIR DETERMINATION HAVE FORCED MEN TO TAKE ON THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION, MALE SUPREMACY AND MALE CHAUVINISM. As much as the *Guardian* would like to be blind to the facts—these are the real truths.

The real truths are that the liberation of women is a central part of the revolutionary struggle. This is something the *Guardian* never deals with. Instead it flips-flops all over the place, and first tells us that capitalist development has brought into existence the material conditions that

make the total and complete emancipation of women possible. Then it tells us, (realizing its exaggeration) in its concluding remarks that "socialism will not automatically 'solve' the woman question," but that the whole matter will be transformed when the working class seizes state power. All of this talk serves to deny that the women's movement and the struggle against male supremacy and male privilege and the fight for women's liberation will form the material force for women's liberation. These struggles also constitute a mighty contribution to the abolition of imperialism/capitalism—and an essential one. The seizure of state power will form the political conditions for women's liberation, but the women themselves will create the material force for women's liberation by leadership and struggle within the movement at all its stages.

What all this comes to is that the *Guardian* says it wants to struggle for women's rights but only on the condition that the women's movement stays within the narrow limits drawn by the *Guardian*. The condition to be imposed is that we don't get to the heart of the matter, which is fighting male supremacy and male chauvinism and establishing an anti-imperialist women's movement. The condition is that we remain silent on the necessity of and material basis for con-

solidating women's leadership in all forms of revolutionary struggle and organization.

All this adds up to a refusal to deal with facts, and a refusal to draw conclusions that are critical to the development of a revolutionary movement in the white left and to the formation of revolutionary class consciousness in the white working class. If there is to be a revolutionary struggle for women's liberation, there have to be revolutionary feminist communist women to lead it. There has to be a communist party committed to fighting for a revolutionary women's movement. The only way that a communist party can be committed to this struggle is for it to understand the necessity of a revolutionary line on women, one that places women's oppression in the context of an analysis of imperialism, that fights in support of the oppressed nations and fights women's oppression. And that understanding must also express itself in women's leadership.

We believe these are the major elements to a working class approach in the US white oppressor nation, and no amount of *Guardian* imitation "Marxism-Leninism" is going to change our minds. We intend to fight more resolutely for these principles in all aspects of our work, and this includes pointing out the absolute necessity of exposing the blatant opportunism of the *Guardian*.

Philadelphia, 1976:

Lesbians at a demonstration in support of Susan Saxe.

"If there is to be a revolutionary struggle for women's liberation, there have to be revolutionary feminist communist women to lead it."



credit: LNS women's graphics





The African People's Socialist Party is a Black revolutionary nationalist party. A number of excerpts from the Party's newspaper, *The Burning Spear*, are reprinted here.

The first set of excerpts is a sharp criticism of the impact of imperialism on the white left, showing how our historic failure to break with imperialist ideology has led to a long train of betrayals of the national liberation movements. Opportunist leadership has also frustrated the revolutionary potential of the white working class, allowing the force of the white working class to be too often turned *against* the national liberation movements instead of against our enemy, imperialism. The second selection, drawn from a number of issues of the *Spear*, presents the APSP's perspective on the oppression and liberation of women in both the oppressed and oppressor nations in the US.

*BREAKTHROUGH* presents these articles as an expression of our commitment to promote the study of revolutionary writings by the national liberation movements. These writings have been hidden from our view by white supremacist left publications. The relatively plentiful media resources of the white left generally either ignore the theory and practice of national liberation movements inside and outside the US., or give themselves over to defining other peoples' strategies and struggles for them.

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee holds

a contrary stance. The history of the US left and our own experience show that it is the line and practice of the national liberation movements that are leading the revolutionary struggle within the current borders of the US. *BREAKTHROUGH* will continue to reprint both present day and historical materials of oppressed nations and revolutionaries as an essential ingredient of revolutionary politics.

You can get copies of *The Burning Spear* from PO Box 12792, St. Petersburg, Fla. 33733.

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#### U.S. LEFT: BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY IN COMMAND *Spear*, Sept.-Oct. 1976

The contradictions of imperialism are deepening in the U.S., providing many objective, material opportunities for the exploited workers and colonial and subject peoples in the United States.

However, these opportunities are not being realized and the peoples' movements in the U.S. is on the defensive, divided, and lacking clarity and direction. While objective conditions are ripe for the advancement of the peoples' causes, the peoples are suffering from a lack of leadership and are unable to discern the areas of unity in our struggles.

One reason for the inability of the peoples' movement to find areas of unity is the dismal failure of organizations, which

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*Reprinted by permission of the African People's Socialist Party*

# BURNING SPEAR

claim to provide leadership to overcome the ideological influences shaped and given form by the historical relationship of the peoples in North America, and the peculiar evolution of capitalism in the U.S.

This evolution has its basis in the genocidal attack and subsequent domination of the "Native American" upon whose land capitalism was developed; the theft and enslavement of African people upon whose backs, lives, and labor capitalism was founded, and the forcible annexation of people from neighboring Mexico which provided for the immediate territorial expansion of U.S. North American capitalism.

The U.S. North American bourgeois democratic revolution which freed the productive forces from the fetters of British colonialism and threw off the restrictive chains of diminishing feudal productive relations, was part of a bloody process that resulted in the death, mutilation, enslavement, and forced annexation of millions of peoples of color....

The arguments, ideas, theories, etc., which were manufactured to enable the dominant settler-slave master society to adapt the relations of production to the forces of production necessarily had to justify land-theft, slavery and the perpetuation of the productive process which required both slave and wage labor as well as the liquidation and internment of the "Native American" people.

## National Ideology

The evolution of capitalism in the U.S. demanded a corresponding evolution of ideas—ideas necessary to explain the world and the relationships of peoples in the U.S. to the real world and each other. These ideas, which certainly worked against the interests of the nascent U.S. North American working class, nevertheless became the national ideology that united the North American working class with its ruling class against the interests of the oppressed and subject peoples of color within the borders of what was becoming the United States of America....

The capitalist mode of production still exists to serve the unbroken rule of the now officially 200-year-old national bourgeoisie. The "Native American" people are still dispossessed on their land despite their militant and heroic struggles; the areas of Texas, California, Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona and New Mexico, and part of Wyoming and Colorado, which along with their inhabitants, were forcibly annexed by the U.S., are still illegal "states" of the U.S. despite the continuous struggles of the Mexican people; and the African people whose slave labor constituted the central productive stimulus for capitalist development in the U.S., have not, even yet, become politically independent and self-determinant....

## "Left"-Ruling-Class Alliance

In other words, the peculiarity of the  
cont'd to p.26

# BREAK THE CHAINS



Yvonne Wanrow, a Colville Indian, was convicted by an all-white jury for the self-defense killing of a man who molested her 9-year-old son. The initial conviction was overturned and she currently faces retrial.

## FOR MY PEOPLE'S SAKE

Send me a dream  
filled with wisdom  
for my people's sake;

Let me sip from the gourd of courage  
to face the challenges  
for my people's sake;

Let me find youth in spirit  
to gather roots  
for my people's sake;

Let me witness the birth  
of freedom  
for my people's sake;

And for my sake,  
let me live  
and grow  
and learn  
alone in peace  
yet together  
with my family, my way.

—Yvonne Wanrow, Sept. 7, 1975



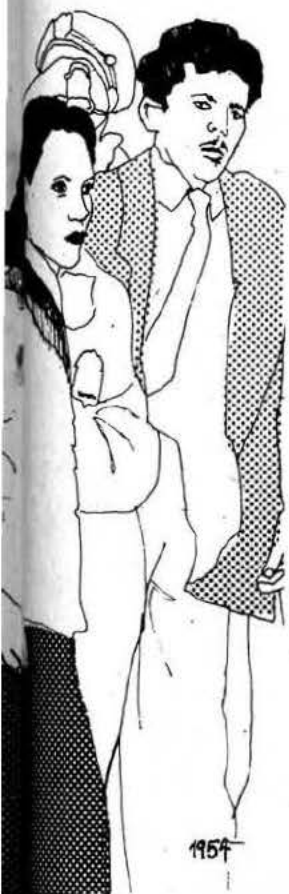
Assata Shakur

"The idea of a Black Liberation Army emerged from conditions in Black communities. Conditions of poverty, indecent housing, massive unemployment, poor medical care and inferior education. The idea came about because Black people are not free or equal in this country. Because 90% of the men and women in this country's prisons are Black and Third World. Because 10-year-old children are shot down in our streets. Because dope has saturated our communities — preying on the disillusionment and frustration of our children." "Black people should, and inevitably must, determine our destinies. . . . There is, and always will be, until every Black man, woman and child is free, a Black Liberation Army."

**FREE ALL PRISONERS OF WAR  
INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION  
SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN IN**

Marilyn B. woman, is seen  
victim for pe  
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as martyrs  
committed  
to liberatio  
goes on.  
Marilyn."





Lolita Lebron

Lolita Lebron, a leader of the Puerto Rican nationalist struggle, has been in federal prison in the US for more than 20 years. Along with three other Nationalists she shot into the US House of Representatives on March 1, 1954 to protest US domination and focus world attention on US colonialism in Puerto Rico. Writing from prison in 1975, Lolita said:

"The U.S. has done everything scientifically and otherwise to destroy the Puerto Rican independence movement and the nation's deep aspirations of nationhood ... to kill the liberation spirit of Puerto Rico. It is struggling very hard to destroy the Puerto Rican family, the Puerto Rican revolutionaries, the Puerto Rican would-be-born children. It sterilizes our young mothers and young women, to avoid Puerto Rican human harvests, just as it has killed almost all our agriculture, and many of our men in its wars of conquest and aggrandizement. U.S. weapons are used against our workers, ... against the students, against liberators. It is a war to the death. ... On March 1, 1954, Puerto Rico went to its last recourse and attacked the United States of America, in its own heart. ... We will continue to fight what terror we must fight and we will win, and we shall overcome."

k, a revolutionary white  
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taining two boxes of am-  
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men attacks are due to her  
materialist politics and actions  
of the Black Liberation  
e note:

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There is a difference between  
as positive examples and  
We are not martyrs. We are  
men and men ... committed  
or people. ... And the war  
Your sister in struggle,



Lolita Lebron and Marilyn Buck  
in Alderson Federal prison

credit: Seven Days

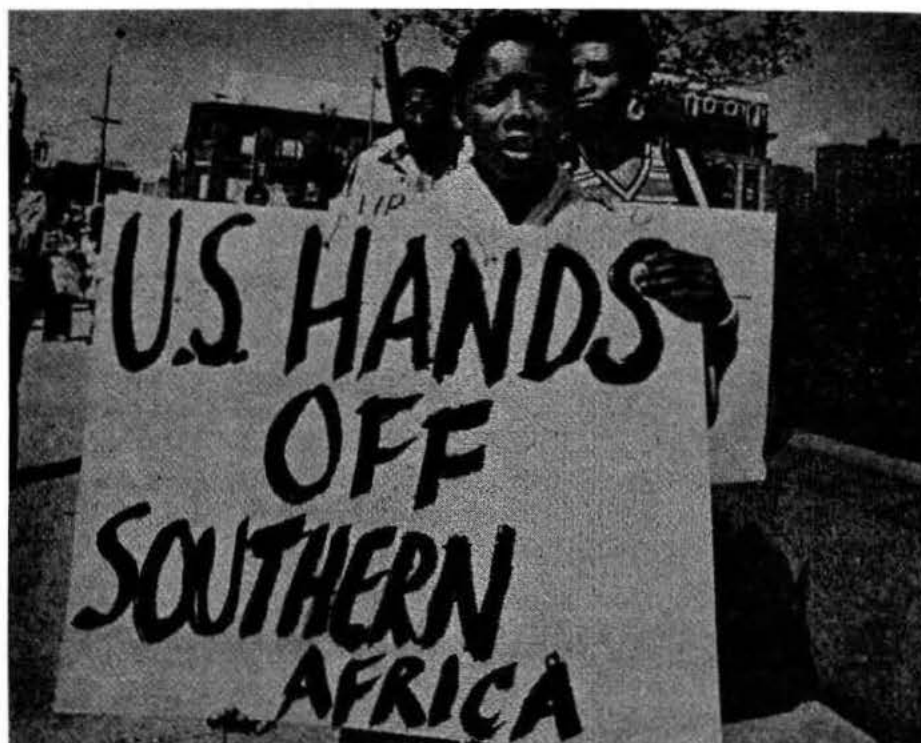


credit: Seven Days

Susan Saxe, lesbian revolutionary, is serving 12 years for manslaughter and armed robbery. She has stated, "In 1970 I did commit illegal armed actions aimed against property and wealth. These actions came from a sense of outrage against the injustice of sexism, racism and imperialism and particularly the immediate and pressing crisis of the Vietnam war."

To a joint educational fund-raiser for her and Assata Shakur in 1976, she wrote: "If we are to be about revolution, then we must be about it boldly. ... White women must stop standing within the safety of a reformist movement, calling upon Black and third world women to join us in a struggle which sees male sexism as the primary — or only contradiction, while our white skin shields us from the day to day violence of racist amerikkka. ... Women who claim to be revolutionaries have got to stop telling their sisters, Black or white, that revolutionary struggle necessitates postponing our liberation as women until sometime in our bright socialist future when the ingrained oppression of centuries will be magically erased without struggle. This is a false notion. ... We white women are saying that we are willing to give up our skin privilege, to see ourselves on the firing line, not just as bystanders or supporters for Black and third world freedom fighters who are expected to fight our battles for us."

**RAND POLITICAL PRISONERS!**  
**INATION FOR OPPRESSED NATIONS!**  
**STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM!**



*"... our struggle in the U.S. has never been one to achieve a status of 'non-slavery' from a status of slavery, but a movement FROM a status of independence (in Africa) TO a status of independence ..."*

cont'd from p.23

evolvment of U.S. North American capitalism is that it came about, not only as a result of human struggle with nature promoting the development of the productive forces, but also at the expense of life, land, and liberty of other peoples who were essentially outside of the historical process leading to the development of U.S. capitalism, although we were unwilling participants in that process.

It is this reality that continues to escape the leadership of the various North American "Left" organizations. It escapes them because they are themselves products of, and active participants in, the social process they are attempting to analyze, and because they have been unable to make the essential break with U.S. bourgeois ideology which promotes and demands the subservience of peoples of color. . . .

The failure of the North American left to make a clean ideological break with its ruling class has found it in objective alliance with the North American ruling class at decisive historical periods of struggle, to the detriment of the subject and colonial peoples within the U.S. North American borders, as well as to the

detriment of the North American working class.

Today's North American Left appears as unable to make an ideological break with the North American ruling class as its predecessors, and par to tradition, this failure manifests itself in denying the right and even the ability of African people to organize ourselves independently in our own interests for our own liberation, by spending a tremendous amount of resources, time and energy—seeking hegemony of the struggle of Black people for liberation from U.S. colonialist rule. . . .

### State Ownership

It has been especially difficult for the North American Left to understand the Black Liberation Movement in the U.S. since the official end of slavery and the adoption of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which became effective in 1868, and formally transferred ownership of "freed" slaves from white individuals to the North American ruling-class state.

The transfer of ownership of Black people to the state, which inaugurated the colonial character of the contradiction we are confronted with in the U.S., was

codified in the South as the notorious Black Codes beginning in 1865, but was given U.S. sanction as early as 1857 by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney in the renowned Dred Scott case. In the now famous decision, Taney said in part that Black people "...had no rights or privileges but such as those who held power and the Government (sic) might choose to grant them. . ."

However restrictive the Black Codes and other laws upon the rights of Black people were, the transfer of ownership of African people to the state served to obscure a fundamental and basic contradiction—one that flowed from the condition of our enslavement, but was essentially unchanged by the process of colonialization. That contradiction—demanded by both, a condition of chattel slavery as well as colonial subjugation—is that Black people in the U.S. do not have political authority over our own lives, such political authority resting in the hands of a foreign exploitative power!

The character of class and colonial exploitation is different, colonial exploitation being at the hands of an easily identifiable foreign power and consequently demanding a rule of continuous oppression and terror for its success. On the other hand the success of bourgeois democracy demands that class rule, the essential exploitative relationship, be disguised to the masses.

It has been the inability of the North American Left to realize that our struggle in the U.S. has never been one to achieve a status of "non-slavery" from a status of slavery, but a movement FROM a status of independence (in Africa) TO a status of independence, that has led to so much confusion.

### Not An Equality Struggle

The North American left has traditionally seen the tremendous struggle of African people, especially since "emancipation," as one to achieve the same status as "Americans" as they enjoy themselves. This is due in part to the change in the form of our oppression from slaves to

colonial subjects—a factor probably most responsible for the development of the subjective North American analysis of our situation—and the ideological unity of the North American Left and ruling-class, both of which promote the ownership of Black people with terms like Negro-American, Black-Americans, Afro-Americans, etc.

Consequently, no matter what Black people have had to say about our situation, our North American "comrades" have always known what we "really" meant, or what we "really" intended to say, or what we would have said if we were capable of scientific analysis. . . .

Until the North American workers can depend on a movement based within its ranks, speaking to its real material interests, and is conscious of itself as a social force, it will never be able to understand its real relationship to the real world. For this to happen, those who profess to lead the North American workers must base themselves and their analysis on the reality fashioned by the conditions of the North American workers' existence. . . .

Otherwise our struggles will continue to be unnecessarily complicated, fraught with false contradictions, beset by unnecessary setbacks, and the peoples of the U.S. will pay an unnecessarily high toll in continuous bloodshed and suffering.

But the struggle of African people will move on, regardless of the inadequacies of the leadership of the North American Left and the concomitant hostility of the North American working class because of those inadequacies.

This excerpt from the Coordinating Committee of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) said it well for us in a recent "Message to the Black Movement":

The fact that the majority of whites who are... oppressed and exploited do not really understand who their real enemy is, does not deter us from doing what must be done to break not only our people's ...chains, but theirs as well.



# THE APSP ON WOMEN IN STRUGGLE

## WOMEN'S DAY FORUM

*Spear*, April 1975

A spokeswoman for the APSP stated that "although women in general have a common oppressor in the white ruling class, that to the extent that the form of oppression differs the struggle against it differed." Speaking in relation to African women, the spokeswoman said that the oppression African women face is colonial in nature and centers around foreign domination. The objectively different contradiction faced by white women as opposed to the colonial contradiction faced by African women creates the non-antagonistic difference. While the struggle of white women is anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, the struggle of African women is anti-colonial as well. . . . African women are exploited in an effort to maintain the colonial relationship.

## DESSIE WOODS AND CHERYL TODD: AMERICAN STYLE BLACK JUSTICE

*Spear*, Nov. 1975

The U.S. government, through the State of Georgia, may execute Dessie Woods and Cheryl S. Todd. On the night of June 12, they successfully fought off a white assailant in Southern Georgia who attempted to sexually assault them, leaving him dead from gunshot wounds from his own gun. Now the state of Georgia plans to murder Dessie X Woods and Cheryl S. Todd.

Presently there is a rush on by some defenders of the two Black women to undermine the state's efforts by loudly advancing the right of women to defend themselves from sexual attacks. Many see this as being the critical issue and believe most defense efforts should be designed to force the state as well as the general population to make this concession.

Certainly the right for women to defend themselves is an issue here, but it is not the critical issue.

Unpunished attacks on African women in the U.S. by white men are centuries old, going back as far as our initial antagonistic contact with Europeans. These attacks have never come about simply because the white men were deranged, or because of widely-held notions of women as sexual objects, although both of these things may be true to lesser or greater degrees. The primary reason for sexual attacks on Black women by white men is the fact that they go unpunished, that the US white ruling class condones and encourages such attacks as a tactic of colonial terror against Black people.

Even if the right of women to defend themselves against sexual attacks were granted and applied equally to Africans and Americans, we must realize that the state would simply find another, probably more sophisticated method for oppressing African women.

. . . Samora Machel, another African patriot, who also seems to have drawn some conclusions from struggle concerning colonialism, had this to say in his message to the Nation (Mozambique) on June 25, 1975:

. . . Why did colonialism kill? Why did it seize, deport, and massacre people? Why were our mothers and wives raped, our traditions humiliated, our civilization negated and Mozambicans arrested for the slightest show of patriotism? Why was alcoholism made widespread and prostitution and the disintegration of the family encouraged? . . ."

. . . Were it not for the mention of Mozambique and the Portuguese, Machel could almost be addressing himself to the situation for Africans in the U.S. For colonialism acts in a definite oppressive and terroristic manner wherever it is the form of exploitation used by im-

perialism. . . .

These are things we must remember when we struggle against the sexual oppression of Black women and the general attack against all Black people in the U.S.

While raising certain demands and slogans during our struggle may very well bring about a certain democratization within U.S. society, we must always remember that ours is not a struggle to democratize U.S. society. Ours is a struggle to liberate our people from U.S. imperialist domination, and nothing short of that can be politically satisfying. . . .

Let us move forward to free Dessie X Woods and Cheryl Todd from the clutches of US domestic colonialism, let us raise slogans and demands around the contradictions peculiar to African women, including the right to self-defense against sexual attacks, but let us move beyond that and raise the demand for complete independence, so there will never be another Dessie Woods, Cheryl Todd, Joan Little,

Pitts and Lee (Black men falsely accused of rape), ad infinitum.

Struggle against colonialism and end the oppression of Black women and all African people in the U.S. The struggle against the oppression of African women is a struggle against U.S. colonialism.

#### STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*Spear*, Jan. 1976

The present economic crisis and the accompanying increase in colonial terror against Black people has increased attacks against Black women. This year Black women comprise 90 percent of the women in Florida prisons and as Black women continue to stand in the forefront of the anti-colonial struggle, resisting the ruling class' illegitimate authority over Black people, attacks will continue. . . .

(The cases) of Floretta Allen, Joan Little, Dessie X Woods, Cheryl Todd and countless other Black women who have suffered vicious attack from colonial rulers



*"Attica is the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed."*

—L.D. Barkley, a leader of the Attica Rebellion

after resisting rape from individual racists clarifies the existence of a state policy relative to Black women.

The particular history of Black women under colonialism adds a dimension which is not present in the exploitation of white women. Although the general oppression of women under capitalism is a fact, the specific relationship of Black people to that ruling class, which is characterized by powerlessness, places Black women squarely in the colonial contradiction.

... Since the emergence of capitalist industrialization, it has been in the interests of the ruling class to maintain women in a specific relationship to the means of production. This role consisted mainly of reproducing and maintaining workers. The ideology, perpetrated to make this role agreeable and exclusive to women, was an idealist philosophy of oppression. It called for women keeping men workers in good enough repair to continue slaving for the bosses each day.

When the more recent needs of capitalist production called for involving more women in the work force, the philosophy changed to the extent that liberal legislators claimed to be women's liberationists.

Although Black women suffer from this type of general oppression, the major contradiction facing Black women and Black people generally comes in the form of colonialism. The position of Black people first as property and slave laborers and then as a buffer in the industrialized capitalist production scheme where we continued to slave as a powerless colony with the U.S. boundaries, offered no protection to Black women.

This is the situation at present and will be until Black people successfully throw off the chains of foreign domination to stop once and for all violence against Black women. The struggle to free Black women is an anti-colonial struggle!

#### **SAXE TRIAL ENDS**

*Spear*, Feb. 1977

Susan Saxe, unlike many of the sectarian and opportunistic elements of the

North American Left, is a revolutionary intent on smashing U.S. North American imperialist exploitation and oppression. She has openly struggled for the rights of women and homosexuals, struggles which identify and moves to resolve major contradictions between the North American people, the resolution of which is the condition for a unified and principled North American revolutionary movement.

She has also stood in firm, unqualified solidarity with the aspirations of African people in the U.S. for independence, as manifested by her statements supporting Assata Shakur.

All Progressive people should support Susan Saxe because of all these reasons and because the women's and homosexual movements are the most progressive aspects of the North American Left. And a North American movement influenced by such leadership will be beneficial to all the peoples.

#### **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

*Spear*, Mar. 1977

Attacks on women within the current U.S. borders are escalating—especially on women who are of the subject and colonial nationalities. Not only are women under attack from the North American state apparatus, but also by increased unemployment, forced sterilization, reduced social services, etc.

Women are playing leading roles in the struggle world-wide against imperialism and for socialism and human dignity.

African women have played and are still playing heroic roles in our struggle for freedom—from Queen Nzinga, who for decades successfully fought off the Portuguese enslavers, to Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Joan Little, Dessie Woods, Assata Shakur, Katura Carey and other Black women who have fought and are still fighting the colonial oppression of Black people.

*The Burning Spear* salutes all the women of the world struggling to change the oppressive living and working conditions imposed by capitalism and colonialism.



# ASSATA SHAKUR CONVICTED

**FREE ASSATA SHAKUR!  
FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!  
FREE ALL PRISONERS OF WAR!**

Assata Shakur, revolutionary Black leader, was convicted March 25, 1977 by an all-white jury on frame-up charges of murder and illegal weapons possession. The charges stem from a shoot-out on the New Jersey Turnpike in May 1973, when a car driven by Assata and two companions was pulled over and attacked by N.J. State troopers. The New Jersey Turnpike is notorious as a highway where Black people do not have freedom of travel and are pulled over, harassed, and busted by the state police.

During the shoot-out, a state trooper and Assata's companion Zayd Shakur were killed, and Assata and another trooper, James Harper, were wounded. Sundiata Acoli, also in the car, escaped and was captured two days later after a massive, military-like police search operation. Sundiata was later railroaded to a murder conviction, and is serving life plus 30 years at Trenton State Prison in New Jersey. In prison he is under attack for his organizing activities in support of Assata and against the genocidal U.S. prison system.



The state's campaign to kill Assata or imprison her for life, is part of the continuing attack on the Black liberation movement and its leadership. Plans like COINTELPRO, the murderous attacks on Black revolutionary organizations, the assassinations of Malcolm, Martin Luther King, Fred Hampton, George Jackson, and others, continue to this day.

Prior to her recent conviction, Assata fought through three consecutive trials for attempted murder, bank robbery, kidnapping, and armed robbery. She was found innocent in each trial despite the massive white supremacist media campaign to brand her as a white-hating terrorist. Despite the acquittals, she has been held in prison for the past four years without bail. As a Black revolutionary woman linked to the Black Liberation Army, a former member of the Black Panther Party, and the mother of a three-year-old child, Assata has suffered the most inhuman, genocidal treatment and conditions while in prison.

Before her last trial, she was refused a change of venue from Middlesex County, N.J., even after a National Jury Project survey disclosed that 70% of the potential jurors in the county (Middlesex County is

97% white) believed she was guilty.

The judge refused to allow Assata to read her opening statement at the trial, and refused to allow evidence that showed Assata to be a target of the COINTELPRO counter-insurgency program against the Black liberation movement. Despite medical evidence that Assata had her hands raised over head when she was shot, and State trooper Harper's admission that he had lied in his written reports of the incident, the government's campaign to carry out their frame-up was finally successful.

On conviction, she received a sentence of life imprisonment plus 30 years. She will not be eligible for parole for at least 20 years. After her conviction, Assata was transferred from the windowless basement cell of the otherwise all-male Middlesex County jail, where she had remained in solitary confinement for over a year, to Clinton Women's Prison. Her move was accompanied by increased repression, including humiliating strip searches. When a majority of the women imprisoned there responded with a work stoppage demanding better conditions and an end to the discriminatory treatment of Assata, she was moved again—to an all-men's maximum security prison at Yardville, N.J.

Here, Assata is the only woman in a prison of 870 inmates. Incarcerated in a

tiny cell with no privacy, she is totally exposed 24 hours a day to any guard or inmate who passes by. A federal court has recently *denied* her request for transfer.

A movement in solidarity with Assata Shakur has been building. Only our continued pressure to overturn this frame-up can secure her transfer and finally her freedom. Solidarity with Assata Shakur is an essential part of solidarity with the Black liberation struggle against U.S. imperialism.

Money is still needed to pay bills and appeal the case. Please send all contributions and inquiries to:

Assata Shakur Defense Comm. West  
P.O. Box 40614 Station C.  
San Francisco, CA 94110

National Committee for the Defense of  
Assata Shakur  
126 W. 119th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10026

Assata Shakur Defense Committee  
339 Lafayette Street  
New York, N.Y. 10012

### FREE ASSATA SHAKUR AND SUNDIATA ACOLI!

In the first issue of *BREAKTHROUGH* we published "To My People", by Assata Shakur. The following statement was written by Assata after her conviction.

The vicious racist conviction of Sister Assata is a sobering reminder that, while temporary and occasional relief may sometimes be gained through the courts, our ultimate liberation and destiny depends upon the sweat of our efforts and the employment of our own means.

This is equally true for us as a nation of people and as armed revolutionaries."

—Sundiata Acoli,  
from Trenton State Prison



# FROM ASSATA SHAKUR

## TO THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ME

I first want to thank you for all the support that you have given me and secondly to say right on to the stand that you have taken against the government's persecution program against Black revolutionaries. By supporting me and other revolutionaries you have taken a stand against racism, against sexism, against oppression, against capitalism, against imperialism and against the genocidal war being waged against Third World people. By supporting me you are supporting Black people's right to national self-determination and the struggle to acquire that right.

From the beginning, we knew that it was highly unlikely, if not impossible for me to get a fair trial in Middlesex County, N.J.

One —because the constant co-optation by ruling classes of the masses of working peoples, coupled with their complete control of technology and information, makes the so-called democratic process null and void and thus created the hysterical, slanderous and racist press coverage that surrounded this case.

Two—because of the press coverage, over 70 percent of the people in racist Middlesex County were already convinced of my guilt.

Three —because the judge was racist and blatantly prejudiced in favor of the prosecution.

Fourthly —and most importantly, because there is no such thing as justice in amerika, especially for Black and poor people. History clearly shows that in the course of the development of modern western society, the code of law is the code of the dominant and most powerful class, made into laws for everyone. Law is never impartial, never divorced from the economical relationships that brought it about.

So, this is not the time to feel depressed or defeated. This is not the time to forget about struggling, or to forget about all the Sisters and Brothers who have been railroaded into these dungeons. Rather, it is the time to feel outraged, to feel determined, to fight against this government tooth and nail, not for what it is doing to me, but for what it is doing to us all.

This railroading and legal lynching of me is but one drop of blood in the ocean of blood and suffering that the amerikan government is responsible for. As i am writing this now someone else is being railroaded or shot in the back. We, the people, have lost this one battle, but we will and we must win the war; the war for liberation, for justice and for freedom. The war for our children and for the future of the world. I have no faith, nor have i ever had faith in this government or in this system of injustice. Black people must learn to no longer have a psychological dependence on racist reactionary "legalities". It is the people who will set us free.

In struggle,  
Assata



# LENIN ON GUERRILLA WARFARE

*BREAKTHROUGH* is reprinting the major portion of the article *Guerrilla Warfare* by V.I. Lenin published Sept. 30, 1906. (Col. Wks. Vol. 11, 1962, pp. 213-23).

Our objective in re-publishing this article at present is somewhat limited, although we think that it is very important. We do not offer this material as a definition, or even as an outline, for a present day strategy or position on the subject of guerrilla warfare. The reason we think this article is important is because it exemplifies a scientific approach and a serious revolutionary attitude toward events which can and do arise unexpectedly.

In particular, we think that revolutionaries in the US at present can benefit greatly from thinking more deeply about various forms of rebellion and resistance that have marked our recent history. Especially events that are outside and even contrary to established ways of thinking and acting of existing mass and cadre organizations and their leaders. It is

very much the fashion now to look upon the history of the last 10 or 15 years as being marked mainly by romantic, adventurist and ill-conceived individual and terrorist forms of violent response to the oppression and violence of the decaying capitalist/imperialist system and its state.

We think that such off-hand condemnation is essentially a conservative response that is much more reactionary than that which it criticizes. The events of the last decade and a half in the US can only be regarded by revolutionaries as expressions of the deepening national and world crisis of monopoly capitalism/imperialism. These *new-for-us* forms of struggle should be examined not mainly for their weak and un-strategic aspects but as notice of the existence of underlying volcano-powered forces that will one day overwhelm those so foolish as to ignore or underrate them. This is reason enough for re-circulating the content of this 71 year old treasure which has been buried by the opportunists far too long already.



May Day 1919

The phenomenon in which we are interested is the *armed struggle*. It is conducted by individuals and by small groups. Some belong to revolutionary organisations, while others (the *majority* in certain parts of Russia) do not belong to any revolutionary organisation. Armed struggle pursues two *different* aims, which must be *strictly* distinguished: in the first place, this struggle aims at assassinating individuals, chiefs and subordinates in the army and police; in the second place, it aims at the confiscation of monetary funds both from the government and from private persons. The confiscated funds go partly into the treasury of the Party, partly for the special purpose of arming and preparing for an uprising, and partly for the maintenance of persons engaged in the struggle we are describing. The big expropriations, (such as the Caucasian, involving over 200,000 rubles, and the Moscow, involving 875,000 rubles) went in fact first and foremost to revolutionary parties—small expropriations go mostly, and sometimes entirely, to the maintenance of the “expropriators”. This form of struggle undoubtedly became widely developed and extensive only in 1906, i.e., after the December uprising. The intensification of the political crisis to the point of an armed struggle, and, in particular, the intensification of poverty, hunger, and unemployment in town and country, was one of the important causes of the struggle we are describing. This form of struggle was adopted as the preferable and even *exclusive* form of social struggle by the vagabond elements of the population, the lumpen proletariat and anarchist groups. Declaration of martial law, mobilisation of fresh troops, Black-Hundred pogroms (Sedlets), and military courts must be regarded as the “retaliatory” form of struggle adopted by the autocracy.

### III

The usual appraisal of the struggle we are describing is that it is anarchism, Blanquism, the

old terrorism, the acts of individuals isolated from the masses, which demoralise the workers, repel wide strata of the population, disorganise the movement and injure the revolution. Examples in support of this appraisal can easily be found in the events reported every day in the newspapers.

But are such examples convincing? In order to test this, let us take a locality where the form of struggle we are describing is *most* developed—the Lettish Territory. This is the way *Novoye Vremya* (in its issues of September 9 and 12) complains of the activities of the Lettish Social-Democrats. The Lettish Social-Democratic Labour Party (a section of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party) regularly issues its paper in 30,000 copies. The announcement columns publish lists of spies whom it is the duty of every person to exterminate. People who assist the police are proclaimed “enemies of the revolution”, liable to execution and, moreover, to confiscation of property. The public is instructed to give money to the Social-Democratic Party only against signed and stamped receipt. In the Party’s latest report, showing a total income of 48,000 rubles for the year, there figures a sum of 5,600 rubles contributed by the Libau branch for arms which was obtained by expropriation. Naturally, *Novoye Vremya* rages and fumes against this “revolutionary law”, against “terror government”.

Nobody will be so bold as to call these activities of the Lettish Social-Democrats anarchism, Blanquism or terrorism. But why? Because here we have a *clear* connection between the new form of struggle and the uprising, which broke out in December and which is brewing again. This connection is not so perceptible in the case of Russia as a whole, but it exists. The fact that “guerrilla” warfare became widely-spread precisely after December, and its connection with the accentuation not only of the economic crisis but also of the political crisis is beyond dispute. The old Russian terrorism was an affair of the intellectual conspirator; today as a general rule guerrilla warfare is waged by the worker combatant, or simply the unemployed worker. Blanquism and anarchism easily occur to the minds of people who have a weakness for stereotype; but under circumstances of an uprising, which are so apparent in the Lettish Territory, the inappropriateness of such trite labels is only too obvious.

The example of the Letts clearly demonstrates how incorrect, unscientific and unhistorical is the practice so very common among us of analysing guerrilla warfare without reference to the circumstances of an uprising. These circumstances must be borne in mind, we must reflect on the peculiar features of an intermediate period between big acts of insurrection, we must realise what forms of struggle inevitably arise under such circumstances, and not try to shirk the issue by a collection of words learned by rote, such as are used equally by the Cadets and the *Novoye Vremya*-ites: anarchism, robbery, hooliganism!

It is said that guerrilla acts disorganise our work. Let us apply this argument to the situation that has existed since December 1905, to the period of Black-Hundred pogroms and martial law. What disorganises the movement more in *such* a period: the absence of resistance or organised guerrilla warfare? Compare the centre of Russia with her western borders, with Poland and the Lettish Territory. It is unquestionable that guerrilla warfare is far more widespread and far more developed in the western border regions. And it is equally unquestionable that the revolutionary movement in general, and the Social-Democratic movement in particular, are *more disorganised* in central Russia than in the western border regions. Of course, it would not enter our heads to conclude from this that the Polish and Lettish Social-Democratic movements are less disorganised *thanks* to guerrilla warfare. No. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that guerrilla warfare is not to blame for the state of disorganisation of the Social-Democratic working class movement in Russia in 1906.

Allusion is often made in this respect to the peculiarities of national conditions. But this allusion very clearly betrays the weakness of the current argument. If it is a matter of national conditions then it is not a matter of anarchism, Blanquism or terrorism—sins that are common to Russia as a whole and even to the Russians especially—but of something else. Analyse this something else *concretely*, gentlemen! You will then find that national oppression or antagonism explain nothing, because they have always existed in the western border regions, whereas guerrilla warfare has been engendered only by the present historical period. There are



many places where there is national oppression and antagonism, but no guerrilla struggle, which sometimes develops where there is no national oppression whatever. A concrete analysis of the question will show that is not a matter of national oppression, but of conditions of insurrection. Guerrilla warfare is an inevitable form of struggle at a time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the "big engagements" in the civil war.

It is not guerrilla actions which disorganise the movement, but the weakness of a party which is incapable of taking such actions *under its control*. That is why the anathemas which we Russians usually hurl against guerrilla actions go hand in hand with secret, casual, unorganised guerrilla actions which really do disorganise the party. Being incapable of understanding what historical conditions give rise to this struggle, we are incapable of neutralising its deleterious aspects. Yet the struggle is going on. It is engendered by powerful economic and political causes. It is not in our power to eliminate these causes or to eliminate this struggle. Our complaints against guerrilla warfare are complaints against our Party weakness in the matter of an uprising.

What we have said about disorganisation also applies to demoralisation. It is not guerrilla warfare which demoralises, but *unorganised*, irregular, non-party guerrilla acts. We shall not rid ourselves one least bit of this *most unquestionable* demoralisation by condemning and cursing guerrilla actions, for condemnation and curses are absolutely incapable of putting a stop to a phenomenon which has been engendered by profound economic and political causes. It may be objected that if we are incapable of putting a stop to an abnormal and demoralising phenomenon, this is no reason why the *Party* should adopt abnormal and demoralising methods of struggle. But such an objection would be a purely bourgeois-liberal and not a Marxist objection, because a Marxist cannot regard civil war, or guerrilla warfare, which is one of its forms, as abnormal and demoralising *in general*. A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle, and not social peace. In certain periods of acute economic and political crises the class struggle ripens into a direct civil war, i.e., into an armed struggle between two sections of the people. In such periods a Marxist is *obliged* to take the stand of civil war. Any moral condemnation of civil war would be absolutely impermissible from the standpoint of Marxism.

In a period of civil war the ideal party of the proletariat is a *fighting party*. This is absolutely incontrovertible. We are quite prepared to grant that it is possible to argue and prove the *inexpediency* from the standpoint of civil war of particular forms of civil war at any particular moment. We fully admit criticism of diverse forms of civil war from the standpoint of *military expediency* and absolutely agree that in *this* question it is the Social-Democratic practical workers in each particular locality who must have the final say. But we absolutely demand in the name of the principles of Marxism that an analysis of the conditions of civil war should not be evaded by hackneyed and stereotyped talk about anarchism, Blanquism, and terrorism, and that senseless methods of guerrilla activity adopted by some organisation or other of the Polish Socialist Party at some moment or other should not be used as a bogey when discussing the question of the participation of the Social-Democratic Party as such in guerrilla warfare in general.

The argument that guerrilla warfare disorganises the movement must be regarded critically. Every new form of struggle, accompanied as it is by new dangers and new sacrifices, inevitably "disorganises" organisations which are unprepared for this new form of struggle. Our old propagandist circles were disorganised by recourse to methods of agitation. Our committees were subsequently disorganised by recourse to demonstrations. Every military action in any war to a certain extent disorganises the ranks of the fighters. But this does not mean that one must not fight. It means that one must *learn* to fight. That is all.

When I see Social-Democrats proudly and smugly declaring "we are not anarchists, thieves, robbers, we are superior to all this, we reject guerrilla warfare",—I ask myself: Do these people realise what they are saying? Armed clashes and conflicts between the Black-Hundred government and the population are taking place all over the country. This is an absolutely inevitable phenomenon at the present stage of development of the revolution. The population is spon-

taneously and in an unorganised way—and for that very reason often in unfortunate and *undesirable* forms—reacting to this phenomenon also by armed conflicts and attacks. I can understand us refraining from Party leadership of *this* spontaneous struggle in a particular place or at a particular time because of the weakness and unpreparedness of our organisation. I realise that this question must be settled by the local practical workers, and that the remoulding of weak and unprepared organisations is no easy matter. But when I see a Social-Democratic theoretician or publicist not displaying regret over this unpreparedness, but rather a proud smugness and a self-exalted tendency to repeat phrases learned by rote in early youth about anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism, I am hurt by this degradation of the most revolutionary doctrine in the world.

It is said that guerrilla warfare brings the class-conscious proletarians into close association with degraded, drunken riff-raff. That is true. But it only means that the party of the proletariat can never regard guerrilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief, method of struggle; it means that this method must be subordinated to other methods, that it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be ennobled by the enlightening and organising influence of socialism. And without this *latter* condition, *all*, positively all, methods of struggle in bourgeois society bring the proletariat into close association with the various non-proletarian strata above and below it, and, if left to the spontaneous course of events, become frayed, corrupted and prostituted. Strikes, if left to the spontaneous course of events, become corrupted into “alliances”—agreements between the workers and the masters *against* the consumers. Parliament becomes corrupted into a brothel, where a gang of bourgeois politicians barter wholesale and retail “national freedom”, “liberalism”, “democracy”, republicanism, anti-clericalism, socialism and all other wares in demand. A newspaper becomes corrupted into a public pimp, into a means of corrupting the masses, of pandering to the low instincts of the mob, and so on and so forth. Social-Democracy knows of no universal methods of struggle, such as would shut off the proletariat by a Chinese wall from the strata standing slightly above or slightly below it. At different periods Social-Democracy applies different methods, *always* qualifying the choice of them by *strictly* defined ideological and



Mozambican women fighters

credit: Robert Van Lierop *The Black Scholar*

organisational conditions.\*

#### IV

The forms of struggle in the Russian revolution are distinguished by their colossal variety compared with the bourgeois revolutions in Europe. Kautsky partly foretold this in 1902 when he said that the future revolution (with the exception *perhaps* of Russia, he added) might be not so much a struggle of the people against the government as a struggle between two sections of the people. In Russia we undoubtedly see a wider development of this *latter* struggle than in the bourgeois revolutions in the West. The enemies of our revolution among the people are few in number, but as the struggle grows more acute they become more and more organised and receive the support of the reactionary strata of the bourgeoisie. It is therefore absolutely natural and inevitable that in *such* a period, a period of nation-wide political strikes, an *uprising* cannot assume the old form of individual acts restricted to a very short time and to a very small area. It is absolutely natural and inevitable that the uprising should assume the higher and more complex form of a prolonged civil war embracing the whole country, i.e., an armed struggle between two sections of the people. Such a war cannot be conceived otherwise than as a series of a few big engagements at comparatively long intervals and a large number of small encounters during these intervals. That being so—and it is undoubtedly so—the Social-Democrats must absolutely make it their duty to create organisations best adapted to lead the masses in these big engagements and, as far as possible, in these small encounters as well. In a period when the class struggle has become accentuated to the point of civil war, Social-Democrats must make it their duty not only to participate but also to play a leading role in *this* civil war. The Social-Democrats must train and prepare their organisations to be really able to act as a *belligerent side* which does not miss a single opportunity of inflicting damage on the enemy's forces.

This is a difficult task, there is no denying. It cannot be accomplished at once. Just as the whole people are being retrained and are learning to fight in the course of the civil war, so our organisations must be trained, must be reconstructed in conformity with the lessons of experience to be equal to this task.

We have not the slightest intention of foisting on practical workers any artificial form of struggle, or even of deciding from our armchair what part any particular form of guerrilla warfare should play in the general course of the civil war in Russia. We are far from the thought of regarding a concrete assessment of particular guerrilla actions as indicative of a *trend* in Social-Democracy. But we do regard it as our duty to help as far as possible to arrive at a correct *theoretical* assessment of the new forms of struggle engendered by practical life. We do regard it as our duty relentlessly to combat stereotypes and prejudices which hamper the class-conscious workers in correctly presenting a new and difficult problem and in correctly approaching its solution.

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\*The Bolshevik Social-Democrats are often accused of a frivolous passion for guerrilla actions. It would therefore not be amiss to recall that in the draft resolution on guerrilla actions (*Partiinnye Izvestia*, No. 2, and Lenin's report on the Congress), the *section* of the Bolsheviks who defend guerrilla actions suggested the following conditions for their recognition: "expropriations" of private property were not to be permitted under any circumstances; "expropriations" of government property were not to be recommended but only *allowed* provided that they *were controlled by the Party* and their proceeds used *for the needs of an uprising*. Guerrilla acts in the form of terrorism were to be *recommended* against brutal government officials and *active* members of the Black-Hundreds, but on condition that 1) the sentiments of the masses be taken into account; 2) the conditions of the working class movement in the given locality be reckoned with, and 3) care be taken that forces of the proletariat should not be frittered away. The practical difference between this draft and the resolution which was adopted at the Unity Congress lies *exclusively* in the fact that "expropriations" of government property are not allowed.



# COMMENT ON PUERTO RICO SOLIDARITY WORK

— by some members of PFOC

## EDITORIAL NOTE

We of PFOC have opposed the practice of some individuals and organizations of the white left who take it upon themselves to make authoritative decisions on the affairs of oppressed nations as to their way of struggling for their own liberation and social revolutions. In the US this is very often done from the standpoint of liquidation of the oppressed nations into one big multi-national working class family, with whites securely in charge.

We continue to oppose and criticize such practices as a white supremacist negation of the right of self-determination.

As a new organization still beginners in international solidarity activity, we have come to realize that we must also learn about the history and politics of each liberation struggle if we are to learn which are the revolutionary politics and who are the revolutionary forces, in order not to confuse them with those politics and forces which have already been rejected by the peoples of the nations concerned as actual helpers of the oppressor nations.

It is important that we be forthright and open about questions that are not clear or where we have differences and criticisms. At the same time we are responsible not to allow the criticisms we have of others to eat up and destroy our support and solidarity where unity in the struggle is the main priority.

We want to receive criticism of ourselves seriously, but also when necessary we defend and explain the internationalist and revolutionary content of our politics and activity within the dominant oppressor nation.

Our first task is to strengthen unity and solidarity with liberation movements. Very important in doing this is to fight opportunism and chauvinism within the white left and the white dominated solidarity formations. This set of relationships needs more analysis and discussion. Here we only add that, while we are broadening our understanding, we will continue these criticisms of the white left as a major task.

In discussing these questions it is also

necessary to take into account the sometimes differing views and opinions of Third World organizations and comrades about our own or joint solidarity work within the dominant oppressor nation.

Many such struggles arise from the fact that oppressed nation comrades have a much more immediate and urgent interest in solidarity than most of the white left which tends to be very calm and relaxed about the whole subject, which is a chauvinist approach in itself.

However, differences also arise about relationships of politics and organization, including party building: all the questions about vanguard and mass, minimum and maximum positions etc. What is at stake here is the anti-imperialist content and quality of the solidarity movement. Rapid expansion at the price of major concessions to opportunism, putting numbers in command, will fail in the end. The only basis for solid growth of our movements are internationalist and revolutionary content. We will be writing more on these critical subjects.

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At the recent national conference (Chicago, Feb. 1977) of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee (PRSC), there were important struggles about the nature of anti-imperialist solidarity work.

The struggles came about in opposition to a political line claiming to be anti-imperialist but which actually liquidates the leading role of national liberation in defeating US imperialism. This line rejects the importance of self-determination in building solidarity with Puerto Rican liberation. In this article we will discuss the essential understandings of imperialism that can guide a mass solidarity movement. The article will criticize the incorrect politics put forward at the conference by most of the present leadership of PRSC; politics that in fact hinder in-

stead of support the Puerto Rican national liberation struggle, and thus also liquidate the role of revolutionary class solidarity and struggle within the oppressor nation as well.

Before examining the history of PRSC and the recent conference, it is important to clear up one or two false issues which have already been injected into the debates about solidarity work. One of these is the charge that revolutionaries and anti-imperialists are clinging to abstract theory at the expense of "real" mass organizing based upon class struggle. There are two main props to this charge. One is that anti-imperialists ignore or reject the fact that various forms of material and political support and reforms can be very important to the cause of national liberation regardless of the political level or role of those who join in the cause and the action.

To this we respond that we too are aware of such relationships and needs. However this begs the question. The question is should we condone people who use the need for popular support to deny the greater truths and the more profound need to make revolution and national liberation? National liberation and anti-imperialism are indispensable concepts not only to Marxist-Leninists and communists, but to all of the solidarity and mass movements. This is what our world and our country are like. Charges of the alleged narrowness and dogmatism of telling the truth about our world do not and cannot move real mass solidarity consciousness forward a single inch. Such charges only serve to confuse people about the nature of the struggle and the result is to keep opportunism in command.

Practice also shows that this is a false notion of mass appeal. The most clear and open of revolutionaries end up with the greatest support from all sorts of folks. Witness Ho Chi Minh and Malcolm X.

The other point often made is that most of the large numbers of revolutionaries needed for the struggles of today and the future have to come from people who are not at this moment committed anti-imperialists and revolutionary communists; they

are right now at less advanced levels of social consciousness.

This is true, and it is important. But this will never change if people who presume to lead united fronts, coalitions and masses in the name of solidarity and anti-imperialism, and even of revolution, Marxism-Leninism and socialism, cater to all the most backward and white and male supremacist and opportunist ideas and habits.

No—the way to revolution is not to offer re-assurance and bait that it will be easy—no sacrifice—no sweat. The thing that builds real organization and real movements is the political truth, that it is necessary to oppose capitalist empire and support national, class and social revolution, openly and straight-forwardly. Naturally, it's easier to use all the old gimmicks and publicity stunts than to be a serious revolutionary fighter. It's hard to build movements in the US that do stand up and fight and that persist. All of how to do that cannot be covered in this article or this issue, or this Journal or by any small group. But we and significant numbers of others are beginning and will keep on. This is why we need to examine PRSC doings as one little but important step.

Those who promote opportunist politics like those which prevailed at the PRSC conference are responsible for the damage done already and for that which will follow until their line is defeated.

A brief look at the history of PRSC will help in understanding the conference. PRSC was formed about two years ago on the initiative of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). The PRSC's initial political statement affirmed the leading role of national liberation struggles and the importance of international solidarity work. The PSP projected the PRSC as a united front of forces within the US left organizing to carry out work in support of Puerto Rican struggle for independence.

From the beginning, the leadership of PRSC has steadily liquidated fundamental characteristics of US imperialism. It failed to address and fight the national oppression of Blacks, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Asians, and

Chicanos/Mexicanos within the US, and it did not understand the importance of the struggle against women's oppression. Thus it ended up denying the existence of white and male supremacy and putting forth a "multi-national working class" analysis of the US. By requiring these positions as a basis of unity, disunity has been created with some of the most consistent supporters of national liberation who do not want to melt their national identity into the multi-national pot.

Liquidating the fight against US imperialism obscures the fact that Puerto Rico is an oppressed nation whose people are engaged in a national liberation struggle. PRSC has concentrated instead on a populist approach focussed on the "illegality" of US colonialism under US and international law. Self-determination has been raised only as a slogan, it is not used as a guide to work and support for the Puerto Rican struggle. Nor has PRSC developed adequate solidarity relations with Puerto Rican groups other than PSP. It has ignored the fact that the liberation struggles of Puerto Rico will take many forms and has historically included and will continue to include the form of armed struggle.

In this process solidarity work serves as an "anti-imperialist banner", a left cover for opportunist politics. In particular, some forces (for example those who unite with the line of *Osawatamie*, political journal of the former WUO) used their activity in support of Puerto Rican independence as a cover for not supporting the Black Liberation movement, the Native American or other national liberation movements.

Eventually, PRSC moved still further to the right, going so far as to hold that any work making an issue of Puerto Rico is "objectively anti-imperialist". The national leadership proposed to massify the PRSC by lowering the political standards of the organization so that all the forces in the US that opposed colonialism for whatever reason could be organized on an equal basis. PRSC would itself concentrate to work on the Dellums

Congressional resolution calling for US withdrawal from Puerto Rico. The slogan projected for the coming period was "US Out of Puerto Rico!" instead of the former call for "Independence and Self-Determination!" The national liberation of Puerto Rico was to be abandoned, presumably in favor of what would "sell" in the US.

After the July 4th Coalition (1976) the San Francisco PRSC chapter undertook to criticize its own wrong line and practice, especially in pitting Puerto Rico against other anti-imperialist struggles. The SF chapter opened up a struggle to reaffirm anti-imperialist politics. This struggle was participated in also by members of Prairie Fire (PFOC) as being in accord with PFOC's commitment to struggle for the rectification of opportunist politics.

The local challenge to the opportunist line and suppression of struggle that had been followed in the national July 4th Coalition and other PRSC programs, was pushed forward with the objective that PRSC should engage in anti-imperialist solidarity (not just support work) with Puerto Rico based on the leading role of national liberation struggles. The national PRSC leadership was put somewhat on the defensive by the San Francisco chapter struggle.

At this point, the *Guardian*, in the persons of Fran Beal and Irwin Silber, put itself forward as "representing Marxist-Leninist/anti-imperialist leadership" within PRSC. These persons formed political alliances with forces that had been dominant, such as the Mass Party Organizing Committee (MPOC), some chapter co-ordinators and national staff people. The National Board of PRSC then gave to Irwin Silber the task of drafting a new political statement for discussion and ratification at the upcoming national conference. A draft program representing the same political line and priorities was also circulated. These documents continued the line of liquidating the Puerto Rican national liberation struggle and the revolutionary potential of solidarity work in the oppressor nation. Their import was to define the PRSC as a liberal support



*Irving Flores, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Lolita Lebron and Andres Figueroa Cordero under arrest after their armed attack on the US Congress, March 1, 1954*

*"The so-called crimes for which Five Puerto Rican Nationalists are presently serving in US prisons were a direct consequence of the invasion of our country by US armed forces and of all the acts of aggression that have been perpetrated against our people since July 25, 1898."*

*Oscar Collazo*



credit: "Puerto Rico: Our People's History"

organization under the cover of anti-imperialist rhetoric.

#### FORCES AT THE CONFERENCE

Conference preparations were firmly in the hands of the *Guardian*-led alliance. Agendas and rules were determined by this grouping in ways that diverted or quashed political struggle against their formulations. The Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) led in projecting a view that the PRSC should unite around "lowest common denominator" politics, and concentrate its energy on legislative and educational work for independence. PSP positions tended to reinforce the *Guardian*-MPOC camp on important issues.

But there were many other political forces present which made it difficult for the *Guardian*-led forces to achieve the degree of hegemony and control they were aiming for. The first obstacle to opportunism was the active participation and leadership by forces of the Puerto Rican national liberation movement, both from the island and the US. Representatives of the Movimiento Socialista Popular (MSP) and of El Komite-MINP (a group in the US with close ties to the MSP) emphasized the central reality that Puerto Rico was engaged in a national liberation struggle. They

both pointed out the role of the national liberation movements in advancing socialist revolution and the necessity of armed struggle in the fight for liberation. The Puerto Rican Peace Council (an organization of various forces including the PSP, the MSP, and independents) pushed the PRSC to undertake concrete solidarity activities around issues of central importance to the survival of the Puerto Rican nation.

The Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico and a grouping of independent Puerto Ricans from Chicago had, in effect, previously been excluded from PRSC. Among them were Puerto Ricans who had been subpoenaed to testify before the Federal Grand Jury investigating the Puerto Rican independence movement. In Chicago, the main solidarity with Puerto Rican liberation was carried on outside PRSC, as in the Committee to Free the Five Nationalists and in the Committee to Stop the Grand Jury. This group led a working alliance of forces at the conference called the *March 1st Bloc*. This Bloc also included oppressor nation forces like the Sojourner Truth Organization (STO) and the Brooklyn PRSC chapter, including forces from NY "PFOC" (which is not affiliated

with national PFOC). This Bloc confronted the liberal priorities of the national PRSC.

The PRSC delegation from San Francisco came with an alternative draft political statement which represented a compromise among the forces in the local chapter. This statement opposed crucial aspects of Silber's draft and proposed the following principles of anti-imperialist solidarity work:

- 1) that national liberation struggles are the leading force in the fight against imperialism, which is a single system;
- 2) that male supremacy is fundamental to imperialism; and
- 3) that support for self-determination is central in solidarity work.

Delegates from other West Coast PRSC chapters allied themselves with the SF paper at the conference in a joint caucus. These delegations also included PFOC members who were delegates and some who were observers. A substantial proportion of the conference delegates were not aligned with any political bloc, including many who had originally been organized into PRSC on the basis laid down by the existing national leadership.

#### MAIN STRUGGLES AT THE CONFERENCE

The San Francisco chapter paper held that an understanding of imperialism is necessary to guide the work of a mass anti-imperialist organization. Imperialism was described as a single system of national oppression, white supremacy and male supremacy, and class exploitation inside and outside US borders. National liberation was identified as the leading force in resisting and overthrowing that system. The debate over this amendment drew out the opposing world views of the forces engaged in solidarity work. Irwin Silber rose to explain that although he agreed with 90% of the proposal, and that a definition of imperialism should be included, the San Francisco paper was unscientific and obscured the fundamental and unchanged class contradiction of imperialism, which was only capitalism in its

monopoly stage.

Speakers supporting the SF PRSC position emphasized in response that Silber's analysis repudiated the leading role of struggles for national liberation and for women's liberation. Imperialism is capitalism in its deadly and dying monopoly stage, in which the world is divided into oppressor and oppressed nations. White supremacy is a central pillar of imperialism and so is male supremacy based on the exploitative sexual division of labor, a part of the fundamental production relations of imperialism; the double shift of women at home and on the job is a source of super-profits. Silber only pays lip-service to Lenin and anti-imperialism while ignoring its consequences for our solidarity work. Negating these most characteristic features of empire undercuts solidarity in the most critical and strategic areas. It robs the Puerto Rican national liberation movement of its strongest allies within the US—the Black, Latino, Native American nations who have shared a common history of national oppression and resistance.

What is substituted for the solidarity of the most oppressed in practice was spelled out by the national leadership's program proposal in these words:

"Working class and trade union solidarity between workers in Puerto Rico and the US can develop as a basis for solidarity of workers in this country with the liberation movement.

"Workers are often threatened in contract negotiations when confronted with the company's threat to move to Puerto Rico where wages are lower and health and safety regulations are virtually non-existent. Worker solidarity based on mutual respect for rights and aspirations can be a powerful response. Such an alliance can develop through support for strikers in Puerto Rico em-

ployees of the same company here, *and vice versa* (italics ours). It is particularly important to rally support to unions and strikers in Puerto Rico when their efforts are threatened by the imposition of the Taft-Hartley law and attacks from repressive agencies.

"The Taft-Hartley law, recognized by the labor movement in this country as a major obstacle to organizing, is even more stifling and repressive in Puerto Rico. This is because union organization was minimal at the time the law came into effect. Now, Puerto Rican workers are taking a leading role in the struggle against the Taft-Hartley. Support for this initiative from progressive unions in the US may be a springboard to a nation-wide drive against this most despised law."

These proposals are actually based on maintaining and reinforcing imperialist relations between the US and Puerto Rico. They call on Puerto Rican workers to support US strikes. The struggle of the Puerto Rican people is directed against the very jurisdiction of the repressive US agencies and laws, including the reactionary US trade unions. But PRSC was asked to identify the entire US work force with the interest of the most reactionary-led organizations most integrated into the service of monopoly capital/imperialism. This totally ignores the role of US unions in the suppression of the Puerto Rican independent workers movement, and depoliticizes solidarity work in favor of "bread and butter" appeals firmly rooted in defending imperial super-profits and privilege. This set of proposals, and others equally objectionable were thrown out in workshops, when forces from the Puerto Rican movement made clear their unacceptability. But the dominant national

leadership of PRSC pushed through acceptance of their program as a whole without discussion from the floor.

### WHITE AND MALE CHAUVINISM

These proceedings reflect both national chauvinism towards Puerto Ricans and a disrespect and cynicism toward the revolutionary potential of millions of oppressor nation workers. They also reflect an incorrect position on women's oppression and liberation, and a denial of the leading role of women in the struggle against imperialism—a denial of the centrality of male supremacy to imperialism and revolutionary internationalist potential of white working class women.

Silber's draft was insulting in its dismissal and liquidation of women's oppression and male supremacy, barely mentioning the oppression of Puerto Rican women, and ignoring the role of women in the oppressor nation in building internationalist solidarity. Instead, Silber's draft off-handedly refers to male supremacy as "an erection of imperialism to enforce super-profits." The struggle for the leading role of women was weakened by differences on the struggle for women's liberation within the March 1st Bloc, which led to proposals to defer struggles about the oppression of women. This posed women's liberation against national liberation and obstructed dealing with the revolutionary cause of women as a strategic part of the whole.

As a result, the fact that male supremacy is necessary to imperialism, and that the women's movement can be a strong ally of Puerto Rican liberation, was never fully addressed by the conference. This weakened the potential for a fuller discussion of women's oppression and liberation. (There was no discussion of gay oppression. The conference refused to accept most sections of the SF paper on these issues.)

At the beginning of the conference, a women's caucus was voted down. On a series of motions from other chapters, portions of the SF paper on the oppression of Puerto Rican women were added to the draft. These excerpts, taken out of con-



text, equated the oppression of women in Puerto Rico with that of all women in the US. At this point Puerto Rican women at the conference objected to the positions being put forward and to their exclusion from the discussion as a violation of self-determination, and a caucus was approved to allow struggle over the amendment to take place. The caucus put forward a proposal which ultimately rejected the potential leading force of Puerto Rican women, and in its place put an analysis that "because women are subject to a barrage of bourgeois propaganda designed to ensure their participation in reinforcing ruling class ideology on future generations . . . women are in danger of being co-opted as a counter-revolutionary force." Thus Puerto Rican women are called backward while the white US conservative labor movement is called advanced.

national leadership treated self-determination only as rhetoric and not as an imperative political principle in developing solidarity with oppressed nations. The *Guardian* newspaper article on the conference had to be retracted with apology to El Komite and the MSP because of expressions of national chauvinism. This was another example of white US arrogance. For the article was an attempt to use differences within the Puerto Rican independence movement rather than respecting them.

Silber's draft as approved categorized Puerto Ricans in the US as an oppressed section of the "multi-national American working class" despite the fact that the situation and status of Puerto Ricans in the US and their relation to Puerto Rican nationhood is an open and unresolved question within the national liberation movement.

#### ARMED STRUGGLE

A special effort to define and control the struggle of the Puerto Rican people, through the vehicle of "solidarity", was evident around the issue of armed struggle.

The national draft dealt with the question of armed struggle only by lamenting that "when it comes to a fight" it will be "the sons, husbands and fathers primarily of

*Don Pedro Albizu Campos, leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party until his death in 1965.*



credit: "Puerto Rico: Our People's History"

the American working class who will be called on to die." On this issue as well, the *Guardian* position defines solidarity work according to what it thinks will "reach" or "hook" people in the US, abandons the Puerto Rican nation to imperialist attack, and in fact tries to limit the leading national liberation struggle to a level and scope it deems acceptable. This line generates reformist illusions.

The March 1st Bloc pushed forward the necessity of armed struggle to the national liberation movement, as a right and option thrust upon it and exercised in face of continuing US imperialist aggression and oppression. Opposition to this was mounted on the grounds that armed struggle was too "heavy" a question for PRSC to ad-

dress, that it meant condoning "terrorism", or was beyond the unity of a mass solidarity organization. This came from forces committed to "peaceful transition" and legalisms. At this point, the initiative of the MSP was decisive. A proposal they formulated was introduced by a SF delegate and adopted. It read in part:

This characterization of US imperialist domination determines the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to make use of revolutionary violence...to achieve its definitive liberation....Any movement of solidarity must take into consideration the inevitable use of armed struggle as a fundamental aspect of struggle against US imperialist domination of Puerto Rico. This aspect is part of the series of forms of struggle—legal and illegal—that will be used by the Puerto Rican workers and people in their anti-imperialist struggle.

The concrete forms assumed by armed struggle—as well as by other methods of struggle—will be defined by the character of the national liberation struggle and by the Puerto Rican revolutionary organizations, each applying those methods they understand are correct in order to achieve independence and socialism on the island.

A serious weakness of the debate on armed struggle is that it confined itself to defending the right of Puerto Ricans to resort to arms. It did not raise or define the duty of US progressive and revolutionary people to obstruct, oppose, sabotage and negate the armed force and violence by which the US government holds Puerto Rico captive.

Similar initiatives were taken, led

especially by the Puerto Rican forces and the March 1st Bloc, to redefine and rectify the work of PRSC on the campaign to Free the Five Nationalist Prisoners, and to instruct the PRSC to take up the attack on Grand Jury harassment of the Puerto Rican movement. Workshops approved these as priority areas of PRSC work, and adopted an approach to work around the Five as prisoners of war in the Puerto Rican national liberation struggle.

Previously, work around the Grand Juries had been non-existent within PRSC, reflecting an unwillingness to deal with the issues of armed struggle or to take leadership from the Puerto Rican forces involved. This was an abandonment of the entire Puerto Rican movement at a moment of sharp attack by the imperialist state. Similarly, work around the Five, imprisoned for their armed attacks on the US government in the '50's, had been restricted to a moralistic and defensive approach. PRSC treated the Five only as victims of repression rather than building support for the heroic and principled stand of the Five themselves in rejecting the authority of US imperialism, by developing solidarity with the right of the Puerto Rican people and nation to achieve liberation by any means necessary. The PRSC was unable to apply the lessons of Vietnam, of Cuba, of the Black liberation movement, to develop an understanding of Puerto Rican national liberation. It couldn't show how internationalist forces in the oppressor nation can be a real force on the side of national liberation.

#### OPPORTUNISM IN PRACTICE

Despite gains registered at the conference by the struggle to deepen PRSC's understanding of imperialism and its actual ability to do material solidarity, the national leadership, pushed by the *Guardian's* opportunist line, persists in its errors. Continuing practice makes it clear how this line actually impedes the development of solidarity and serves as an obstacle and hindrance to the Puerto Rican struggle.

One chapter of the PRSC in New York has withdrawn from a coalition to stop the

Grand Jury which had the support of the women and men imprisoned for refusing to testify. This NY chapter decided that the coalition principles, because they included demands for independence and self-determination (including the right of Puerto Ricans to bear arms) and "Freedom for the Five", were "too narrow". The national interim committee of PRSC has backed them up, proposing demands restricted to quashing the subpoenas and stopping the attack. This proposal, which is supposedly aimed at "broadening" support, has the effect of severing the clear connection which exists between the Grand Jury as a particular repressive tool and the ongoing attacks on the Puerto Rican national liberation struggle. Chapters currently involved in the coalitions in Chicago and NY would be "asked" to leave by the national leadership. This puts the PRSC in the outrageous position of opposing a coalition because it is demanding Puerto Rican independence and self-determination, and in fact calls on PRSC chapters to sabotage the defense efforts of Puerto Rican and Latino liberation forces under attack.

The lesson of these struggles is clear. Real solidarity within the oppressor nation must be based upon unity of the anti-imperialist struggles of the oppressed and of the oppressor nations. Taking internationalism and the fight against white and male supremacy as the concrete ap-

plication of Marxism-Leninism as the guide to our work means that it is necessary to struggle against opportunism in all phases of international solidarity work. There are people who seek to control the solidarity movement so they can manipulate the national liberation forces according to the narrow needs of a sector of the US left, which wants to build a "multinational" party. This opportunist line in solidarity work betrays internationalism in order to flatter the slowest-moving, most backward elements of the oppressor nation working class. This sells out the national liberation struggles. This surrenders the possibility of building a mass solidarity movement based on revolutionary principles. This surrender betrays the right to self-determination for oppressed nations.

By: PRAIRIE FIRE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE members active in Puerto Rico solidarity work.

Note: *BREAKTHROUGH* will shortly publish an additional article on the subject of solidarity activity in which events since the PRSC conference will be examined and evaluated. The problems of building solidarity movements that are both anti-imperialist in content and capable of organizing genuine coalition and mass support for national liberation struggles will be discussed further.

## WHO WE ARE

cont'd from inside front cover

led by oppressed nations around the world and within the US.

We struggle to implement these views in the prisoner solidarity movement, in communities, in workplaces, in international solidarity movements, and in the women's movement. We understand that revolutionary theory must guide revolutionary practice, and that practice tests the correctness of theory. We rely on the principles of democratic centralism and criticism/self-criticism to help determine, evaluate and correct our practice.

As an organization, we commit ourselves to active solidarity with national liberation struggles, to supporting the right of self-determination for oppressed nations inside and outside the US, and to combatting the white supremacist institutions of US imperialism. We commit ourselves to fight for women's liberation, for revolutionary women's leadership; for gay liberation, and against the male supremacist institutions of US imperialism.

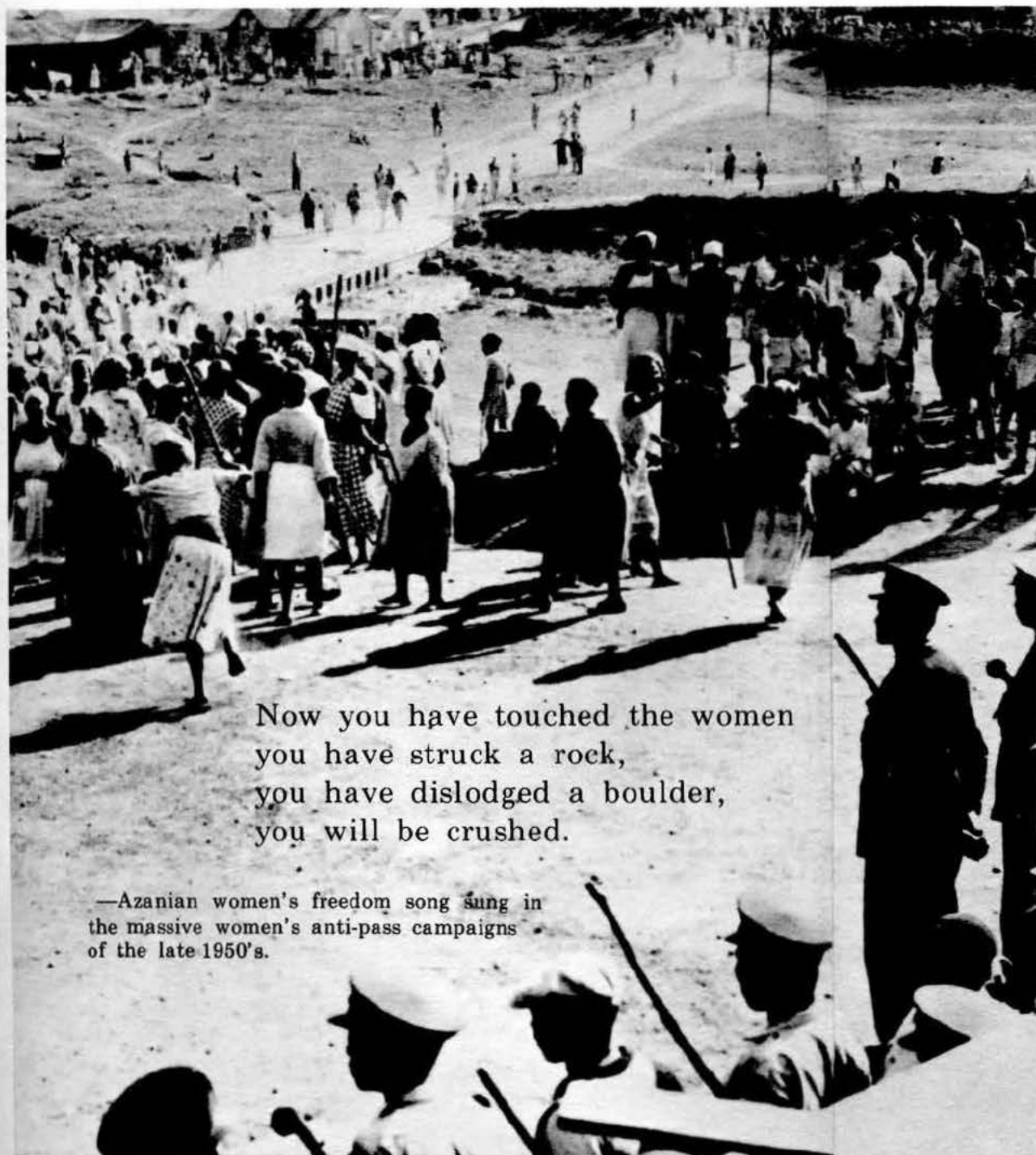
We commit ourselves to fight against all forms of opportunism, national and male chauvinism, privilege, competition, and arrogance which have historically characterized most of the white oppressor nation left in the US. We commit ourselves to struggle with all who have honest differences with us and who are principled in the struggle. We will unite with all who break with opportunism to struggle against imperialism.



# VICTORY TO THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA!

*"The liberation of women is a basic requirement for the Revolution,  
the guarantee of its continuity, and a precondition of its victory."*

*--1st Conference of Mozambican Women*



Now you have touched the women  
you have struck a rock,  
you have dislodged a boulder,  
you will be crushed.

—Azanian women's freedom song sung in  
the massive women's anti-pass campaigns  
of the late 1950's.

## SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLES OF AFRICAN WOMEN!

# **SMASH WHITE VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK WOMEN!**



Connie Canney, Burning Spear

## **FREE DESSIE WOODS!**

Dessie Woods shot Ronnie Horn with his own gun after he attempted to rape her and threatened to kill her when she fought against his rape attack. On February 12, 1976 Judge O'Connor of Pulaski County (Hawkinsville Georgia) sentenced Dessie to 22 years in the Georgia Women's Institute of Corrections.

For more information and to contribute to Dessie Woods' defense efforts, contact:

National Committee  
to Defend Dessie Woods  
Post Office Box 92084  
Morris Brown Station  
Atlanta, GA 30314

or:

Committee to Defend Dessie Woods  
3 Hazel Avenue  
San Anselmo, CA 94960