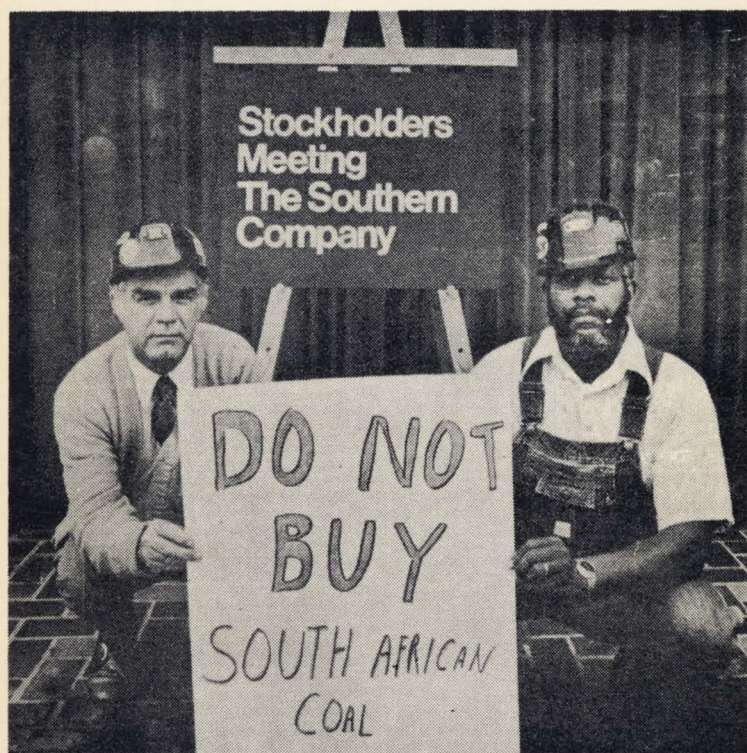


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# RADICAL AMERICA

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SLAVERY AND RACISM IN THE U.S.  
REVOLUTIONARY ARGENTINA  
... MORE ON BUSING IN BOSTON

# RADICAL AMERICA

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# **American Workers and Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa: The Boycott of Coal and Chrome**

*Eileen Whalen & Ken Lawrence*

*The economic boycott of South Africa will entail undoubted hardship for Africans. We do not doubt that. But if it is a method which shortens the day of bloodshed, the suffering to us will be a price we are willing to pay. In any case, we suffer already, our children are often undernourished, and on a small scale (so far) we die at the whim of a policeman.*

*Chief Albert J. Luthuli, late President-General of the African National Congress, and Nobel Laureate*

The two largest African political parties are the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, whose leaders have been forced underground or into exile by government repression. Both organizations are on record as favoring economic sanctions as a means of providing concrete support for the growing armed struggle of black Africans to liberate themselves from imperialism.

In Zimbabwe, as the liberation struggle reaches a military and political climax, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) continues to call for sanctions against the Smith regime.

Throughout the world, the struggle to quarantine the illegal white racist governments of Southern Africa has been gaining strength. Spearheaded by Communist and Third World governments, the United Nations has called for economic sanctions against these regimes.

Protests against governments and corporations that ignore or violate these sanctions have also been gaining strength — not only in the Third World, but in Western Europe and the United States as well.

#### BUILDING SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN PEOPLES' STRUGGLE AGAINST PORTUGUESE COLONIALISM

In the Netherlands, the Angola Comité initiated a successful boycott of Angolan coffee. As the liberation struggle intensified in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and the Cape Verde Islands, Gulf Oil was targeted for boycott activity throughout Black America, from the Mississippi Delta to the Northern ghettos. The Gulf Boycott Coalition, supported by the left and by some liberal church people, educated large numbers of people about the struggle to end Portuguese colonialism.

In spring 1972, the Pan African Liberation Committee, a black activist group, took over Harvard University's administration building to protest Harvard's investments in Gulf Oil. In May of that year, 20,000 black people marched through the streets of Washington, D.C., to express their solidarity with the liberation movements of Africa, and to condemn white minority rule. The Pan African Liberation Day Committee raised \$22,000 through activities surrounding the march and presented this money to Amilcar Cabral of the PAIGC in the fall of 1972. Each succeeding year the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) has called a march in major cities across the country which thousands have attended. With pressure growing, the World Council of Churches voted in August 1972 to divest itself of all stocks of corporations involved in the Portuguese colonies.

This struggle became so important in the black community here that a \$50,000 gift to Southern Christian Leadership Conference from Gulf Oil caused a split between the nationalist wing of SCLC and the organization's top leadership.

### BUILDING SUPPORT FOR THE AZANIAN AND NAMIBIAN PEOPLES' STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WHITE SETTLER REGIME IN SOUTH AFRICA

Throughout the world, and particularly in Great Britain and Australia, there have been countless demonstrations against segregated South African sports teams. South Africa and Rhodesia have been banned from many international competitions, including the 1972 Olympic Games, as a result of pressure by African and black American athletes.

In the United States, Students for a Democratic Society joined with SNCC and other black organizations to educate people about the white settler regime's policy of apartheid, and its illegal occupation of Namibia. They mobilized mass protests aimed at the Rockefellers' Chase Manhattan Bank — Partner in Apartheid.

Building awareness about apartheid also led to the first specifically proletarian base for supporting African liberation in the United States. In 1970, the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement demanded that their employer stop doing business in South Africa. Though their demands were not met, the struggle against Polaroid did a great deal to educate masses of people about the role of US corporations in supporting the white South African government. A similar protest was conducted by employees of IBM Corporation.

### BUILDING SUPPORT FOR THE ZIMBABWE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ILLEGAL RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT

Black longshoremen conducted the first political strike in recent US history when they refused to unload the Santos Vega at the port of Burnside, Louisiana, on March 15, 1972. The Vega's cargo was chrome ore from Zimbabwe. Students and faculty members at Southern University (across the

river from Burnside, in Baton Rouge), formed an alliance with the predominantly black locals 1830 and 1833 of the International Longshoremen's Association to embargo the ore. Southern is the largest black campus in the US.

The dockers, backed up by the students, effectively stopped the hot cargo until the company hired scab labor — and that only happened after the students had gone home for the Spring recess.

In the following months, members of the Southern University faculty who had organized and participated in the Burnside boycott and other militant activities were gradually purged (via forced resignations) by the white-controlled administration. By fall 1972 a political crisis had developed at SU, and came to a head when another black instructor, who addressed himself to the concerns of the students, resigned. Students united, demanded that the SU administration meet the needs of African people everywhere, and began organizing the people in the community and the state around these demands. The crisis climaxed in a 99 percent effective student boycott of Southern, followed by arrests, and the fatal shooting of two students, Denver Smith and Leonard Brown, by deputies on November 16, 1972.

During 1973 and 1974, black dockers in Baltimore, supported by black and white demonstrators, repeatedly refused to unload chrome and nickel from Zimbabwe. Starting in the fall of '73, boycott coalitions formed in Philadelphia and Baltimore, later Norfolk and New York. By spring '74 there were coalition organizations all up and down the East Coast. One ship, the African Sun, was forced to turn back to Africa, returned to Baltimore a second time, was not unloaded, sailed to Philadelphia where longshoremen refused to unload it, and was finally unloaded in Boston amid boycott demonstrations. Other ships scheduled to unload in Baltimore have had to go to other ports, or else, having docked at Baltimore, have had their unloading effectively delayed.

Under pressure from rank and file black longshoremen and anti-imperialist organizations, the ILA executive board passed a resolution officially endorsing the boycott of all Rhodesian goods shipped into East and Gulf Coast ports under its jurisdiction.

## BUILDING MASS SUPPORT

The strongest and most massive support for these actions has come from the black community, especially black workers and students. While white radicals and liberals have been involved in these struggles, their mass character has been predominantly black or all-black.

Development of the boycott against white-dominated Southern African governments has been, at all times, closely intertwined with the struggle against racism and oppression of African people in the United States. Within the black community, awareness of African struggles and their importance grew with the struggle here; and in turn, the growing struggle against racism here fostered an awareness of Africa, and an understanding of the unity underlying both struggles.

### THE COAL BOYCOTT

The whole situation was complicated by the announcement that the Southern Company had contracted to import Azanian coal to fuel some of its power plants. In addition to the people who have been building support for African liberation, the struggle to keep out this coal was joined by the leadership and membership of the United Mine Workers of America. The primary concern of the UMWA leadership



Birmingham miners demonstrate against the Southern Company. Photo: Earl Dotter/UMWA, Southern Patriot.

was that imported coal would not bring per-ton royalty payments into the UMWA's treasury, and they combined this with propaganda to their members that US miners' jobs were being threatened, and with on-and-off propaganda (more on this later) about racism and slave labor in South Africa.

For a time the UMWA leadership appeared to have the initiative on this issue, and their jingoistic line, their red-baiting, and their known racist practices threatened to undermine and weaken this struggle, by attacking and trying to isolate anti-imperialist forces while encouraging "Be American, Buy American" reactionary protectionist sentiments.\* Their attempts to sidetrack the campaign failed almost as quickly as they started, however, because they took down their picket lines from the docks as soon as they were enjoined by a court, and they haven't been seen since. On the other hand, this campaign raised issues that are of vital importance to black miners, and offers the opportunity for a serious challenge to white miners to join the struggle for African liberation with the struggle against racism in the mines and in the UMWA.

\*it is necessary, however, to sharply repudiate those on the left who use this as an excuse for opposing the boycott. One criticism really isn't worthy of a reply, since its "facts" fly in the face of reality, insisting that African revolutionaries haven't called for this boycott! The African liberation movement has been calling for sanctions for years, as we indicated at the beginning of this article, and worldwide support has been based upon this strategy.

Another criticism is more serious, suggesting that there is no difference between the coal boycott and the attempts by the garment workers' unions to keep out pajamas from Taiwan. But this really boils down to a racist and chauvinistic analysis. Reading this line, you would never guess that there was an African liberation struggle going on, that it has a base of support in the United States, and that Afro-Americans have been martyred for their role in building it.

While it would certainly be tragic if the UMWA were able to add steam to the bourgeois media campaign to blame unemployment on workers from Haiti, Mexico, and elsewhere (as the United Farm Workers has done), or on the import of foreign-made goods (as the UAW, USW, ILGWU, ACWA, and other unions have done), it is still important to recognize the one-sidedness of this analysis. Even if the UMWA leadership deserved the entire credit for the boycott, it would still be important to indicate one progressive aspect of these developments: this is the first time in more than twenty-five years that the UMWA has tried to protect its members' jobs. Under Lewis and Boyle the UMWA helped the coal operators to put its members out of work.



## BLACK COAL MINERS IN THE US

Black miners have always been discriminated against by the coal operators, and for a long time the UMWA has been a party to that discrimination — sometimes passively, by not struggling against it; other times actively collaborating with the companies against their black brothers. In the 1974 coal contract's new anti-discrimination clause, black miners have gained little. The job bidding system is still the most common tool for discrimination.

Under the old contract, jobs were awarded on the basis of "length of service and qualification to perform the work." At the beginning of the 1974 negotiations, the union demanded new seniority language where jobs would be awarded only on length of service. This demand was strongly opposed by industry, and the union's bargaining team gave in.

The new contract defines seniority as "length of service and the ability to step into and perform the work of the job at the time the job is awarded." The word "ability" is not substantially different from "qualification," and only gives the miner slightly stronger grounds to protest unequal treatment. The clause has no enforcement power; it is only a "promise" of the employers not to discriminate.

How could this happen ?.

In order to understand how we have come to this point, where the leadership of a revitalized UMWA sacrifices the special needs of black miners that they had promised to fight for, it is important that we examine the past history of the miners' struggle.

### THE HISTORY

At the turn of the century, black miners were more than one third of all the miners in Southern Appalachia. That was also the era of the UMWA's strongest and most principled stand against racism, when two thirds of all black union members were in a single organization — the UMWA.

But since that time there has been an accelerating decline in the percentage of blacks working in Southern Appalachian mines — 23.3 percent in 1920, 16.3 percent in 1940.

There were many heroic struggles fought by coal miners during that period. Some, like the 1913-14 strike in Colorado, were defeated by the armed intervention of the state. Others, especially in the South, were weakened or defeated when the operators succeeded in splitting the miners along racial and national lines.

The most successful struggles during these years were not led by the UMWA: the 1927 strike in the Colorado coal fields was led by the IWW; the 1931 strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, was led by the National Miners Union; and other important struggles in the 1930s were fought in Illinois and West Virginia, led by Musteite unions.

In all of these struggles, the revolutionary leaders exposed the attempts of the companies to divide the workers along racial and national lines. In Harlan, the Communists successfully confronted racism in the ranks of white miners, and the strike leadership had a significantly higher proportion of blacks than their overall percentage in the strike.

During the late 1930s the UMWA breathed new life as the center of the CIO, and Southerners from the miners' union provided the majority of the organizers for the CIO during its formative years.

During World War II, miners were the most militant of all organized workers. When the UMWA struck in defiance of labor's no-strike pledge in 1942, the government's threat to break the strike with federal troops failed. That was when John L. Lewis made his famous statement, "You can't mine coal with bayonets." But after the war, the companies sought to undermine and destroy that militancy by replacing as many miners as possible with machines.

The brunt of this attack was shouldered by black miners in the South. Huge numbers of them were expelled from the mines in the fifties — their numbers declined from 26,136 in 1950 to 7,108 in 1960 — and by the end of that decade, they were only 6.3 percent of Southern Appalachian miners.

In Alabama, from 1900 until the mid-thirties, a majority of the miners were black, and at one time half of the local union officers were black. Today only about one fourth of Alabama miners are black.

The coal operators could not have accomplished this

without the collaboration of the UMWA leadership — John L. Lewis and Tony Boyle. The rank and file had not yet begun to reassert its power, though there were occasional signs of discontent. The roving picket movement of the early sixties is probably the best known example.

While the roving pickets were trying to keep union representation and union benefits in the truck mine areas of Eastern Kentucky that had been written off by the UMWA leadership, other miners were becoming disgruntled about increasingly unsafe conditions in the mines.

This sentiment burst into the public view following the Farmington Number 9 explosion in November 1968, where 78 miners were killed. In spite of Tony Boyle's attempt to absolve Consolidation Coal Company of responsibility for the disaster, mass pressure developed for strict laws providing for safe operation of coal mines with rigid enforcement of them.

The political expression of this pressure was organized and strengthened by Disabled Miners and Widows. The result was the 1969 Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act.

The rank and file militancy took on a mass character in February and March of 1969, when 42,000 miners wildcatted in West Virginia. The strike lasted for 23 days, and the miners returned to work only after the governor had signed the Black Lung bill into law. Although the strike erupted spontaneously, the political groundwork for it had been organized by the Black Lung Association.

In both of these organizations — Disabled Miners and Widows, and the Black Lung Association — black miners were elected as the leaders. Disabled Miners and Widows of Southern West Virginia was headed by Robert Payne, who has since also been elected president of the BLA in Beckley. Charles Brooks was the first president of the entire BLA. Bill Worthington, a veteran of the miners' struggle in Harlan County, Kentucky, was elected president of the Kentucky BLA, and later served as fourth president of the four-state BLA.

This is important evidence of (a) the crucial significance of black miners, even where they are a minority, in forging these struggles and providing them with a militant backbone, and (b) that this leading role is recognized and sup-

ported by the white miners who are most deeply committed to these struggles.

## THE REFORM MOVEMENT

Out of these militant strains grew a chorus demanding change — not just piecemeal mending, but a complete overhaul of the union. The first challenge to Boyle was headed by Jock Yablonski. The Boyle forces defeated that challenge first by ballot-box stuffing, later by murder.

In days past (as in 1926, when Lewis stole the election from Brophy), this might have worked. But Boyle had lost all credibility, not only with the UMWA ranks, but with the coal operators as well. Once it was clear to them that Boyle could not discipline and control the membership, he was of no use to them at all.

So with Boyle's effective support stripped down to his own clique of careerists and a conservative section of retired pensioners, the government prosecuted and convicted Boyle and his henchmen, and cleared the way for the election of the Miners for Democracy slate, headed by Arnold Miller. Because MFD expressed and symbolized the aspirations of the UMWA rank and file, the operators hoped that the miners would follow this new leadership in accepting, and then submitting to, the terms of a new contract.

But during this tortured and contradictory period of growth, the reform movement became more conservative — undoubtedly its government and liberal friends would say "more practical". As the day of inevitable victory drew nearer, Miller and MFD watered down their program. Miller, who had once made a name for himself as an opponent of strip mining, dropped this issue from his program.

Despite the crucial significance of black miners in the struggles that sired the reform movement, the MFD top slate was all-white. But with the entire attention of the union's militants focused on defeating Boyle, little attention was paid to this fact, particularly since there appeared to be a practical working unity among black and white rank-and-filers.

After the MFD slate won, it looked like the new leadership might acknowledge its debt to black miners and black

leadership. Levi Daniel was appointed interim president of District 29.

## URNS TOWARD RACISM

But signs also pointed in the opposite direction. In the organizing drive at Brookside, Miller made no move to replace the old guard organizers with representatives of the reform movement, even though Bill Worthington, for example, was a Harlan veteran. In the May 1973 election when William Finley, a black miner, ran for District 5 International Executive Board on a militant platform, some MFD leaders at first would not back him. After agreeing to go ahead with the campaign, they urged him not to include his picture on campaign literature to hide the fact that he was black. But his majority white constituency proved the MFD leadership wrong, and Finley won by a 2 to 1 margin.

In last fall's election, at a time when the Atmore-Holman prison struggle in Alabama was one of the sharpest Southern battles against racism, COMPAC — the political arm of the UMWA — endorsed Bill Baxley, Alabama's Attorney General, for re-election. Baxley is personally prosecuting the Atmore-Holman Brothers, and is asking for the death penalty, in order to gain popularity among racist voters. COMPAC also endorsed George Wallace for governor. These endorsements should have raised doubts about the UMWA's pledge to fight discrimination.

## THE SITUATION TODAY

And while the rest of the US economy is collapsing, the coal industry, as a result of the "energy crisis", is booming. As new jobs are opening up with the recent expansion of the deep mining business — around 8,000 so far, and more to come — it is important to ask who will get them. In the past 2 to 3 years, hundreds of white men have returned to Appalachia from the Northern industrial cities to get jobs in the mines, and they have been hired. But despite a similar reverse migration among black people, only token numbers of blacks have been hired to work in the mines —

just enough to avoid Civil Rights lawsuits. This is particularly evident in Southern West Virginia, where there is a large black population.

The new surface mine operations, which are expanding faster than underground mining, are even more extreme in the numbers of whites hired relative to the small number of blacks. In Alabama's District 20, where the black population is 26.2 per cent, out of 1500 strip miners, 10 are black — only two thirds of one per cent !

The UMWA leadership has been applying some pressure on state human rights commissions to end hiring discrimination, but so far with too little result, and without using its leverage directly on the coal companies.

### THE JINGOISTIC CAMPAIGN

And now, in the campaign to stop Azanian coal, the UMWA is manipulatively and opportunistically addressing black people and white people with different messages. In one full page ad in a Mobile newspaper, the UMWA addressed black people (especially black longshoremen) with an ad picturing a black miner saying in the headline that he was "mad about slave labor coal". The mention of protecting his job was subordinate to a detailed description of the working and living conditions of black miners in Azania.

On another page, an ad pictured a white miner and his wife and children, with a headline saying this miner was "worried about his job". The ad went on to say that this miner had lost a job once before as an ore miner, when his company began to import ore from Venezuela, and now he was worried about the Southern Company importing coal from South Africa, and the possibility of losing this job. The ad went on about the importation of coal hurting Alabama and hurting America. Protectionism and national chauvinism were the overall message of the ad; there was no appeal to white people to support the black people of South Africa.

The appeal to black people was essentially to fight the Southern Company because it made profits from South African racism. The appeal to white people was to fight the Southern Company and any importation of coal, in order to

protect the jobs of Americans. In the ad to white people, the racism of the South African government and any UMWA opposition to that racism, is played down so as not to risk losing any support from white racist readers who support "job protectionism".

Sam Littlefield, president of Alabama's District 20 until his death in December 1974, led the Boyle forces in 1972 when Harold Underwood, a black man, ran for Secretary-Treasurer on Miller's reform slate. During the campaign, the Boyle-Littlefield forces distributed a racist leaflet that attacked Underwood by asking these questions :

Ask the Fuller-Clements-Underwood bunch if they plan to keep on having the bath-houses integrated.

Ask Underwood about his record as a civil rights activist and trouble-maker around Jasper, and ask what he was doing in the Walker County Jail in 1968.

Ask Underwood what Martin Luther King told him to do when they met in Selma in 1963.

Does Underwood hold the same Communist Party ties that King did ?

Is it true that Underwood had to be restrained by police in a bar in Birmingham last year to stop him from molesting a white waitress ?

Ask people around Jasper if Underwood didn't get a white girl pregnant a few years back and get away with it because her family was rich and they didn't want anyone to know what happened.

Ask Underwood why his wife was picked to integrate the Walker County High School.

Why are they so anxious to stir up trouble ?

Why is Underwood so anxious to get his hands on the UMW's record books and funds ? Is it because he wants to make contributions to black power groups ?

When black longshoremen in Mobile were asked to hot cargo the Azanian coal, they were at first reluctant to do so, because of the things they knew about Sam Littlefield. But after the African struggles were explained to them by Tapson Mawere of ZANU, they agreed to boycott the coal. But they made it clear that while they were supporting the African liberation struggle, they would not do anything to support Sam Littlefield, whom they characterized as a rac-

ist. And when UMWA pickets tried to block a shipment of Australian coal, they crossed the picket line and unloaded it.

## GOING FORWARD IN THE STRUGGLE FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION

If we are going to succeed in building a broad multi-national movement in the South to support liberation struggles in Southern Africa, we must learn the lessons of the struggle up to this point. Above all, that the imperialists in Southern Africa back up their military strength with the ideological weapon of racism to perpetuate their slave system. The strength of our movement so far has been its ability to link the struggle for liberation in Africa with the struggle against racism and oppression in the United States. This will have to characterize the coal boycott, as it has the Polaroid boycott, the Gulf boycott and the chrome boycott. The special factors involved in this struggle demand that careful attention be paid to combining boycott activity with the struggle of black miners for equality, in Alabama and throughout the United States.

## TACTICS OF THE STRUGGLE

For many reasons, it would be inappropriate for us to propose a tactical and organizational program in this paper. Just as the anti-war movement in the US took its lead from those in the National Liberation Front (and those who didn't were quickly isolated and discredited), we feel that it is important for us to get as much information as possible about the present stage of the liberation struggle in Africa as viewed by the sisters and brothers on the front lines. It may be that they have a different set of priorities than those currently being proposed by their supporters.

We also feel that white people who are involving themselves in these struggles should pay careful attention and give great consideration to tactical and organizational ideas from our black comrades. In most cases, individually and collectively, they have a broader and deeper experience in building the support movement for African liberation, and



certainly black people have provided the only sustained mass support for that struggle. We are not trying to suggest that these comrades are infallible or above criticism, but we know from bitter experience the price we pay for the racism and chauvinism within the ranks of our movement.

**A NOTE ON NOMENCLATURE:** Throughout this paper we have generally used the name given to a country or area by the Africans who live there. But in referring to the illegal governments of these countries, and to the colonial powers, we have used the names imposed by the imperialists. In a few years these names will be only relics of history, along with others like "Gold Coast", "French Equatorial Africa", and the like.

*EILEEN WHALEN has been active in the women's movement in New York City and was a member of the collective that published UP FROM UNDER. She now works in Louisville, Kentucky as a member of the SOUTHERN PATRIOT collective and is involved in the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF). KEN LAWRENCE is also involved with SCEF and has worked on the SOUTHERN PATRIOT for the last four years. This article was originally presented as "Liberation for the Oppressed Nations and Peoples of Southern Africa: Building Support for the Struggle Against Imperialism and Its Main Ideological Weapon—Racism", at the Organizing Conference to Stop Southern African Coal in Atlanta, Georgia on February 1-2, 1975. The conference adopted a perspective presented by the Atlanta chapter of the African Liberation Support Committee.*

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# **Revolutionary Trade Unionism In Argentina: Interview with Augustin Tosco**

*Christopher Knowles*

Latin America usually captures world attention only with spectacular guerrilla action or military coups. As a result the crucial roles played by labor movements in the national liberation struggles throughout the continent are either underestimated or entirely ignored.

The name Augustín Tosco is familiar to few people outside Argentina, yet he is one of the most important militant union leaders in a country whose labor movement is legendary for its triumphs and betrayals. Augustín Tosco has been leader of the Light and Power Union (Luz y Fuerza) in the industrial city of Cordoba for more than a decade. His reputation as a non-sectarian Marxist leader of indisputed integrity and consistency has gained him national recognition while the last ten governments have tried to rule Argentina. Light and Power is one of a dozen militant unions which have been "intervened" or taken over on orders from the present Peronist government. The significance of figures

like Tosco increases as the drama of the degeneration of Peronism, perhaps the classic example of class struggle within a populist context, accelerates.

The following interview with Tosco is the only one he has granted a foreign journalist since he was declared a fugitive from justice by Isabel Peron's government last October (1974). The interviewer, Christopher Knowles, met him secretly late one night at a worker's home in the foothills above Córdoba. The 44-year-old union leader, wearing a mustache and heavier from the inactivity of the underground, exuded confidence. He spoke in the deep pitched voice and in the simple manner of an Argentine provincial without the flamboyance of the porteño (an inhabitant of Buenos Aires). Three bodyguards and two drivers, all union members, sat silently with him at the dining-room table, passing the maté tea from person to person, listening intently to the long interview. The evening before police and army troops had performed house-to-house raids in the neighborhood, so now it was considered a safe place to meet. However the drivers were concerned about the road blocks leading back to Cordoba: If the car in which Tosco traveled were stopped, his chances of survival were considered slim.

A brief introduction explains the particular context of the interview and the situation in which Tosco and the militants of Light and Power continue resistance to Isabel Peron's government from the underground.

Just as Juan Domingo Perón's return to power was the key event to occur in Argentina in 1973, his death and the assumption of the presidency by his wife Isabel were indisputably the key events to occur in Argentina in 1974. Perón's death marked the end to the enduring left-wing Peronist illusion that Perón had returned from an 18-year exile to help build an "Argentina Socialista". The truth is that his third presidency saw him move unflinchingly to the right, deliberately favoring the interests of the national bourgeoisie over those of the working class, his traditional base of support.

Perón came to power after World War II when Argentina was especially rich from feeding wartorn Europe. He used the monetary reserves to nationalize foreign-owned indus-

tries and to raise the workers' standard of living substantially without redistributing profits. In his first presidency (1946-1952) Perón and his charismatic wife, Evita, organized the strongest trade-union system in the Third World, centered on the General Workers' Confederation (CGT). Previously the CGT was controlled by the Communist and Socialist Parties, but Perón quickly gained so much control over the entire workers' movement that any form of Marxism has been considered blasphemy ever since. Evita, hailed by the Peronist left as a revolutionary, demonstrated a militant concern for the neglected worker; she thrived on class hatred, and when the going got rough allegedly urged her husband to arm the workers to defend the gains they were enjoying for the first time in Argentine history. Evita's premature death in 1952 at the age of 33 symbolized the end of the good years of Peronism. Her death coincided with a worsening international trade position for Argentina. By 1952 Europe was producing its own food again, Perón's first five-year plan was going sour, and the monetary reserves were running out. This critical situation accentuated Perón's drift to the right and provoked his overthrow in 1955.

During Perón's 18-year exile, Argentina witnessed a continuation of the economic crisis which a succession of seven governments failed to resolve. In fact, the crisis continues today, heightened by the general crisis of the capitalist world. The Peronist movement was outlawed by his successors: even to utter or write Perón's name was strictly illegal. To relieve the economic crisis the military repressed the workers' movement, Peronist and non-Peronist, and opened up the economy to intensive foreign investment which ultimately alienated the national industrial bourgeoisie. As usual the traditional agrarian power structure, which brings in 80% of Argentine foreign exchange, was left untouched.

Through the CGT Perón continued to pull strings from Madrid. But after two frustrated attempts to return to Argentina, the old man began to lose control over his movement. CGT leaders, lead by Augustín Vandor, who was assassinated in 1968, began to pursue a policy of collaboration with the military, business, and foreign interests. This defection forced Perón to rely increasingly on the Peronist

left, dominated by the Peronist youth and, after 1970, by the Montonero guerrillas. The left rallied around the banner of Perón's return, and its ranks swelled. It was the resistance and mobilization by Peronist leftists which alarmed the military and the ruling classes sufficiently to negotiate Perón's return, "the last hope against communist revolution".

While in exile Perón promised everyone the world, made room for everyone in his plot to retake power. Though personalist interpretations of history are limited, it is important to recognize how such diverse interest groups clustered around the old fox. Through sheer double-talk he broadened his support from a small section of unionized labor to half the nation: the Peronist left, the nervous Old Guard, the alienated middle class, and Washington, worried about the precedent of Allende's Chile. When Hector Cámpora, Perón's designate, took power in March 1973, the middle class and Washington grew alarmed: "What about the promises you made us?" they wired Madrid. Perón, himself upset by the leftist Peronist domination of the Cámpora government, ordered Cámpora to resign and announced his candidacy, with Isabel as his vice-president, in the September 1973 elections.

Perón's third presidency represented a total repudiation of the Peronist left. The so-called "Social Pact", Perón's plan of state mediation between labor and capital, lopsidedly favored business. Confronting inflation, the government relaxed price controls and passed legislation virtually turning strikes into subversive activity. The Peronist left was purged from the government, the unions, and the university, and found itself denounced by Perón himself. Reluctant to renounce Peronism and its masses, the Peronist left was unable to present a viable socialist alternative. Persecuted within the front and politically impotent outside it, the Montoneros announced their decision to return to underground resistance soon after Perón's death, always swearing their loyalty to Perón.

Now, with Perón dead, his third wife, Isabel, has been selected to be his sole heir. Right-wing Peronists with allies in the military, the middle class, and foreign capital strain to maintain Peronism without Perón, to forge a de-

finitive orthodoxy which will save the eclectic movement from disintegration.

Presently the Peronist right is badly divided. In simplest terms it is split between Peronist Party politicians and Peronist CGT union leaders. The politicians, lead by Peronist Party leader Raúl Lastiri and Interior Minister Alberto Rocamora, control most key government posts, and through Presidential Secretary José Lopez Rega have direct control over Isabel, generally accepted as an orthodox Peronist symbol. Rightist labor is led by the head of the powerful metal workers' union (UOM), Lorenzo Miguel. Feeling that the labor bureaucracy has been neglected by the politicians, Miguel has been demanding more participation in the government, especially in economic decisions. The politicians would rather share power with the opposition parties, specifically the Radical Party (UCR), with a large middle-class base, than give the CGT a bigger share. A Peronist coalition with UCR, something Perón attempted before his death, would greatly strengthen the government and eclipse the CGT, at least temporarily. However Lorenzo Miguel counts on strong military backing and bargains from a particularly threatening position.

The gravity of this split within the rightist Peronist ranks is secondary to the unity the politicians and the CGT demonstrate against the Peronist left, including the militant unions, Peronist or Marxist, and the various guerrilla groups. Their repression of the left began after Hector Cámpora was forced to resign, and it has received enthusiastic support from the armed forces. It has meant an all-out campaign to break the militant unions such as the printers, transport, journalist, and student unions in Buenos Aires, the sugar workers in Tucuman, the electric power and auto workers in Córdoba, and the steel workers in Villa Constitución. These unions and large numbers of rank and file in other unions violently reject the right-wing leadership of the CGT and the economic policies it underwrites.

The repression has also entailed the federal takeover of six left-leaning provincial governments, the restructuring of the traditionally leftist national universities by openly fascist ideologues, the shutdown of over a dozen daily newspapers and magazines, the establishment of a state of siege

and an all-out war against guerrilla groups such as the Guevarist Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ERP), the Peronist Montoneros, and the Peronist Armed Forces (FAP), all adding up to the most severe repression in Argentine history. The Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA), a right-wing terrorist death squad, alone is responsible for over 300 murders of leftists in the ten months after Perón's death.

The developing struggles of the militant unions can best be seen in Córdoba, one of three major industrial centers of Argentina (see map). The provincial capital of Córdoba has been a center of militant union resistance during Perón's exile, and now to the right-wing takeover inspired by Perón and being carried out by Isabel.

Córdoba is the Detroit of Argentina. 500 miles northwest of Buenos Aires, with a population of 700,000, it was selected in the mid-1950s to house the extensive automotive industry set up in Argentina by North American and European automakers. This industrialization took place after Perón's overthrow, thus permitting the development of a highly skilled and concentrated urban proletariat somewhat independent of the CGT hegemony. This has gained Córdoba the reputation of being Argentina's socialist province, where leftist ideas other than Peronism are not considered anathema.

In fact the elected leaders of the two most important unions, Agustín Tosco of Light and Power and René Salamanca of the autoworkers (SMATA), are declared Marxists, and various other unions are controlled by leftist Peronists. Tosco is not a member of any political party, though, with qualifications: One could associate his line with that of the militant (as opposed to the bureaucratic and dominant) wing of the Communist Party (PC). Many of the Light and Power militants belong to the PC, while the majority are Peronists. A small percentage belong to the Montoneros or ERP. Light and Power and SMATA point out the success with which they have avoided divisive sectarianism within the unions. This success is attributed to the powerful leadership both men provide. Salamanca is a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR), a Maoist-oriented revolutionary party centered in Córdoba. Another group im-



portant ideologically is Peronismo de Bases (PB).

The ideological conflict between Peronism and Marxism revolves around the concept of class struggle, which the Marxists see as inevitable and necessary while the Peronists believe labor and capital can be reconciled through the mediation of a powerful state. All Peronist leftists use Marxist analysis "simply as a helpful tool in interpreting Argentina's reality", but insist that they are Peronists at heart. This juggling of contradictions has made them an easy target for criticism from both the right and the left and weakened their position among the Peronist masses. However, the day-to-day struggle in the factories tends to bring the ideological differences down to earth: the workers, Marxist or Peronist, are fighting basically to regain the rights and standard of living they had in 1955. Socialist or Peronist "revolution" remains distant. As Tosco notes, the general strategy is agreed upon; it is now just a matter of tactical differences.

In the following interview Tosco frequently refers to specific situations in Cordoba which warrant some description. The Cordobazo is the name given to a spontaneous mass uprising in May 1969 in which workers and students supported by sectors of the middle class took over the city for nearly a week to protest the economic policies of the government of General Onganía. The people disarmed the police, occupied the factories and public buildings, and fought from the barricades to resist the troops sent by the federal government. The Cordobazo marked the beginning of mass resistance to the military governments, prompted the overthrow of Onganía, and paved the way for Perón's eventual triumphant return from exile.

The national elections in March 1973 marked the triumph of the resistance and the return to Peronist rule. Hector Cámpora was elected President, and Peronist leftists Obregón Cano and Atilio López, head of the militant transport union in Córdoba (UTA), were elected governors of Córdoba.

The Navarrazo was a right-wing police takeover of Córdoba by chief of police Antonio Navarro in February 1974. Navarro, inspired by Perón, overthrew Obregón Cano and Atilio López and began a reign of terror which continues

with the federal imposition of authority by Major Raúl Lacabanne. The police uprising was declared illegal, but Navarro was pardoned by Isabel and is presently training right-wing paramilitary groups in Mendoza. Obregón Cano, threatened by the AAA death squad, escaped to Mexico as did Hector Cámpora earlier. Atilio López was murdered by the AAA in September 1974, machine-gunned with over a hundred bullets.

Despite the federal takeover of the Province and the CGT's ban on strikes, SMATA initiated a three-month-long work slowdown in August 1974 at Ika-Renault's main plant, whose production is responsible for 25% of Córdoba's gross provincial product. The strike demands were finally met, but in the process both SMATA and Light and Power were taken over by representatives from the national committee of the CGT. Both Tosco and Salamanca were removed from their posts and, after raids on their headquarters, decided to go underground.

As Tosco predicts in the interview militant labor activity has greatly intensified since the end of summer in February. Despite threats from the CGT, wildcat strikes occur daily, hitting the most important centers of production.

In the industrial belt of Villa Constitución steel workers struck to protest the government's denunciation of a subversive plot to paralyze the nation's heavy industry and the arrest of their left Peronist leadership. They struck in March 1975, and as of this writing (April 14) have not gone back to work, thereby paralyzing the entire auto industry. Simultaneously guerrilla activity has been stepped up, despite government claims to have eradicated the guerrillas. In Tucuman, where the ERP claims to hold liberated territory, a massive military campaign involving 5,000 anti-guerrilla special forces has been underway since February without success. As the government, together with the military and the CGT, take over an area and attempt to control it, the tendency is for wildcat strikes and guerrilla activity to spring up in another area. For the moment the repression in Córdoba is so great that virtually no union activity is possible. That Villa Constitución and Santa Fe and Rosario are now in conflict indicates the militant unions' strategy of wearing down Isabel's "gobierno popular".

## INTERVIEW

Question : Before talking about the present situation, could you give a brief history of your experience as a worker and as leader of the Light and Power Union here in Córdoba ?

Tosco : I am the son of a small farming family. Since I was quite young, while I attended the Industrial School here, I was an activist in student and worker affairs. I entered Light and Power when I was 18 years old, and now, 25 years later, I have lost my job due to the takeover of the union last October. So I have been a union militant for Light and Power or for the regional CGT since I was 18, excluding one year of obligatory military service.

I was arrested for my participation in the May 1969 Córdoba, later tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to over eight years in prison. I was freed with other compañeros after six months, not due to the good will of General Onganía's dictatorship, but rather to the mass demonstrations and active strikes which were held in Córdoba every month from June to December as well as in Tucuman, Rosario, Buenos Aires and elsewhere.

We continued the struggle against that dictatorship, and again I ended up in jail. I spent from April of 1971 to September of 1972 in Devoto prison in Buenos Aires, and later served time at the Rawson prison where I had been in 1969. When I was freed the process of returning to a more or less democratic system was already being carried out, ending in the March 1973 election of Hector Cámpora. In October of this year (1974) Isabel's government declared me a fugitive from justice, and since then I have been living in hiding.

Question : I know there are many ideological positions among the members of Light and Power. What was your political development, and what is your own position now ?

Tosco : When I was a teenager I was sympathetic to Peronism. Peronism as it appeared in 1944, when I was 14 years old, defended causes which I thought were just; but as time went on I began to realize that it had totalitarian concepts. Later I came to understand that Peronism was a populist movement, generally speaking in the service of the right-wing forces which had as its base the working class. This is a common phenomenon in Latin America.

Sometime after this I discovered dialectical materialism — that is, Marxism. I define my philosophical position as Marxist. In the political sense I am a socialist. In practice our struggle is to achieve broad unity among worker, popular, and democratic sectors to fight the principal enemy at the moment : fascism.

Question : How do you see Peronism in relation to the trade-union movement ?

Tosco : Peronism was a multi-class movement, and to the extent that the economic situation in post World War II Argentina made it possible, it was populist. But we believe that the generalized crisis of the capitalist and imperialist system — particularly in dependent countries in Latin America — creates a crisis for populism which is even more serious.

Today's Peronism is not that of the first two presidencies of Perón. The democracy brought about by the resistance to the military regimes degenerated rapidly. The most reactionary groups have come to dominate the government, and the repressive machinery has once again been turned on the popular sectors. Now, with an institutional mandate, they are trying to impose the same policy employed by the military.

You can see the situation in terms of elections. For us today's Peronism is not the 7,500,000 votes which it received last year. Those votes are a kind of memorial to Perón, greatly inspired by his presence after a long struggle. If there were to be an election today in Argentina, Peronism wouldn't even get 30% of the vote. Peronism is broken — not from an idealistic point of view, but due to the fact that the rank and file is repudiating it, rejecting the exploitation and persecution as their political consciousness grows.

In November there was an election in Villa Constitución where the popular forces of the UOM (Union Obrero Metalurgico, led by Lorenzo Miguel) metal workers voted 2,600 against the 1,400 votes for the right-wing Peronist orthodox candidates. This took place under the most discouraging of circumstances. We identify with the leftist sectors of Peronism, their union militants and the Montoneros and the Peronist youth. We have taken many steps toward unity of



action, and we believe that the future of the country depends on a new coalition with the left wing of the Radical party and the socialist forces generally. This coalition will determine the development of political events in the country and will confront the right wing.

Question: Were the militant unions aware of what was going to happen with the return of Peronism to power? With the governments of Campora, Lastiri, Peron, and now Isabel, did they recognize the drift toward right-wing politics?

Tosco: That depended on one's ideological position. I believe we were aware of what was going to happen. I didn't vote for either Peron or Campora in the national elections, although I voted for Peronism on the local level — for Governor Obregon Cano and Vice Governor Atilio Lopez. I supported Lopez in particular because I was secretary when he headed the Cordoba CGT and knew that he supported our program of national liberation, of anti-imperialism, understanding that the only liberation possible would be that which would lead toward socialism.

When Peronism returned to power in 1973, Argentina did not have a favorable balance of payments, nor had it accumulated the gold bars which Peron boasted of in 1946. At the moment Argentina's foreign debt is seven billion dollars, and we have a budgetary deficit of three billion pesos annually. In order to solve these problems it is necessary to totally transform the economic structure. Peronism faced this challenge backed by an overwhelming popular mandate to radically transform the system, but it chose a lukewarm reform of the old structure. That's no way to advance toward liberation, nor is it the way to construct socialism.

In order to overcome our generalized malaise of inferiority, the countries of the Third World need revolutionary transformations. If we don't totally change the social structure, we will never be able to increase the production of staple agricultural products or better the conditions of rural life. It won't be possible to develop independent industry of any kind if we don't carry out a thorough agrarian reform. If we don't confront the monopolies it won't be possible to plan or stimulate the economic development of which we are capable. We must combat the over-riding influence of such organizations as the World Bank, the Inter-

national Monetary Fund, or the City Bank, which work in collaboration with the most reactionary sectors of Argentina. This is our primary task.

Question: Referring to the situation in Córdoba: When did it become clear to you all that the right was mounting an offensive to retake power in the province?

Tosco: In July of 1973 reactionaries tried to take over the Light and Power headquarters by force. There were 15 men, armed to the teeth with grenades, FAL rifles (an Argentine Army weapon), and machine-guns. They were up against the organized defense of the union headquarters by our "compañeros". They faced the fact that we were willing to defend our union with our lives if necessary. The building was practically destroyed during the half-hour battle that followed. Finally, unable to ignore a pitched battle in downtown Córdoba, the police arrived and detained seven of the attackers.

Lt. Col. Navarro, police chief at the time, freed them instead of identifying them and taking them to justice. At that moment the intention of Navarro became quite clear; he ended up overthrowing the elected government of Córdoba in January of 1974: the so-called "Navarrazo". The government of Isabel absolved him in October as a prize for his subversion.

Question: Speaking about the situation in Córdoba, what is your opinion about the recent three-month strike of the SMATA mechanical workers?

Tosco: The SMATA strike, like so many others, was aimed at obtaining a salary increase to offset the 15% increase in the cost of living. Of course that increase would not solve our problems, but a short time later, because of the strike, the government was obliged to grant a 15% increase. Even as the 15% wage hike was going into effect, it was calculated that inflation would reach 30% during this period. In other words, the strike was effective in the sense that it brought about a temporary increase in wages, but little more.

Question: Do you consider the takeovers of the militant unions by the national CGT a major victory for the right-wing forces?

Tosco: The victories of the reactionary CGT in their

takeovers of all the militant unions — SMATA, Light and Power in Córdoba, the Association of Journalists and the Graphic Workers Federation in Buenos Aires — are pyrrhic victories. They are gambling everything on them. Last night we were watching the police patrols, the armored cars, the Ford Falcons loaded with civilian police, the house-to-house searches . . . and we concluded that a system that is forced to resort to these measures is on its last legs. The people repudiate all this repression. If there were to be free elections at this very moment in SMATA and Light and Power, we would win by an even greater margin than before.

Essentially the SMATA strike won, even though finally it was repressed as we were. But what we maintain is that if our ideas are understood and sustained by the people, and if the system — the regime — needs to carry out generalized repression in order to impede the development of our ideas, then it is evident that they fear our triumph.

Question: The strike of SMATA lasted for more than three months. Could you talk about the problems of organizing and maintaining such a long strike?

Tosco: The militant union movement organized three major demonstrations which rallied more than 8,000 persons in support of the SMATA strike. The situation did not permit a general mobilization because the strike consisted of a slow-down of production, not a total paralysis of work. The companeros agreed to work at half speed, and for a period work was slowed to 30% normal capacity. In the subsidiary factories to Ika-Renault it was difficult to carry out the same kind of slow-down of production even though everyone expressed support for the automobile workers. SMATA's struggle could only be ended by the combined efforts of the local repressive apparatus and the takeover by the national SMATA union bureaucracy.

Light and Power maintained its total solidarity with the SMATA workers, and was in turn attacked. The motivation was clear: Light and Power was the last of the militant unions which hadn't been taken over, and was able to organize the fight against the rightist deviation.

Question: Given the extent of the repression and the fact that most of the militant union leaders are underground, in jail or dead, what kind of union activity are you able to



maintain ?

Tosco : Well, the struggles are going to continue in spite of the difficult situation. As the workers' standard of living decreases, the concrete possibilities of struggle in the union increase. Of course in order that this struggle does not become merely spontaneous, we have to organize the leadership of the movement. The essential thing is that the leadership be in the hands of the militant sectors. One thing is for sure : The leadership sent from Buenos Aires does not have the support of the workers in either SMATA or Light and Power.

Not much can be done right now because we are at year's end — vacation time; but we believe that a generalized struggle will begin during the first months of the new year. Meanwhile we are maintaining our presence, strengthening our organization. We are not thinking about leaving the province, which would be much safer during this wave of repression. We have a very strong commitment to our people, and so our duty is to remain in spite of the risks that may imply. The possibility which awaits us is not prison, which we do not fear, but rather death. Some compañeros have already been killed by the Death Squad called the Triple "A". If they found us right now they would liquidate all of us. We have no special hideouts : We stay in the houses of fellow workers, often at great sacrifice to them. And we maintain the functional aspects of the union : Our declarations are published every week and sent to the rank and file; meetings are held; as far as is possible we work through legal means. And this will certainly lead up to an important workers' struggle during the first months of the new year.

Question : Concerning the question of political alliances : During the SMATA strike Mario Firmenich arrived from Buenos Aires to give the total support of the Montoneros. What importance do you give to the relation with the Montoneros ?

Tosco : Well, we make a difference between union and political activity. The worker's movement appreciates all kinds of support from the different groups involved in the struggle, but the co-ordination and the proposals for unity must be made by the unionists themselves. We cannot base



the workers' struggle on the solidarity of a certain political or political-military organization.

What is fundamental for us is the unity of the different sectors independently of the political structures. We advocate and practice worker unity with the Peronists, with Socialists, Radicals, Christians, Communists, with FAS (Socialist Anti-Imperialist Front) and all of the organizations they are connected with.

Question: What relation does the movement have with the guerrillas, that is, with FAP (Peronist Armed Forces) and especially with ERP (People's Revolutionary Army)?

Tosco: We don't have "relations". I insist on making a distinction. Workers struggle for better salaries or for political causes, and these may or may not be related to particular political organizations. We do not propose any concrete activity between the workers' organizations and the guerrilla groups.

Question: What about armed struggle?

Tosco: Well, that depends on the viewpoint of each individual. In the militant union movement, we maintain that the fundamental thing is the mass struggle. At the same time we see that the phenomenon of the guerrilla struggle is present all over Latin America and the countries of the Third World. It is a consequence of the injustice that exists in these countries.

Question: But do you think that the guerrilla struggle is favorable or unfavorable to mass struggle?

Tosco: In general terms I believe that all revolutionary activity is beneficial for the change of existing society. That is, speaking in terms of strategy. In terms of tactics it is clear that at particular moments terrorism — which we do not support — makes the action of the masses more difficult and may even favor the repression. We would be naive to not recognize that the struggle of the people is expressed in terms of mass action, student and worker strikes, guerrilla actions, demonstrations, etc. Rather than condemn the guerrillas, we condemn the injustice which provokes the existing situation. We are struggling against this injustice through the struggle of the masses.

Question: Up to what point can you rely on the Córdoba student movement?

Tosco : I believe that we are going to get the support of the student movement. We have seen that the colorless reformist policies in Córdoba, headed by the National Reformist Movement, are headed toward total failure. At present the Córdoba University Federation — which was neutralized and removed from the people's struggle against the fascist advance — is losing strength. Its policies are being questioned by different sectors, and this will mean that the student movement will be activated next year along with the workers' movement.

I believe that they are capable of struggling, and that in the student movement concrete steps are being taken for unity with workers.

Question : Could you explain what happened in the UTA (Transport Workers' Union) election in which Atilio López lost by only a few votes ?

Tosco : We believe that the defeat in UTA was not due to the weakening of the mass support, but rather was a result of Atilio López's political shortcomings. I say this with all due respect for his political struggles in favor of workers. We said that the government of Córdoba vacillated. During meetings with Obregón Cano and Atilio López we said that there was a fascist advance, bombs were going off every week, that something had to be done to stop fascism . . . they vacillated. A demonstration was held, but it was supported by only five unions; the rest did not strike because their leaders waivered in the belief that if they made concessions the democratic legality would be assured. But democratic legality is assured by active struggle and mobilization. This policy of vacillation, of making concessions, of incomprehension of the reality in Córdoba, the lack of concrete definitions, generated the indifference of the rank and file. It was not the union militancy of Atilio López which was defeated in the elections; it was his conciliatory attitude which helped to provoke the crisis of the Navarrazo that they rejected.

Question : They say that the "Navarrazo" was a "Cordobazo" in reverse.

Tosco : The Navarrazo means control of the city by gangsterism. We believe that fascism wants to get all of the power. On the other hand, the bourgeois democratic sectors

play the game of equilibrium.

For us an authentically democratic system in a dependent country would be revolutionary. Even with a vacillating government we can express ourselves in the press, by radio, on television, have freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to transform the country. If democracy irritated the right, it is because it has a revolutionary content. That's why the rightists don't even want democracy.

Question: Was there a possibility of another Cordobazo at the time of the Navarrazo ?

Tosco: We would have liked to have one, but we couldn't. The hesitations, contradictions, and the lack of energetic measures by the governor left the people frustrated. We were ready to defend the government because we preferred the hesitations of democracy to the Navarrazo and fascism. As we said before, we could call a meeting under the government of Obregón Cano and Atilio López, we could publish a declaration, lots of things, but it was precisely for that reason that the rightists confronted democracy, destroyed it, beat it down, and thus generated a great deal of frustration among the people. The Navarrazo meant a division of the broad front of struggle which formed during and after the Cordobazo.

Question: Do you think the national government has a pre-fabricated plan to implement fascism, or is it doing things haphazardly ?

Tosco: I repeat that the national government is not homogeneous. I believe that some want fascism and base their programs basically on terror. Their instruments are the Triple "A", some military sectors, and others. The struggle in Argentina is on every level of power. The most fundamental contradiction, between democracy and fascism, can be seen on the superstructural level as well as at the grass-roots level.

Every Argentinian is aware of the fact that Perón's most capable student is not his wife Isabel. She is in the center of a tremendous tug-of-war, determined by the relation of forces that surround her. She does not have Perón's decisiveness. Perón was a very clever politician, with much more influence, and probably would have slowed down the

right-wing tendency. But Perón is dead now; and Isabel might inherit his property, but there isn't any inheritance in political capability. Political capability is not inherited; it is acquired through long experience. The president doesn't have it, nor will she obtain it in the middle of the sea of contradictions and intrigues which surround her.

The most important men in the government are fascists — Oscar Ivanissevich (Education), López Rega (Social Welfare), Ricardo Otero (Labor), and here in Cordoba we have their delegates in Major Raúl Lacabanne (Federally appointed Governor) and Garcia Rey (Police Chief). Everything indicates a process of fascist reaction, a type of internal coup within Peronism, impeded by the moderate ministers, Rocamora, Benitez, and Vignes, who put something of a brake on this process.

Resistance to fascism comes from rank-and-file workers, students, political-military organizations, even within the democratic sectors of Peronism, with left sectors of Radicalism, and also with a sector of democratic military men. We maintain that if there is a coup, a fascist takeover in Argentina, civil war will soon follow.

Question: How do you plan to carry out workers' resistance?

Tosco: Workers' resistance will be expressed by means of mobilization, organization and strikes. These will be centered around immediate causes, which are the most important ones for the workers' movement — especially economic conditions, working conditions, the need for housing, for better health care, improvements for the retired who receive miserable allowances.

Question: The walls of the city are painted with calls for another Cordobazo. What do you think about that?

Tosco: We are working hard as possible for a Cordobazo against fascism. In the face of fascism there are no "half-way measures". We can democratically discuss many things, but in the face of fascism we have to struggle, and every kind of struggle that advances is valuable.

Question: Do you think a Cordobazo against fascism would be accepted?

Tosco: Of course.

Question: What do you see as the next step after a Cordobazo?



Tosco: The sovereign will of the people, unrestricted democratic legality. Democratic legality is very important to us.

Question: Would you say that Córdoba is the vanguard of what's happening in Argentina?

Tosco: Yes, and because it is the vanguard it receives the weight of the repression. We believe that due to its economic situation, its democratic tradition, its combative spirit, Córdoba could lead the way to a rebellion against fascism.

Question: How does your living in the underground affect you personally?

Tosco: That's a psychological type of question. We have to perpetually re-organize things. It is not easy to be in an illegal union, constantly moving from place to place, evading repression, and at the same time doing everything possible for the struggle.

I've grown accustomed to these kinds of things. I was in jail for more than two years. Our union has been taken over three times. Although this implies a sacrifice, we believe that for a social revolution all sacrifices are small. People like us, whose commitment is well known publicly, can't lead an easy life, walk freely on the streets.

Question: How do you see the situation in Latin America, generally, now?

Tosco: Positive but very difficult. On the one hand we feel the grief of Chile. But at the same time we feel the joy of Cuba. There are countries all over Latin America which are on the road toward democracy and socialism. Many are struggling against fascism. I think that the democratic movement indicated by the November 1974 elections in Brazil is an important step forward.

The positive attitude in the US of working toward the re-establishment of relations with Cuba is important. We identify ourselves with the struggle of the North American workers, particularly the minorities: blacks, Puerto Ricans, all of the revolutionaries who are struggling for a more just society. For us imperialism is not the people. Some day the peoples of North and South America will be united — united in socialism.

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## CHRONOLOGY

- 1943 - Rightist military coup makes Colonel Juan Domingo Perón Minister of Labor
- 1946 - Colonel Perón elected President
- 1952 - Perón elected to second term  
- Eva Perón dies of cancer
- 1955 - General Perón overthrown  
- General Pedro Aramburu becomes President
- 1956 - Several foreign auto makers set up shop in Córdoba
- 1958 - Radical Party candidate Arturo Frondizi elected President with secret Peronist support
- 1961 - Perón marries Isabel Martínez in Madrid while in exile
- 1962 - Frondizi overthrown  
- José Guido made President
- 1963 - Radical Party candidate Arturo Illia elected President
- 1964 - Perón foiled trying to return to Argentina
- 1966 - Illia overthrown  
- General Juan Carlos Onganía becomes President
- 1968 - Cordobazo led by militant unions in Córdoba  
- CGT head Agustín Vandor assassinated
- 1969 - Onganía overthrown  
- General Roberto Levingston made President
- 1970 - Levingston overthrown by General Alejandro Lanusse  
- Montoneros appear, kidnap Aramburu and execute him  
- ERP begins activity along with other guerrilla groups



- 1973 - Perón's designate Hector Cámpora elected President  
- Cámpora forced to resign, repression of Left begins  
- CGT head Jose Rucci assassinated  
- Perón and Isabel win Presidential election
- 1974 - Navarrazo overthrows left-leaning Córdoba government  
- Perón dies; Isabel takes over  
- CGT chief, Adelino Romero, dies  
- Three-month strike at Ika-Renault settled with national takeover of Light and Power and SMATA  
- Salamanca and Tosco go underground
- 1975 - Major steel strike in Villa Constitución begins in March  
- Isabel Perón's government denounces subversive plot to paralyze heavy industry throughout the nation



Augustin Tosco.

# WHUMP

or

## THE DEATH OF DAVID ROCKEFELLER

It has to be  
has to be  
like a Saint Valentine's Day  
Massacre

but another time —  
saint christopher's day would  
be appropriate —

guns won't be necessary  
quick starvation is the way

it must be possible  
to devise a method  
of quick starvation  
to take a well-fed American banker  
and quick starve him in seconds  
so as his belly implodes  
he dies in the deafening

# WHUMP

of intestine walls

that would be the crowning achievement  
of capital technology



the moment of

**WHUMP**

we'll zoom into his right eye  
to glimpse his visions  
at the moment of his death

it is nice to think we'd see  
swimming in the milky cloud forming there  
sympathetic images of the legion he has joined  
but coming through those murky gatherings  
I am sure we'd see hands clenching clenching clenching  
empty air  
as so long they grasped  
the fruits that others' labors laid upon his board  
it could well be the first  
one man massacre in history  
another landmark for children's books, ballads, epic poems  
we will invite his brothers with hopes  
that rhythmic

**WHUMPS**

of Rockefeller guts will set the beat  
for a new and beatific dance of freedom  
across an America threatening to remain a dream

Wilson Roberts



**Escape. Graphic : Culver Pictures.**

**“ . . . They Would Have  
Destroyed Me”:  
Slavery and the Origins of Racism**

*Theodore Allen*

In the period before the Civil War, one of the standard arguments made for racial slavery was that it made possible a practically air-tight system of social control. The strife-torn and ism-riddled plight of wage-labor societies in Europe was contrasted with the long tradition of social peace in the South, where, despite intramural grudges, the great majority of the poor whites would side with the slaveholders in any confrontation between black labor and the plantation bourgeoisie.

The high courts of South Carolina well understood that “the peace of society . . . required that slaves should be subjected to the authority and control of all freemen when not under the immediate authority of their masters”; that where “a slave can invoke neither Magna Charta nor common law”, social peace depended upon “the subordination of the servile class to every free white person.”

If the black bond-laborer sought to flee, any white person

had the legal right, indeed duty, to seize the fugitive, and stood to be rewarded for the deed. "Poor white men," writes one historian, "habitually kept their eyes open for strange Negroes without passes, for the apprehension of a fugitive was a financial windfall."

Chancellor William Harper of South Carolina confidently reassured those who were apprehensive of another Santo Domingo in the American slave states. "It is almost impossible," he wrote, "that there should be any extensive [insurrectionary] combination among the slaves." The reason was simple: "Of the class of freemen, there would be no individual so poor or so degraded (with the exception of here and there a reckless outlaw or felon) who would not . . . be vigilant and active to detect and suppress it."

*"We do not govern them [the free states] by our black slaves but by their own white slaves. We know what we are doing—we have conquered you once and we can again . . ."*

*John Randolph of Virginia, opposing the Missouri Compromise of 1820*

The pioneer slaveholding sociologist George Fitzhugh described in terms even more explicit the indispensable role of the poor whites in the social order established by and for the plantation bourgeoisie. "The poor [whites]," he said, "constitute our militia and our police. They protect men in the possession of property, as in other countries; and they do much more, they secure men in the possession of a kind of property which they could not hold a day but for the supervision and protection of the poor." Here Fitzhugh has perfected our definition of racial slavery. It is not simply that some whites own black slaves, but that no whites are so owned; not simply that whites are by definition non-slaves, but that the poor and laboring non-slaveholding whites are by racial definition enslavers of black labor.

Contrast the serene sense of power expressed by Fitzhugh and Harper in the nineteenth century with the troubled



mind of the seventeenth-century planter elite at the time of Bacon's Rebellion. "How miserable that man is," wrote Sir William Berkeley to his friend Thomas Ludwell, "that Governes a People where six parts of seaven at least are Poore, Endebted, Discontented and Armed." Since 1642, whenever kings had reigned in England, Berkeley had served as Royal Governor over Virginia, which then had two-thirds of the total population of the South. Now in the last year of his time, he was to be driven from his home, his capital city was to be burned, and most of his territory was to be taken over by armed rebels.

*"While the workingmen, the true political power of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor . . ."*

*Karl Marx, letter to Abraham Lincoln, 1865*

Colonel Francis Moryson, who had served many years in the government of Virginia, and who for that reason was chosen as one of the King's Commissioners to inquire into the state of affairs of the colony in the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion, expressed wonderment that in Virginia, "amongst so many thousand reputed honest men there should not be found a thousand to fight five hundred inconsiderable fellows." He could only conclude that "the major part of the country is distempered."

To understand how the anxiety of the Berkeleys and the Morysons was transformed into the self-assurance of the Harpers and Fitzhughs, is to understand the origins of racial slavery in this country. (1)

## II

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Virginia and Maryland, the tobacco colonies, experienced a severe and

had the legal right, indeed duty, to seize the fugitive, and stood to be rewarded for the deed. "Poor white men," writes one historian, "habitually kept their eyes open for strange Negroes without passes, for the apprehension of a fugitive was a financial windfall."

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Grantham procured the treachery of the new rebel general, Laurence Ingram (whom Grantham had known before), and Ingram's Lieutenant, Gregory Walklett, to help him in securing the surrender of the West Point garrison of three hundred men in arms, freemen and African and English bond-servants. A contemporary account says, however, that

"...the name of Authority had but little power to ring the sword out of these Mad fellows' hands ... [and therefore Grantham] resolved to accost them with never to be performed promises." [of pardon for the freemen and freedom for the bond-servants, African and English]

Then Grantham tackled the main stronghold of the rebel forces, three miles further up the country, and, in Grantham's own words:

"I there met about four hundred English and Negroes in Arms who were much dissatisfied at the Surrender of the Point, saying I had betrayed them, and thereupon some were for shooting me, and others for cutting me in peeces: I told them I would willingly surrender myselfe to them, till they were satisfied from his Ma[jes]tie, and did engage to the Negroes and Servants, that they were all pardoned and freed from their Slavery: And with faire promises and Rundletts of Brandy, I pacified them, giving them severall Noates under my hand... Most of them I persuaded to goe to their Homes, which accordingly they did, except about eighty Negroes and twenty English which would not deliver their Armes...."

Grantham tricked these one hundred men on board a sloop with the promise of taking them to a rebel fort a few miles down the York River. Instead, towing them behind his own sloop, he brought them under the guns of another ship and forced their surrender, although "they yielded with a great deal of discontent, saying had they known my resolution, they would have destroyed me." Grantham then proceeded to disarm these last of the rebels and to deliver them to their respective owners.

The transcendent importance of this record is that there, in colonial Virginia, one hundred and twenty-nine years before William Lloyd Garrison was born, the armed working class, black and white, fought side by side for the abolition of slavery. (3)

### III

The bourgeoisie had succeeded in crushing the revolt, as they were again able to do, but only with great difficulty, in the tobacco riots six years later. All this, however, was merely a defensive action; their basic problem remained and was more pressing than ever: The securing of an increasing supply of plantation labor and the establishment of a stable system of social control for its maximum exploitation.

The supply of labor could be increased in two ways: by increasing the number of bond-servants, and by lengthening their time of service. From the standpoint of maximum profit the ultimate step would seem to have been to combine these two approaches to the fullest extent, to tap all possible European and African sources and to extend the period of servitude to life. This, of course, would have required the resort to forced transport of European as well as African bond-servants.

On the basis of perpetual servitude the 250,000 African laborers brought to the southern colonies up to 1790 had developed into a bond-servant population of 650,000. On the same basis, the importation of thirty-eight thousand European life-long bond-servants would have been sufficient to develop more than the maximum number, never more than 100,000, that were actually used in the southern colonies. Perpetual servitude, furthermore, afforded the plantation capitalist important incidental benefits, aside from the extension of the period of service. The children of these bond-servants would belong to the master, as lifelong bond-servants; the women would work in the fields along with the men; deprived of all civil rights, they would be more completely exploitable; and the benefits of improved labor skills, where they developed, would accrue exclusively to the master, not at all to the servant.

The sale price of life-time bond-servants was almost



twice the price of limited-term bond-servants. But even at a doubled price, 38,000 European bond-servants sold into perpetual bondage like that of the Africans, would have cost only one-half to two-thirds as much as what the plantation bourgeoisie actually paid for the 125,000 to 150,000 European bond-servants they did import.

How are we to account for this deviant behavior of the class whom Shakespeare mocked in Timon's satiric encomium to glittering gold, and who practiced so religiously the folk wisdom about a penny saved, a penny got? This brings us to the hard part of the question, "Why racial slavery?" The hard part is, not "Why were African bond-servants reduced to perpetual servitude?", but "Why were European bond-servants not reduced to perpetual servitude?" (4)

#### IV

Domestic political and economic considerations would have made it impossible to impose such a policy as a general thing in England. But, a policy of forced transportation to perpetual servitude, restricted to convicts only, in England, and to Irish and Scottish rebels, "vagrants", and "rogues", and the extension to life of the terms of all such categories of servants already in the colonies, would not have imperiled the fundamental ruling power of the bourgeoisie in England. If this course was not followed, it was not for reasons of social order in England, but of the establishment of a system of social control in the unique conditions of the plantation colonies. The Anglo-American bourgeoisie did not make slaves of black and white together because it was not in its power to do so in the historical context. To have attempted to do so would have put in mortal jeopardy what power it did have, considerable as that power was. The non-slavery of white labor was the indispensable condition for the slavery of black labor. This is no mere conjecture; it is a fact that the events of Bacon's Rebellion, and of the whole turbulent quarter-century following 1660, made unmistakably clear.

The defeat of the popular forces in this struggle cleared the way for the distinctive southern plantation system.

In that economy the disparity of wealth and social power between the few grandees and the great mass of the dependent poor was much more developed than in the rest of the country; and the middle-class presence was correspondingly weak and insignificant. Under these circumstances, the plantation bourgeoisie established a system of social control by the institutionalization of the white race whereby the mass of poor whites was alienated from the black proletariat and enlisted as enforcers of bourgeois power.

## V

The most common form of resistance to bond-servitude was to run away. English and Africans working side by side in the field or in the tobacco shed plotted their escape, met at their rendezvous, and fled to freedom together. The Assemblies of all the plantation colonies enacted cruel and vicious penalties for such "stealth of oneself". The form of corporal punishment most commonly used was flogging and branding, but mutilation and even death were legal retribution against the captured fugitive. The most common form of penalty, because it was most profitable to the owners, was to extend the period of service: for each day away, added service of two days in Virginia, seven in South Carolina, and ten in Maryland. But by the law of 1661, if, in Virginia, any English bond-servant ran away in company with any African life-time bond-servant, the English bond-servant would have to serve the penalty time twice, once for his own absence and once for the African's. (5)

Another, most elementary and human, form of servant solidarity was marrying without the consent of the master. Not only did the marriage impose some barrier to extremes of exploitation, but it led to "lost" time when a wife became pregnant. For this "offense" there were severe legal penalties. The usual penalty was a year's extension of time for marrying and a year for a pregnancy. The children of bond-servants were themselves bond-servants until they were over twenty years of age. But the heaviest penalties were those for white women who bore children where the father was African. For those women the penalty was as much as

seven years of extended service and a severe whipping at the public whipping post, with the child to be a bond-servant until thirty-one years of age.

This policy was generalized on the largest scale in connection with Bacon's Rebellion itself. Governor Berkeley condemned Bacon and his followers as rebels and traitors when the rebellion was primarily a quarrel among white planters over "Indian policy". Berkeley captured Bacon, then pardoned him and gave his blessing to an anti-Indian campaign. But when, in the second phase, the rebellion became directed primarily against the elite and, as it necessarily had to do, united black and white bond-servants and free poor, Berkeley, in victory, treated the captured rebel leaders with such vengeful severity as was said to have evoked from King Charles II, his sovereign, the remark that "that old fool has hang'd more men in that naked country than I did for the Murther of my Father." T.H. Breen notes the same pattern: "Had Bacon somehow confined his dispute to the upper class, he might have been forgiven for his erratic behavior, but once the servants, slaves and poor free-men became involved, he had to be crushed."

However, special repressive measures for specific acts of solidarity by whites with blacks were not sufficient. The social turbulence of the time showed that the unifying effect of the common lot of bond-servants was stronger than the divisive effect of the penalties for specific illegal acts. Edmund S. Morgan makes a perceptive comment in this connection: "It is questionable (he writes) how far Virginia could safely have continued... meeting discontent with repression and manning her plantations with annual importations of servants who would later add to the unruly ranks of the free... There was another solution which allowed Virginia's magnates to keep their lands, yet arrested the discontent and repression of other Englishmen...."

## VI

The shift to African labor was precipitate after 1685, the newly rechartered Royal African Company, with the unsolicited aid of the interlopers, now making England the world leader in the traffic in human beings. Stressing the impor-

tance of "a trade so beneficial to the Kingdom", the Lords of Trade and Plantations adjured the governors of all the American colonies to see to "the well supplying of the Plantations and Colonies with negroes at reasonable prices." The result was that the number of African lifetime bond-servants in 1708-09 in the three main southern colonies exceeded the number of European bond-servants by 12,000 (tithables) to none in Virginia, 4,657 to 3,003 in Maryland, and 4,100 to 120 in South Carolina.

Now a new note is heard; the terms "deficiency laws", "quota", and "the need for white servants", appear with increasing frequency in the records. "White servants rarely come of late," said one of William Penn's trustees, "and consequently the country is in danger of becoming a country of negroes." The Council of Trade and Plantations urged the King to direct the colonial governors to enforce strictly "the acts for increasing the number of white men in their colonies . . . ." The King, William of Orange, complied just seven days later. On October 8, 1698, South Carolina enacted its first "deficiency law" providing penalties for plantation owners who failed to maintain a ratio of at least one white bond-servant for every six male Negroes above sixteen years of age on each plantation. Governor Francis Nicolson reported in 1698 his concern that in Maryland and Virginia the ratio of African bond-servants to English bond-servants had risen as high as six or seven to one. The Council of Trade and Plantations voiced similar fears that in Jamaica, in 1709, the plantation owners were not maintaining their required "quota" of white men to African bond-servants, in spite of the fact that each plantation owner was liable to a fine of five pounds sterling for every three months and for every white bond-servant of his "deficiency". The editor of the Calendar of State Papers for 1716-1717 makes the general comment that "Everywhere the problem of increasing the white population by means of the import of indentured labor was coming to the fore."

Turn, and turn again. First prefer white labor, then black labor, now white labor again. Why? Of course these European bond-servants were to be exploited, and heavily exploited, on the plantations. That point was made repeatedly.

To cite one example, in 1682, "Sundry merchants possessing estates in America" were anxious lest the enforcement of the anti-kidnapping laws in England inhibit the flow of bond-servants to the colonies. They urged consideration of the fact that "every white man's work at tobacco for a year is worth 7 £ (seven pounds sterling) to the king." That was just the part of the profit that went to the king, and did not include the profits of the planters, shipmasters and merchants. When we note that European bond-servants were selling at less than three pounds per year of unexpired term and that their maintenance came to practically nothing, we can see how remunerative their exploitation was for the owners.

But labor is labor, smoke the pipe or sniff the snuff; taste the sugar or rice. You cannot tell whether African, English or Irish labor made it for you. The renewal of interest in white men for bond-servants was, therefore, not due to any special qualities of their labor power, in which they were the same as the Africans.

## VII

The reason was simple. The special demand for white servants was now primarily to "people the country", to serve in the militia, to serve as a basic means of social control based on the perpetual and hereditary bond-servitude of Africans and Afro-Americans. There are literally scores of documents in the records of the time which attest to this fact. I mention a few.

The same letter from merchants possessing estates in Virginia and Maryland made the point that they "have no white men to superintend our negroes, or repress an insurrection of negroes . . . ." The Council of Trade and Plantations reported to the King on September 8, 1721 that in South Carolina "black slaves have lately attempted and were very near succeeding in a new revolution . . . and therefore, it may be necessary . . . to propose some new law for encouraging the entertainment of more white servants in the future. The militia of this province does not consist of above 2,000 men." In his preface to volume sixteen of the Calendar of State Papers, Fortescue writes that by 1697-98, "The

system of defense by white servants had broken down." "The defense of the West Indies," he tells us, "depended, apart from the fleet, entirely on the militia, which was composed of white servants." But the island plantation colonies were finding it impossible to hold European servants once their time was out because of the strict limits of land available for occupation by freedmen. The record is replete with dire pronouncements on the consequences of the relatively small and diminishing number of white men in those islands. In 1688, the Governor of Barbados complained of the Quaker planters' failure to maintain their fair share of the number of white bond-servants "required to suppress the danger of an insurrection by negroes." The Governor of Jamaica wrote to the Prince of Wales on 24 September 1716 that his island was "...almost defenceless, as well from the want of white people to prevent any insurrection of the Negroes, as ships of war to secure the coasts, trade and navigation...." The House of Commons, on November 3, 1691, received "a petition of divers merchants, masters of ships, planters and others, trading to foreign plantations... setting forth, that the plantations cannot be maintained without a considerable number of white servants, as well to keep the blacks in subjection, as to bear arms in case of an invasion."

Parliament, in 1717, responded to these cries of alarm by making transportation to bond-servitude in the plantation colonies a legal punishment for crime. Persons convicted of felonies, for which the death penalty could be imposed, could instead be sentenced to fourteen years' transportation to the American plantations. Persons convicted of lesser offenses were liable to seven years' servitude. A study cited by A. E. Smith, for the years 1729-1770, indicated that at least seventy per cent of those convicted in the Old Bailey court in London were sent to Maryland and Virginia. Thenceforth "His Majesty's passengers" constituted a large proportion of the white bond-servant population in the southern plantation colonies, being a majority of those arriving from England. Nevertheless, the majority of the total number of European bond-servants coming to the southern colonies (including those who originally disembarked at Philadelphia

or other non-South ports) were, for the greater part of the eighteenth century, Irish, Germans, and Scots. Aside from convicts, the number of European bond-servants in Maryland more than doubled between 1707 and 1755. Whereas the number of white servants in Virginia in 1708 was negligible, Governor Gooch reported to the home government that great numbers of bond-servants, white as well as black, had been imported into that colony since 1720. Separate bond-servant statistics are lacking for South Carolina, except for 1708, when, out of a population of nearly ten thousand, there were only 120 European bond-servants. However, it is generally agreed that a majority of the Europeans coming to the colonies were bond-servants; therefore, as the white population of South Carolina increased from 4,000 to 25,000 between 1708 and 1755, the white-servant immigration must have amounted to several thousand. (6)

## VIII

The bourgeoisie could get European bond-servants to come to the southern colonies, but how was it to avoid another Bacon's Rebellion or Servants' Plot in which African and European bond-servants would join in challenging the ruling elite? How was the bourgeoisie to turn that old situation around, break up the solidarity of black and white, and then enlist the poor whites in the social control apparatus of the ruling class? Professor Morgan, at one point in the article previously cited, comments as follows: "I do not mean to argue that Virginia deliberately turned to African slavery as a means of preserving and extending the rights of Englishmen." Quite right; but reverse the order of the clauses and you have a profoundly correct statement: The plantation bourgeoisie deliberately extended a privileged status to the white poor of all categories as a means of turning to African slavery as the basis of its system of production.

The seventeenth-century Anglo-American plantation bourgeoisie drew the color line between freedom and slavery, a line that had not previously existed under English custom or law. (7) James C. Ballagh, in his well-known old essay, A History of Slavery in Virginia, first published

in 1902, detailed how the Virginia Assembly, "in a long series of...statutes...first drew and applied the color line as a limit upon various social and political rights, and finally narrowed its application definitely to the negro race with respect to liberty and customary or legal privileges and rights." This drawing of the color line was accomplished by defining who was to be a slave; then, of course, everybody else would be by definition a non-slave. The process took place over a period of nearly half a century.

In 1662 the Virginia Assembly decreed that all persons born in Virginia were to follow the condition of the mother. This was a direct result, according to Ballagh, of "fornication" of Englishmen with Negro women; but it was also intended as a "deterrent to the female" English. For, as the historian Philip Bruce put it, "It is no ground for surprise that in the seventeenth century there were instances of criminal intimacy between white women and negroes. Many of the former had only recently arrived from England, and were therefore comparatively free from . . . race prejudice...." It was in this connection that the very first legislative enactment of white-skin privilege for white labor was passed when, by excluding white women bond-servants from the list of taxable persons, the Assembly provided for the general exemption of white women bond-servants from field work. In 1662 interracial fornication by "Christian" men was made punishable by a fine double the amount otherwise imposed for that offense. In 1705 a white servant woman became liable to five years added servitude for this offense, and the son or daughter born in result of the "crime" was to be a bond-servant until he or she became thirty-one years of age.

After 1670, baptism in Christ in Virginia was to have no emancipative effect in this world. But this left still free those Negroes who came from Spanish, Portuguese or English territory already baptized. In 1680, therefore, the Virginia Assembly decreed that imported servants were slaves unless they had been born of Christian parents in a Christian land and first purchased by a Christian. That seemed to cover all contingencies, except for the limited-term black bond-servants, free Negroes and Indian slaves. In 1705, the



last step was taken: All servants who were brought into the country, by sea or land, were to be slaves, unless they came as three-star Christians as specified in the 1680 law. Only blacks were slaves, not Indians, in Virginia. (8)

There remained the question of the free persons of color. But their position was clearly defined as one of a lower status than any white person. In 1705, for instance, the law forbade any Negro to own any white servant. In 1723, free Negroes, who had until then been voters on the same basis as whites, were deprived of this right. Some years later, Lieutenant Governor William Gooch justified this and other special deprivation of rights to free Afro-Americans: The purpose, he explained, was "to fix a brand on free negroes and mulattoes... (because) a distinction ought to be made between their offspring and the descendants of an Englishman." He deplored the "pride of a manumitted slave, who looks upon himself immediately on his acquiring his freedom, to be as good a man as the best of his neighbors." Gooch was determined to break that simple pride, and "to preserve... a distinction between them (free Negroes) and their betters." The Council of Trade and Plantations in England, who had asked the question, indicated its satisfaction with the answer.

The white-skin privileges of the poor free whites were simply reflexes of the disabilities imposed on the Negro slave: to move about freely without a pass; to marry without any upper-class consent; to change employment; to vote in elections in accordance with the laws on qualifications; to acquire property; and last, but not least, in this partial list, the right of self-defense.

Not only the free whites, but the white bond-servants were given privileges in relation to the African. In 1680 the Virginia Assembly repealed all penalties that had been imposed on white servants for plundering during Bacon's Rebellion. The language of the act implicitly excluded from this benefit any Afro-American freedmen or limited-term bond-servants who had taken part in the Rebellion. Negro children were made tithable, hence workable, at twelve years of age, while white bond-servants were exempt until they were fourteen.

In 1680, Negroes were forbidden to carry arms, defensive or offensive. In 1705, the specified freedom dues for a white bond-servant included a musket. In 1680, the law provided that any Negro who raised his or her hand against any Christian white would be liable to receive thirty lashes, well laid on. Under the law of 1705, a white servant raising a hand against the master, mistress or overseer was liable to an extension of a year of his or her servitude. Under the same law, the killing of an Afro-American life-time bond-servant was legal if the bond-servant resisted "correction" by the master or his agent. Here is a classic clear distinction between race and class oppression.

In 1680, it was made legal to kill a fugitive Negro bond-servant if he or she resisted recapture. In 1705, the law specified that a white servant might not be whipped naked except by order of a Justice of the Peace. The same law gave the white bond-servant the right to seek legal redress against the master for severity of treatment or for inadequacy of provisions.

In 1705, white bond-servants, upon completion of their terms of servitude, were to receive under the law the following freedom dues: men, 10 bushels of corn, 30 shillings in money, and a musket worth 20 shillings; women, 15 bushels of corn and 40 shillings in money. The Afro-American laborers were not to receive freedom dues, since they were not to have freedom. (9)

## IX

In 1692, representatives of Virginia in England made the point that Virginia and Maryland, being on the continent, could not keep the bond-servants under control so simply as the authorities could do on the island colonies of the West Indies with the help of the fleet. From Virginia reports of insurrectionary plots by Negroes became frequent. The editor of the Calendar of State Papers describes Virginia in 1728-29 as "a community filled with anxiety and in constant dread" on this account.

The experience of Bacon's Rebellion had shown that the continental colonies were too far from England to be controlled by troops based in the Mother Country. The Crown

was unwilling to maintain at its own expense a permanent army in the colonies for this purpose. Although the plantation owners on some occasions appealed for British troops for the maintenance of order against the rebellious population, they were unwilling to pay the cost. Increasingly, therefore, the colonial governments concerned themselves with the development of the white militia.

From almost the beginning, members of the colonial ruling elite and their key agents, auxiliaries, and employees were generally exempted from militia duty. The Act of 1705 thus excused "Any present or past member of the colony council, speaker of the house of burgesses, attorney-general, justice of the peace, or any person who has borne commission of captain or higher in the colony, ministers, clerks, schoolmasters, overseer of 4 or more slaves, constable, miller . . . ." Under that law bond-servants were also excluded from the militia. In 1723, however, when exemptions were in each instance required to find and furnish "one able white man" for a substitute, no specific exclusion of bonded servants was provided in regard to those who might serve as substitutes. In fact, it was provided that "nothing in this Act contained, shall hinder or deter any captain from admitting any able-bodied white person, who shall be above the age of sixteen years, to serve in his troop or company in the place of any person required by this act to be enlisted."

By 1727, the special form of militia known as the slave patrol was established in Virginia to deal with the "great dangers that may . . . happen by the insurrections of negroes . . . ." The patrols were to be appointed by the chief militia officer in each county, and employed for the purpose of "dispersing all unusual concourse of negroes . . . and for preventing any dangerous combinations which may be made amongst them at such meetings." The poor white men who constituted the rank and file of the militia were to be rewarded for this service by such things as exemption from attendance at regular militia musters, and for payment of taxes and parish levies." An article in the Act of 1727 that especially catches the attention is the one that specifies the militia pay-scale in pounds of tobacco according to rank.

The poor whites when on patrol duty were to receive pay according to that scale.

And paid for what? — to crush plots and rebellions such as their own grandfathers may have taken part in along with black bond-servants fifty years before.

## X

But their own position, vis-a-vis the rich and powerful — the matter that lay at the root of that old civil strife — was not improved, but weakened, by the white-skin privilege system. That system, after all, was conceived and instituted as an alternative method to that of Grantham and Berkeley, but with precisely the same aims and same effect. On that we have the most unimpeachable testimony.

In 1831, less than a hundred miles from the spot where the "four hundred English and Negroes in Armes" had wanted to shoot Berkeley's mendacious Captain, or cut him in pieces, there occurred that brief proletarian uprising known as Nat Turner's Rebellion. That event sent a premonitory shudder through the frame of the United States ruling plantation bourgeoisie. It brought to the surface thoughts and dreads not ordinarily spoken. All that winter and spring of 1831-32 the Virginia Legislature and the press debated the meaning and possible consequences of this battle cry of labor enslaved. They were looking to their defenses, and they talked much of the poor whites.

T. J. Randolph, nephew and namesake of the author of the Declaration of Independence, put the rhetorical question to his fellow legislators: "...upon whom is to fall the burden of this defense (against slave-proletarian revolts): not upon the lordly masters of their hundred slaves, who will never turn out except to retire with their families when danger threatens. No sir, it is to fall...chiefly upon the non-slaveholders...patrolling under a compulsory process, for a pittance of seventy-five cents per twelve hours...."

George W. Summers of Kanawha County made many in the House of Delegates wince. "In the character of Patroles," he said, the poor white "...is thus made to fold to his bosom, the adder that stings him." Summers, of course,

was as opposed as all the rest of the members to freeing the poor white of "the adder" by establishing equality of black and white labor in Virginia.

"Civis", an Eastern Virginia slaveholder, pointed out that in his part of the state more than half the white minority had "little but their complexion to console them for being born into a higher caste."

Another slaveholder, who signed himself with the prophetic name "Appomattox", spoke of the status of the white workers in terms surely even wiser than he knew: "...forced to wander vagabonds around the confines of society, finding no class which they can enter, because for the one they should have entered, there is substituted an ARTIFICIAL SYSTEM of labor to which they cannot attach themselves." (10)

Profoundly true! The artificial, i.e., unequal, system of labor prevented them from "entering" their own class by "attaching themselves" to the proletarian class struggle.

In these Virginia debates we hear published to the world the social degradation that a century and a half of white supremacy had brought to the poor whites, who had forgotten those blood-vows sworn by the triumphant light of the Jamestown fire, and in the gloaming waiting for Grantham.

#### FOOTNOTES

For publication here footnote references have been condensed and greatly reduced. A standard reference used in this essay is the *CAL-NDAR OF STATE PAPERS, COLONIAL*, published by the British Public Record Office. The source for the laws of Virginia frequently cited in the text is W. W. Hening, *STATUTES-AT-LARGE OF VIRGINIA* (11 Vols.; Richmond, 1799-1814). A complete set of references can be obtained by writing to *RADICAL AMERICA*.)

1. Edmund S. Morgan and T. H. Breen have recently made notable contributions to an integral theory of early colonial history by suggesting a connection between the social turbulence in Virginia between 1660 and 1692, including Bacon's Rebellion, and the establishment of racial slavery. (See Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox", *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN HISTORY*, June, 1972; and Breen, "A Changing Labor Force and Race Relations in Virginia, 1660-1710", *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL HISTORY*, Fall, 1973). It seems to me, however,

that their efforts fail fundamentally to establish that connection, and their well-begun arguments trail off into unhelpful, indeed misleading, speculations. This essay is an attempt, by a re-sifting of familiar materials in a different light, to discover that crucial link.

2. The "slavery-as-capitalism" school of American historians includes W. E. B. Du Bois, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Lewis C. Gray, Roger W. Shugg, Carl N. Degler, and Winthrop D. Jordan. Eric Williams and C. L. R. James view Caribbean slavery in the same light. Karl Marx invariably referred to the American plantation economy as capitalist enterprise. If one accepts this view, there is no reason for denying that the slaveholders were capitalists — a plantation bourgeoisie — and the slaves were proletarians. Of course, that form of labor was a contradiction of the basic requisites of general capitalist development — a contradiction that was purged away in the American Civil War. The fact remains that for a time that form of labor was not a barrier to rapid capitalist accumulation, but its main engine. Finally — academic considerations aside — the question of who is or who is not a proletarian has absolutely no significance except in relation to the class struggle conducted by propertyless laborers against their capitalist exploiters. Such laborers constituted the majority of the rebels in the Civil War phase of Bacon's Rebellion, and of the entire population of the plantation colonies.

3. Important published accounts of Bacon's Rebellion are to be found in Wilcomb E. Washburn, *THE GOVERNOR AND THE REBEL* (Chapel Hill, 1957), and Charles M. Andrews, ed., *NARRATIVES OF THE INSURRECTIONS, 1675-1690* (New York, 1915). Unpublished sources include Captain Grantham's "Account", in the Bath Mss., Vol. LXXVII, folios 301-302; and the George N. Chalmers Collection, "Letters Relating to Virginia", I, folio 49, in the New York Public Library.

4. Winthrop D. Jordan, in his *WHITE OVER BLACK* (Chapel Hill, 1968), suggests this same question and makes the unsupported assertion that the plantation owners could have enslaved non-English Europeans if the owners had been able to conceive of such a monstrous transgression against white Christian fellowship. Since I am here occupied in presenting positive theses, I leave polemics aside. Just one note: "White-over-white" perpetual slavery was instituted in Britain, for Scottish coal miners and salt-pan workers, in 1606, a year before Jamestown was founded, and it was not completely ended until 1799. Only objective difficulties, not moral or racial principles, prevented a wider practice of the system and eventually were decisive in bringing about its discontinuance. See "Slavery in Modern Scotland", *EDINBURGH REVIEW*, Vol. 189 (1899), pp. 119-148.

5. The most important secondary sources on European bond-servants in Colonial America are A. E. Smith, *COLONISTS IN BONDAGE: WHITE SERVITUDE AND CONVICT LABOR IN AMERICA, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, 1947); Richard B. Morris, *GOVERNMENT AND LABOR IN EARLY AMERICA* (New York, 1947); and Marcus W. Jernegan, *LABORING AND DEPENDENT CLASSES IN COLONIAL AMERICA, 1607-1783* (Chicago,

1931). The most useful specialized studies for this essay have been E. I. McCormac, *WHITE SERVITUDE IN MARYLAND, 1634-1820* (Baltimore, 1895); and Warren B. Smith, *WHITE SERVITUDE IN COLONIAL SOUTH CAROLINA* (Columbia, 1961).

6. In the continental colonies, even in the good times, no more than one-third of the European bond-servants were able to complete their terms of service and establish themselves as independent farmers; and by the end of the seventeenth century, the proportion was only five or six per cent. (T. J. Wertenbaker, *THE PLANTERS OF COLONIAL VIRGINIA* (New York, 1959). But the situation of the freedmen in the insular colonies, Jamaica, Barbados, and others, was even worse. Bond servants completing their terms there left the islands by the thousands. Those who did not succeed in getting away began to constitute a destitute proletarian white sub-class. The special measures enacted, or at least considered, by the Anglo-Caribbean ruling class to provide some safety margin of racial privileges in this circumstance, anticipated similar measures in the continental plantation country. Among them were the exclusion of non-whites from work as skilled tradesmen, and the extension of the franchise in order that these destitute whites might then be able to sell their votes to the bourgeois candidates at election time.

7. Which came first, racism or slavery? In the post-World War II era of national-liberation upsurge, a related controversy has occupied much attention of American historians. One side, the "psycho-cultural" side, holds that white supremacy is "natural", the result of an "unthinking decision"; that it derives from human attributes not subject to effective eliminative social action. The other side, the "social" side, believes that racism arises from socio-economic, rather than natural, conditions; that (at least by implication) it is susceptible of elimination by social action.

Evidence of early instances of enslavement of Afro-Americans is stressed by the "psycho-cultural" school as proof of the "natural antipathy" of white and black. On the other hand, as Jordan (foremost of the "psycho-culturalists") puts it, "Late and gradual enslavement undercuts the possibility of natural and deep-seated antipathy toward Negroes... if whites and Negroes could share the same status of half freedom for forty years in the seventeenth century, why could they not share full freedom in the twentieth." (Winthrop D. Jordan, "Modern Tensions and the Origins of American Slavery", *JOURNAL OF SOUTHERN HISTORY*, vol. 28 (1962), pp. 19-30, loc. cit., p. 20.

Of all the historians of the "social" school whose work I have read, only the black historian Lerone Bennett, Jr., in his article, "The Road Not Taken", *EBONY*, vol. 25 (1970), no. 10 (August), pp. 70-77, and in Chapter III of his new book *THE SHAPING OF AMERICA* (Chicago, 1975), succeeds in placing the argument on the three essential bearing-points from which it cannot be toppled. First, racial slavery and white supremacy in this country was a ruling-class response to a problem of labor solidarity. Second, a system of racial privileges for white work-

ers was deliberately instituted in order to define and establish the "white race" as a social control formation. Third, the consequence was not only ruinous to the interests of the Afro-American workers, but was also "disastrous" (Bennett's word) for the white worker. Others (such as the Handlins, Morgan and Breen) state the first two points to some degree, but only Bennett combines all three.

Although I learned of Bennett's essay only a few weeks ago, the same three essentials have informed my own approach in a book I have for several years been engaged in writing (and of which this present article is a spin-off), on the origin of racial slavery, white supremacy and the system of racial privileges of white labor in this country.

The comparative study of the systems of social control in the various slave-labor plantation colonies in the Americas, combined with a study of Bacon's Rebellion, its origin and aftermath, can contribute much to the resolution of the question, in favor of "deliberate choice" and against "unthinking decision." In the continental plantation colonies (Virginia was the pattern-setter) the Anglo-American ruling class drew the color line between freedom and slavery on race lines; any trace of African ancestry carried the presumption of slavery. The same Anglo-American ruling class drew the freedom-slavery line differently in Jamaica and Barbados (as did other European ruling classes elsewhere in the Americas). The poor white became not only economically, but politically and socially, marginal in the British West Indies generally. In the southern continental colonies the bourgeoisie came to base their system of social control upon the white proletariat and semi-proletarian and subsistence agricultural classes. In the southern plantation colonies the free person of any degree of African ancestry was forced into an illegal or semi-legal status, as a general rule. The same Anglo-American ruling bourgeoisie deliberately created and nurtured this group as a petit-bourgeois buffer-control stratum in the Caribbean island societies. These are all decisive differences which cannot be explained on the basis of "psychology" or "English cultural heritage."

Finally, and more important, while the Anglo-American bourgeoisie had, by their prior experience in Providence (Bahamas) and Barbados, learned the profitability of equating, or seeking to equate, "Negro" and "slave", the masses of European (at that stage almost all English) bond-servants in Virginia had not accepted that point of view. Instead, they intermarried, conspired, ran away, and finally revolted in arms together with African bond-servants. Racial slavery could not have existed, and did not exist, under those circumstances. Under such circumstances, to attempt to solve the "labor problem" by increasing the number of African bond-servants, reducing them to hereditary lifetime servitude, and making them the main productive labor base of the society would have been like trying to put out the Jamestown fire with kerosene.

8. In South Carolina, in the earliest years of the colony, Indians were enslaved more extensively than was ever the case in other colonies. But this practice was, on the whole, counter-productive for a number



of reasons. The Proprietors were anxious lest the practice cost the colony the services of those Indians who were serving as returners of runaway Africans. The European indentured servants were enticed with promises of land (only exceptionally realized); but no such illusions were possible for the Indians, who could only lose what land they had under the European plan. The English were, furthermore, concerned not to increase the danger of Indian collaboration with the Spanish and French. I do not share the occasionally expressed opinion that relatively few continental Indians were enslaved because of a lack of adaptability to agriculture.

9. To contrast the status accorded European and African bond-servants is not to suggest that the life of the white bond-servant was anything other than hard and oppressive. A. E. Smith believes that "the vast majority of them worked out their time without suffering excessive (!) cruelty or want, [and] received their freedom dues without suing for them." Presumably he means the "majority" of those who survived their period of service. He concedes that "the system of white servitude was cruel" on account of the hard labor it imposed on persons "generally unfitted for such a life", and so much so that in the early colonial period "fifty or seventy-five out of every hundred white servants died without ever having a decent chance at survival." (op. cit., pp. 278, 303-4.)

Morris says that the shift to main reliance upon African laborers did not bring with it an improvement in the conditions of the European bond-servants. They continued to be "subject to the severest disciplinary measures." He cites with approval Edis' well-known comment that "Generally speaking they [the European bond-servants] groan under a yoke worse than [Biblical] Egyptian bondage." Morris relates in some detail the record of more than a score of cases of brutal treatment, including murder by violent blows and deliberate starvation, rape, torture, and inducement of suicide, in which the masters, with rare exception, were only lightly punished, if at all. Morris decided not to add more examples because to do so "would be to give the screw many a turn and in the long run immunize the reader by harsh repetition." (op. cit., pp. 484, 486-497.)

10. Randolph's speech to the Virginia House of Delegates, January 21, 1832, was published as an abolitionist pamphlet, and is available at the NYPL. Summers' speech to the House of Delegates was given four days earlier, and was printed in the RICHMOND ENQUIRER on February 2, 1832. "Civis's" comments appeared in the newspaper on May 4, and those of "Appomattox" on March 3.

*THEODORE ALLEN is the author of "Can White Radicals Be Radicalized?" and co-author of "White Blind Spot" with Noel Ignatin. He is currently writing a book on American colonial history and the origins of racial slavery.*



## **“Racism and Busing in Boston”: Comments and Criticism**

*(EDITORS' NOTE: In the November-December 1974 issue of RADICAL AMERICA we printed an editorial on “Racism and Busing in Boston”. We are printing the following responses to that editorial, with a reply by the authors, in hopes of contributing to the development of a strategy to combat racism.)*

To the Editors :

This is just a brief note of appreciation for your recent editorial on busing in Boston. I grew up in Quincy and while I am a generation or so away from what you are presenting (my mother grew up in Dorchester), buffered by a Catholic school education, a college degree and years away from home, I certainly could not help but be aware of the history you have tried to show. After wading through some of the claptrap that poses as political discussion on the left, it was like the break of day to come across your article for

Opposite: State Police outside South Boston High School. Photo : Christian Science Monitor.

two reasons: for its uncompromising stand against racism; and for an analysis so rooted in the actual events and forces that have shaped this issue.

Here in Louisville we face school desegregation by court order sooner or later and I hope to apply some of my understanding of the Boston situation to developing a useful analysis of the situation here.

One thing that the left evades in its attempt to come to some abstract critique of busing per se is that whether or not busing is attractive, ideal or congruent with one's current position on the national question it does happen to be right now the cutting edge of a long, hard fought and very broadly engaged in struggle by the black community of Boston for a better education for their children. And it is being attacked as such. To be sure there are political opportunists in the black community riding the issue — but the people built it — and in fact in such a down to earth and grass roots way — that they are not known to the rest of the country. Ellen Jackson filled headlines in my youth — but who on the left has heard of her?

Also critical is your presentation of the old line Democratic party machine. My grandmother God-blessed either James Michael Curley or John McCormick for giving some member of her family a job once when times were tough. When I kept hearing the shrill cry of how the Hicks-Kerrigan clique was demagogically exploiting the fascist aspects of ruling class ideology — this stuff tends to go in one ear and out the other. Anyway at some point I said to myself — wait a minute these are people I know about. If they don't still live in Southie their mother does for sure. They are very finely tuned to the aspirations of their base and very responsive to it. Demogogic they may be, but they are not creating racism out of nothing or nowhere, and their political strength does indeed rest on the ability to provide some edge or advantage for their popular base over other segments of the population.

I will close here. This is not a thorough critique, but — for the ring of truth — I thank you.

In struggle,

Laurie Dougherty  
Louisville, Kentucky

To the editors :

The RADICAL AMERICA busing article was one of the most insightful examinations to date on the subject. The authors lay bare the primary issues involved in the busing controversy, uncovering both the political and materialist basis of white racism here in Boston. The article contained so much perceptive analysis that one could write an article of equal length in response. However, I would like to limit my comments to a few brief statements concerning the significance of the desegregation mandate for the black community.

Anyone examining the black community for its reactions to the busing order will find an amazing amount of support for the order. Black parents and black leaders continue to support busing in spite of some ideological differences and in spite of the high price, in the short run, that many of the black students have to pay. It is this price in terms of lost educational opportunities, psychic and emotional costs that troubles the community most. However, the long-term price that the black community would pay by foregoing busing would be even costlier.

The black community has paid the price of inadequate education for decades and has made two significant attempts to deal with it. As the authors correctly point out, METCO and the community schools were both conceived from within the black community as means of altering the inadequate education that black children were receiving. However, there were inherent problems with both of these approaches which made neither of them a permanent solution to acquiring adequate education for black students. These problems included: tenuous funding, inferior physical plants, insufficient openings, and poor conceptualization. The community schools did not cover the secondary level, which caused many parents to doubt the effectiveness of the community school. Their children were still being thrown into a system geared to their destruction. In addition, these two approaches involved less than 10% of the 30,000 black students in the school system.

The community schools and METCO may have served well those students who were lucky enough to get in, but

they left the mass of black students untouched. In addition, METCO and the community schools did not threaten the status quo. For these reasons the Boston School Committee was perfectly willing to allow their existence.

Bill Owens, now the first black state senator in Massachusetts history, was one of the parents originally involved in organizing the first community school, the New School for Children. Presently, Senator Owens publicly expresses support for the full implementation of the desegregation order on both the student and teacher levels, concomitant with a qualitative improvement of the city's schools. It is clear after more than a decade of struggle that only city-wide integration gives the black community any possibility of attaining equal education within the school system's present structure.

Thus, though there are many within the black community who do not favor massive busing of their children, they know that ten years of struggle on their part and continual resistance by the School Committee leaves them no alternative except to support the desegregation mandate handed down by Judge A. Garrity.

Robert Jones  
Roxbury, Massachusetts

To the editors :

I found your editorial statement, "Racism and Busing in Boston" by Jim Green and Allen Hunter, very helpful, for the following reasons :

(1) The background information showed historically how the Boston bourgeoisie built racism into the public schools. This is an essential point for people who want to understand the importance of racism to the ruling class as a tool to keep the working class divided and weak.

(2) More importantly, however, the statement showed the specific ways in which the imposition of racism and racist privileges by the ruling class resulted in today's reality. By putting white working-class racism in context, it is easy

to see the ways in which workers of the oppressor nation (whites) are, in Lenin's words, "partners of their own bourgeoisie" relative to workers of the oppressed nation (blacks). (And this in turn serves to refute those on the left who claim that racism is simply a set of "bad ideas". Marxism insists that ideas become material realities, and that they do so precisely when they are taken up by masses of people.)

(3) By showing that the busing decision was a partial victory in a long struggle waged by Boston's black masses, the editorial is an excellent rebuttal to those who dismiss busing as a capitalist plot, a view which has gained some currency in the past year.

(4) Inadvertently, I think, Green and Hunter showed me that the reason why the fascists have to make their counterattack in a place like Boston is probably because, for the time being at least, they have been routed in areas of heavy black majority. (I am speaking here only of the struggle in the schools, not in politics generally.) By analyzing the material weakness, as well as the strength, of the school struggle, it is possible to make a good guess why Boston, not Alabama or Mississippi, was the target this time.

Despite the strength of the analysis, however, I don't think it follows so readily that "the only hope" for working class unity is located in the struggle against segregation, though that is necessarily the present battleground. It is important to realize that the Boston struggle of the past year has been essentially defensive in nature — a true emergency, in which the most hesitant ally is better than none at all. It would be wrong to view this as a strategy for liberation, even if it is true that the racists have suffered a major defeat.

When the theater of struggle is broadened beyond Boston, and is deepened to include every aspect of life, it may then be that the black masses will opt for independence, and who will we (whites) be to say they are wrong? In fact, we must even now fight for their right to do so. I have no doubt that a liberated black nation in North America will add powerful momentum to the most noble aspirations of white workers as well, providing a living example that there is a light of



freedom at the end of the tunnel, and that it need not be so far away.

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As much as I detest critics who review what an author didn't write, rather than reviewing the contents of the work, I have to admit that I was left dangling at the end of my reading of the editorial. By failing to put forward a program of action, it yields to those critics who attack this line by accusing its (white) proponents of simply cheering from the sidelines while the black masses conduct their struggle.

When called upon to do so, white leftists must and should mobilize and march shoulder to shoulder with black and brown people, to build the mass movement against racism or any manifestation of reaction. But that is not enough. We must also join the fight against racism in other concrete ways, in the very places where the infection is most virulent. The statement draws a blank here.

So I was especially pleased to read Osawatomie, where the Weather Underground told how they penetrated the secret councils of the enemy and exposed the class reality of organized racism to the light of day (and in the process de-mystified and weakened it). This, of course, is only one of many possible programs of action, but it suggests many others for which white radicals are uniquely suited.

The point is that while there can be no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory, the corollary is also true. Revolutionary practice is the preferred fertilizer for the next stage of our movement's development. "Racism and Busing in Boston" is proof that the analytical tools have been mastered. It is now time to draw the conclusions and act on them.

Ken Lawrence  
Tougaloo, Mississippi



Police escort for children at Mackey School, Boston. Photo: Christian Science Monitor.

To the editors :

As a teacher in Boston, I've had long arguments with political friends this year. It seems to me that many radicals and liberals have responded to the anti-busing sentiment with judgments that were appropriate ten years ago — which is probably the last time many of us were seriously confronting the problems of racism. The left has been quick to judge people as racists, while ignoring the segregated worlds in which we ourselves often live, work, and play.

The main disagreement I have with the article is with its political conclusion: that the priority for the left is to confront and change the white racists of Boston. I believe such strategy — by itself — will not work, and that the goal is so one-dimensional that it is wrong. Instead of moralizing, people should start to work on a strategy that might help the Boston working people — black and white — who are caught in this situation.

Boston is a system where deprived ethnic groups are set against each other, competing for jobs, money, and social status. Hunter and Green correctly document how important white-skin privilege is in a situation like this. Today, the Boston white people who are being forced to give up their segregated neighborhood schools, believe the court decision is punishment for being poor or working class. They are furious because they correctly understand that if they had a little more money they could flee from the city, like other members of their families who have "made it". (Approximately 7,000 students have left Boston as a result of the first part of the plan.) Many white parents who remain here are bitter because they feel that they have been forced into a corner — by inflation, unemployment, Garrity's order. Phase I of this busing plan intensified their racism because some neighborhoods were bused heavily; others not at all. Many parents have said to me, "I wasn't a racist before, but this forced busing is wrong, and I guess I'm a racist now."

I'm not trying to justify people who stone black children or those who want to "kill niggers". I'm saying that the force behind those attacks comes at least partly from desperation. To preach to such people is condescending — and it seems that "confronting" their racism helps polarize them to the right. It is important that we accept a more complicated reality in order to work with people to build a strategy that will make things better.

One example is the statistics which show twice as many blacks getting suspended as white kids. It is too easy to dismiss these figures simply as the result of administrators unfairly discriminating against black students. I've found that many of my black and white students who are discipline problems in the ninth grade have multiple learning problems. Many of these "problem kids" have been socially promoted through the grades. (They are passed on to the next grade even though they lack the necessary points.) They have not learned the material, but the administrators (and some teachers) don't want to deal with the problems of a repeater. So, they juggle marks and push the kids ahead. In junior high and high school, these kids are too

proud to admit they can't read so they act out instead. It's sometimes better to be thrown out of class for being a "bad" kid than being found out to be "stupid".

More blacks have these multiple learning problems than whites in the Boston system. This is certainly the result of 20 years of a dual school system, unequal allocation of resources to neighborhood schools, class background, less reading skills before school, etc.

This year some of these problem kids who are black have been sent to schools that have been previously white. And there, surprisingly, they have often found a double standard from some teachers and administrators that is in favor of black kids, at least in the short run. White kids are disciplined on many more small points, like smoking, hanging around in the halls, etc. Many teachers are scared of the "bad" black kids and they try to avoid confrontation. The black kids test and try the limits even further. Then when black kids become impossible to handle, administrators suspend them. Thus, Boston ends up with a much higher suspension figure for blacks than whites. White students and their parents are furious at the double standard of discipline that they see daily in school. Black students and their parents are furious when they get bounced out of school.

Unfortunately, the "liberal" response outside of Boston has been to ask why anyone gets upset with swear words, or to label this as another example of racism. A more realistic response is one that would help teachers and students to break the cycle described above. We must eliminate social promotions while tackling the problems of underachievement in the early grades. At the same time, we need to clarify the students' rights while supporting teachers' need for order and discipline in the classroom.

The conservative forces in Boston are organizing parents around fear. These anti-busing forces offer an outlet for the anger which has built around economic pressures, a stupidly administered desegregation plan, and past assaults on Boston Catholic life styles. Many Boston political people expect ROAR and the other anti-busing forces to win all or most of the city's elections this fall.

The hopeful side is that this crisis is making some white

parents aware that their children are being tracked to much lower expectations than suburban kids. A possible strategy for the next couple of years would be to build a white/black alliance working for schools that will involve kids while teaching them essential skills. It is obvious to me that white parents will only be willing to give up rallying around their neighborhood schools if they believe that integration can offer something positive to their kids.

Marya Levenson  
with help from Andy Hawley

Boston, Massachusetts

To the editors :

The Editorial Statement on "Racism and Busing in Boston" was most helpful and informative. One ambiguity or gap remained, I thought. Nothing was said about a concrete perspective for winning the white working class to a program of joint white-and-black action for better education. I am certain it is true that "no rhetorical calls for black-white unity will erase" the fact that "the immediate effect of the busing crisis has been to increase tension between black and white workers" (page 32). But it would be still more rhetorical and abstract to attack white workers in the name of class unity.

In particular, the editorial fails to take a stand between two alternatives. 1. Should white workers be asked to give up privileges which result from institutionalized racism? 2. Should a demand be made for a higher level of education, housing, and employment, which would benefit blacks more than whites so as to make both equal, but would benefit whites as well?

I strongly favor the second alternative. This might mean saying, for example: "The average cost per pupil in predominantly-white schools is Y. (You give figures on page 11). X is higher than Y. Our demand is that in every school of the city the average expenditure per pupil should be no lower than Z, Z is higher than both X and Y. To bring X and

Y up to Z, Y will have to be increased more than X. That is only fair. But all school children will benefit."

Unless one is prepared to write off the workers of a community like South Boston, I believe this is the only approach which is both moral, and has any chance of success. The editorial states :

"Most white working-class people are against busing white children to black schools because in a racist society black schools are poorer schools" (page 2).

"Tenants in the worst white housing projects have used violence to keep blacks out, because they believe that the presence of blacks or Puerto Ricans will cause housing to be neglected even further . . . . These poor whites are making last-ditch efforts to defend their relative advantages over blacks and to prevent the spread of ghetto-like housing conditions in their neighborhoods" (pages 6-7).

These statements correspond to my own experience in inner-city neighborhoods changing from white to black. Furthermore, I think these statements are true in the sense that schools do deteriorate and housing and neighborhood conditions do change for the worse, in our society, when neighborhoods undergo "transition." Needless to say this is the fault of school administrators who cut services, banks which "red line," ghettoization which compels blacks moving into such a neighborhood to overcrowd housing facilities, and the rest. But to deal with white working people one has to begin by acknowledging the accuracy of their empirical perception of what happens in changing neighborhoods. Only then can one go on to say: "It doesn't have to be that way. And the way you are trying to meet the problem offers no solution for anyone."

Is the approach of improving education for everyone, but improving it more for blacks, a practical approach? Only if a school program includes a tax program. It is generally the radical and even liberal approach that school integration requires treating inner city and suburbs as one administrative unit. Otherwise, school integration is impossible in inner cities where few whites still live. (This may seem inapposite in Boston where blacks are only 18 per cent of the population. It is the situation in more typical cities like Chicago and Detroit. In Milliken v. Bradley, decided in July

1974, the United States Supreme Court rejected the approach of treating inner city and suburbs as one administrative unit, Douglas, Brennan, White, and Marshall dissenting.) The same approach is required to taxation. It may be that Boston has always had, and has even more today, an inadequate tax base. The industries along Route 128 should be taxed to improve the schools in Boston because these industries use the labor force educated in the Boston schools. This can be done by increasing the property tax assessment. Industries are characteristically underassessed. In Gary, Indiana, for instance, the amount by which United States Steel is underassessed just about equals the deficit of the Gary school system.

I am not close enough to the situation to judge how such a tax program might relate to the busing controversy. I am clear, though, that only such a tax program holding the promise of better education for every Boston school child offers a way toward the unity of white and black workers in the long run.

Staughton Lynd  
Chicago, Illinois

To the Editors :

One of the serious weaknesses of socialist analysis of the "racial question" has been the absence of discussion on the needs of the white working class and how these may relate in broader terms to the needs and aspirations of Afro-Americans and other minority groups. The Boston crisis is no different. The white working class perceives busing as an invasion into their neighborhoods, a process which they add will lead to their disintegration. The neighborhood, the "block", is one of the few remaining spheres of social life where people retain a measure of control and decision-making power. The schools, the churches and community centers, the block associations, the shops are all constructed into an organic whole which is the neighborhood and



which provides the resident with a sense of meaning and identity. When these institutions are threatened from the outside, residents react quickly. The Boston busing crisis represents this kind of reaction. To say that the "...question of neighborhood schools is not the issue in Boston", but that Racism is, ignores a powerful set of realities which remain buried beneath the racial issue, and that is the growing erosion of local control. The busing issue has also served as a vehicle for the more conservative elements of the ruling class to more effectively tighten their control over the white working class by steering their attention to blacks. The racial dimension is important, but will lead nowhere if rigidly adhered to. We must get at the core of the problem of racism, and dissect the white expression of racism to uncover its deeper meaning. The position of Green and Hunter which supports busing at all costs will not lead to the kind of political unity of the black and white working class which they surely support. They have ignored the failure of political strategies built around "integration". It was precisely because of this failure that Afro-Americans turned toward more militant means to achieve their democratic rights; and these other means of political struggle are not given the same accord as the busing strategy. Moreover, the authors assume that the busing strategy is a central ingredient in securing quality education for blacks, a conclusion which must be questioned. Busing is one option out of a large number of options open to blacks. To accept busing without examining other options leads one to ignore a crucial reality in black communities: how can black children secure quality education in their own neighborhood schools without being bussed? How might a broader political movement develop around local control of neighborhood schools and its financing?

Although the authors argue that busing is "one way of achieving better education for (black) children", they do not present other alternatives. If busing is one way, what are the others? This is an indication of the serious gap we have in the study of political strategies concerned with racial issues. Moreover, Busing is a part of the national strategy of integration, which has been abysmally deficient in actualizing real change and equality. The lack of alternative

positions harnesses the Radical America position to the conventional liberalism they are attacking. Equal education will lead to improved education, which in turn will lead to mobility and eventually parity with whites. There is nothing in this position to distinguish it from say, the NAACP. They have provided an interesting case for the economic foundations of white working-class racism in Boston, but they have not drawn the proper political conclusions from their economic analysis. Integration, and the busing which is a part of it, no longer speaks to current political realities, and cannot lead to a solution of the racial crisis. In their narrative of black self-activity, the editors have failed to locate the central issue for blacks, and that is community control and participation. During the last ten years, Boston's black community has demonstrated a profound willingness to undertake control of their institutions, and to create new ones. How can this energy be linked with the white concern over powerlessness to create a new alternative to busing?

Blacks must re-instate the demand for community control of their local schools; whites must come to support this for blacks also, and work together around restoring control to local communities. The Busing position can lead nowhere, for it prevents us from understanding the real source of discontent in white communities, their lack of power in affecting the course of their lives; and the political powerlessness of black communities who must rely on the "force of the law," and not on their own resources. Working class unity can only be built around political interests. The inability of both groups to determine their own lives and institutions is the kind of political interest both groups share, and which can be developed into some kind of political alliance. Such an alliance would activate every-day people into political participation and discussion, precisely because they have a stake in such an alliance. Such an alliance of black and white around mutual interests would crack black political opportunism which rests on white liberal support, and it would thwart the local reactionary white politicians who achieve their success by manipulating the fears and anxieties of whites. This political cooperation would be the first stage in what will be a long and difficult

struggle of people moving to recover their institutions from officials and bureaucrats who merely earn their salaries there. Politics and interests, the two are intertwined. The busing strategy is a retreat from this, leading down a path of a fragmented and racially divided working class. This is the issue in Boston.

Eric Perkins  
New York, New York

To the editors :

"Busing and Racism in Boston" has to be acknowledged as an outstanding contribution. This is by virtue of the fact that it is the only publication to date that has correctly identified the material basis of the anti-busing forces' commitment to racism.

The major strengths of the article can be identified as the following : the emphasis on the role of the people of the Black community in their multi-faceted struggle to improve the education of their children; the historical overview of the development of the political economy of Boston and how it has interacted with the struggle of the Black and White sectors of the working class; the stripping away of the non-racist pretenses of the anti-busing forces; and, the recognition of the defense of white skin "privileges" as the driving impulse behind the organized and sustained racist attacks on Black people and their hard won advances.

However, it is in this area of white skin privileges that the statement is seriously deficient. In reading the article one would think that the use of white skin privileges were a local affair under the control of the local anti-busing forces. It is important to explain that this is not so. The system of white skin privileges is a national phenomenon consciously utilized by the entire capitalist class, and not just the right wing of that class. The constant aim of that class is to divide and rule the working class.

Further, it needs to be emphasized that this conscious systemic use of white skin privileges is imposed upon the white working class. White workers do not choose the sys-

tem of privileges. They may choose to actively defend the system as do the anti-busing forces. Or, they may choose to passively acquiesce to them as do the bulk of white working class families in Boston. Finally, they may choose to repudiate them, as a small minority presently do. But, they do not choose to set up the system of privileges because that is a policy option that rests in the firm grip of the capitalists.

For this reason white workers do not just imagine that conditions deteriorate when Blacks are moved into an area. Such deterioration does in fact happen. Normally Blacks are moved into a previously all white stronghold as a matter of capitalist policy (e.g. blockbusting) not through any response to their demands. This is why busing represents a victory for Blacks since it is a response to their demands. It is part of that policy to allow conditions to deteriorate in the newly opened areas while improving them, marginally, in remaining all-white working class areas. This reflects the dialectical nature of white skin privileges: there is no discrimination against Blacks without discrimination for Whites at the same time! White workers actively or passively defending that dialectic realize only a marginal advantage.

Following from all this is the fact that the true nature of these privileges is contradictory, i.e., they are not really privileges, but are in fact vicious traps which hold back the entire working class. The more White workers support them, the worse their own conditions. What kind of education is going on in South Boston High School this year? Thus they are privileges only in the sense that bait in a trap is a privilege to the unwary animal. In short they are counterfeit privileges, and it is in both the short term and the long term interest of the White workers to repudiate them.

Understanding these factors is crucial to the real struggle for Black-White working class unity through equality. Lack of such understanding can only lead to grave errors concerning what needs to be done in the present crisis in Boston. The concluding segment of the editorial statement is a specific example of one type of error, since it presents an overly optimistic impression as to the eventual outcome

of the current struggle in Boston.

Of course busing represents a defeat of a waning patronage machine. However, right now, the ultimate outcome rests almost entirely upon the capacity of the liberal forces behind Judge Garrity to stand firm and "tough-it-out" in the face of the anti-busing forces. This last statement is not intended to belittle the strength and leadership of the people of the Black community. However, it must be stressed that Blacks in Boston constitute only 16-18% of the total population. If, in the context of this numerical minority status, the liberal allies of the Black people waver and fold in the interest of social peace, the situation of the Black community is almost certain to deteriorate and regress.

The efforts of organized White working class forces such as women's centers, welfare groups, tenant unions, food co-ops, etc. will have to simultaneously concentrate on internal education of their membership and seek to win over the large masses of White working class families that passively acquiesce to the privileges to a position which repudiates the privileges by actively recognizing and supporting Black peoples' demands as the genuine demands of the entire working class. Only in this way will the working class become strong enough to ensure that the liberals will not waver and fold. In other words it is only in this way that a proper correlation of forces will be built up to negate the numerical weakness of the Black community.

One serious barrier which stands in the way of this eventuality is the role of the White liberals vis-a-vis the White working class. Since they are liberals and therefore in the mainstream of capitalist society it is no more in their interest to see a united working class than it is in the interest of the overt racists of the anti-busing forces. In fact a divided working class is in the interests of the liberals. The White liberals supporting busing come almost exclusively from the ranks of the professional and managerial classes which derive their income and power by serving the interests of capitalist society.

These White liberals solve this dilemma of supporting Black demands while keeping the working class divided by the simple expedient of seeking to impose a non-violent social peace policy on the efforts of the White working class

to organize support for the Black community. This policy is rooted in an explanation of racism primarily in terms of personal prejudice and bigotry. Ultimately this social peace stance can only serve to deepen the division of the working class. On the one hand, it represents gross irresponsibility given the capacity of the anti-busing forces to use violence. On the other hand, it represents an attempt to create conditions in which a White working class tails after the professional and managerial classes thus opting for a more subtle form of white skin privileges.

This is not to suggest that White working class groups should not link up with White liberals to support Black people. For one thing, the liberals are already there supporting Blacks. And, a popular front can provide the numbers to deal with the racist forces of the anti-busing cross-class alliance. However, White insurgents must understand which allies constitute a proper united front, and be ready to foster the interests of that front by any means necessary, when the time comes. In the final analysis it is only a united working class that, ultimately, has a vested interest in genuine social peace, i.e. when the working class is in control.

Art Standley  
Dorchester, Massachusetts

My thanks to Sue Braswell of the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee and Charlie Allen of Hard Times for suggestions concerning the content of this commentary. — A.S.

To the Editors :

The Radical America Editorial Statement, "Racism and Busing in Boston", is correct in its analysis. The question left untouched by the editorial is, what do we do? We must be honest enough to admit we have suffered a defeat so far. Possibly quite a serious one. In Boston the demands of blacks for equality have been defeated by mass racist ac-

tions by whites. The right-wing potential of the situation is enormous. Attempts will be made to extend the defeat to every black gain everywhere, to build a national "white power" movement. Its base will not be simply the Nazi Party and the KKK, which RA points out were snuffling around Boston. They are little more than a side-show in American politics. But ROAR is now trying to extend itself into a national organization. It is planning a national rally of 30,000 this summer. There will be other ROARs. And they have money behind them.

It is true that busing is not a ruling class plot to divide the working class as some left groups allege but rather the result of black struggle. But it is also true that the ruling class created the conditions that inevitably pitted blacks against whites. They continually reduce the crumbs available to both in order to increase their own share of the pie. This situation tends to make black and white working people view each other as enemies, and unity more difficult to achieve.

As the current capitalist crisis deepens they will have to tighten the screws on workers still further. This will inevitably mean — indeed it has already meant — an escalation of the class struggle. As the ruling class becomes more desperate it will resort to more desperate measures, and ultimately to fascism. Fascism, which involves the total destruction of all working class organization, is a term that is thrown around too loosely by the left. It is a last-ditch capitalist response in a period of crisis. Its base will be the racist movement they will have kept alive until they needed it. It is not busing, but the racist response to busing, which holds back a united class struggle. A battle of historic dimensions is being fought, and we lost a round in Boston.

So, why did we lose and how do we turn it around? The key is militant working class activity led by black workers.

If white workers are won to the racist, fascist movement we are lost. But there is no reason to think they will be. American workers have been conservative and apathetic for the past decades. This conservatism has been based on the post-war prosperity, part of which trickled down to the



workers and provided them with a relatively decent and regularly rising standard of living. The trickle reached black workers too, who saw rising standards of living and new jobs opening up to them in that period. In part this was a result of the black protest of the sixties, because even with the prosperity there were shortages and poverty. White workers were shielded from these by racism. They accepted and took advantage of the racist ideology as a means of alleviating their own exploitation. Racist oppression cushioned them from lay-offs, from the worst jobs, the worst housing, schools, etc. This cushion as RA points out, provides the material basis for the racism of white workers. The result, of course, is that white and black workers are kept apart, do not join in struggle against the capitalist class and thus leave it secure in its rule and leave the living and working conditions for both of themselves far worse than they would otherwise be.

But this prosperity is now disappearing. Real wages are plummeting, working conditions deteriorating, unemployment rates skyrocketing. There is no end of these in sight because sustained capitalist prosperity such as we knew it is gone forever. The desperation of feeling this prosperity slipping away leads to events such as occurred in Boston. It is the same feeling which also makes possible a united black and white fight against the exploiters who create the conditions, and against capitalism itself.

But that requires a fight. To reverse the decline in living standards, working conditions, city services requires an assault on the capitalist class. That means a program that says make the capitalists pay, not us. It is certainly appropriate to make demands on the government in order to expose it, but we must remember that we have only ourselves to rely upon, and not the capitalist state.

As RA points out, struggles led by blacks over issues in the schools had been joined by whites. And when Patricia Bonner-Lyons ran for the School Committee on a platform of community control of the schools she received a substantial amount of support from whites as well as blacks.

There was a whole history of struggle which lay behind the court suit and the ruling in favor of busing. The suit itself was the baby of the NAACP, which had not participated in the earlier activity. According to RA this was because of its weakness. What RA means by this is the NAACP's lack of numbers during the sixties. But it is important to understand that the reason for the NAACP's lack of numbers was its political weakness. The self-activity of the black masses which dominated events in Boston and most everywhere else was not the NAACP's cup of tea. They and their friends in the Democratic Party black caucus prefer lobbying, court suits, government aid and, when necessary, controlled demonstrations. Tied to the structure of capitalism, and to the Democratic Party, which is the main guiding instrument of American capitalism, they could not be for any activity which challenged or threatened it. So they shifted the locus of the struggle from the activity of the black masses to the courts — not as a supplement to the struggle, but as its replacement.

After having initiated and won the court suit, did they attempt to prepare people for what would happen? Did they call meetings of the black community and organize it to defend the black children in case they should meet with resistance? Did they carry out mass demonstrations demanding that the Boston School Committee implement the program? Did they make any appeal to the white workers? Did they attempt to reach them by clearly stating that this move was not being made against them, but against the capitalist exploiters who were gouging both of them, that it was but the first move in a struggle for quality education to be paid for by the capitalist class, a struggle that would benefit black and white workers? Did they call upon the white workers to join them in the struggle, pointing out that what was required for unity is black-white equality and the struggle for it?

No, they did not. Instead — use the courts and the cops, and the army. Ignore that when they are brought in they will inevitably be used against the blacks, against the self-defense efforts of the blacks themselves. It is only efforts such as these which could create a coalition of blacks and whites. If there is no struggle of blacks fighting for equality and fighting for better conditions for blacks and whites there can be no movement to which whites can be won. But the NAACP strategy is to stay passive and let it appear as simply an assault on white workers. Result: instant defeat. Their strategy is the same as it has been for decades, the same as they used in the civil rights movement in the fifties and sixties. It is to use the federal government as a battering ram against local intransigence. With it they achieved certain results, although these were based on the militant activity of masses of blacks who frequently took things into their own hands. In fact the NAACP's unwillingness to rely upon these forces is the reason for its eclipse during that period. But that was a period of capitalist expansion. Capitalism was booming in the South. And its further success required getting rid of some of the past irrationalities. Hence government support for black civil rights. To expect that pattern to continue now, in the worst capitalist crisis since the 1930s, is lunacy. The so-called alliance was already broken irrevocably when Lyndon — "we shall

overcome" — Johnson sent in the army to crush the Detroit rebellion of 1967. There is no prospect of its being revived by Ford, the courts, the Congress or anyone else. It is a dead letter.

The NAACP-black caucus leadership is a terrible impediment to the struggle. At each step they hold back the black masses and do not lead them; they make the forging of working class unity through struggle an impossibility at a time when it is both possible and vital.

Some years ago we used to have to argue that the working class had a potential to change the society, to struggle against its condition. Many in the left accepted the liberal argument that the workers had been bought off, had been "bourgeoisified". Today only a madman would make that argument. The tragedy of the sixties was that when blacks went into motion white workers wouldn't move with them. They were still comfortable with prosperity. Today white workers are moving along with blacks into opposition. The recent unemployment demonstration in Washington is ample proof of that. Not only did some 60,000 workers show up in Washington for the largest workers demonstration in decades; not only did a few thousand rank and file workers invade the arena and force the trade union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party hacks to give up their official talks — which were nothing but talk — but they were also cheered by the thousands of other workers who were not yet ready to step down into the arena. These were the same workers, black and white, which the NAACP and black caucus leadership refused to organize.

It is no longer a question of potential. It is a reality. What remains is to forge the links.

Jack Trautman  
Detroit, Michigan

## Editorial response :

We asked several people to respond to our editorial on "Racism and Busing in Boston", and we printed the responses we received because they raise important questions and difficult political problems. We cannot respond to each criticism here, but we will try to comment briefly on the overlapping areas of concern in the symposium.

Most of the comments correctly point out the need to go beyond a materialist analysis of the problem and to develop a strategy for combatting racism. However, the organization of the left in Boston is not strong enough — does not have a large enough working-class base — to construct and implement an overall strategy that could fundamentally alter the situation. Black-led initiatives did force the courts to desegregate the schools, but neither the left nor the black community could substantially affect the contours of the desegregation plan or prevent the opposition to desegregation from becoming an organized racist force. We wish that such a strategy could be developed quickly and implemented effectively, but this will only happen when there are organizations ready and able to carry out an effective strategy.

The response to desegregation in Boston is the cutting edge of a national re-emergence of racism that has organizational roots in the white working class. Nationally and locally the left has put energy into working on the mass marches against racism: a left-led demonstration on December 14, 1974, and the NAACP demonstration on May 17, 1975. Within the Boston area itself as much energy has gone into anti-racist work in the already existing left workplace organizing projects, tenant unions, and various community groups. Most of these groups have taken a principled stand against racism during the busing crisis and are playing a role in opposing and undercutting racism in several sections of the city. The Hispanic left fought for the retention of bi-lingual programs in the public schools, which were threatened by the desegregation plan. It is important that local groups continue their anti-racist work in their community and workplace organizing and, where possible, initiate and fight for educational improvements. This work

must continue to emphasize the importance of supporting the black struggle for equal rights and the concurrent struggle against segregation.

In writing the editorial we hoped to help local left groups and other socialists to understand the causes of the busing crisis. We insisted that the fight against racism is right in itself; and that it is important in class terms because it helps to narrow the material differences that divide workers by raising the conditions of the oppressed sectors. While we did not call for integration per se, we did insist that it must be defended as one of the options available to blacks and other oppressed groups. In any case, we did not feel that it was the role of white socialists to propose the correct solution to the problems these groups face.

Our article examined a decade of Boston history in which other options were attempted, but in the end were not successful or only benefitted a small part of the black community. The desegregation plan was in part the result of NAACP court initiatives, and it reflects the liberalism and integrationist position of that organization. We agree with Jack Trautman that the NAACP must be viewed critically, but we do not think that its prominence holds back the class struggle; it is rather a reflection of the weakness of black working-class organization locally and nationally. In Boston many blacks favor community control of schools over the integrationism of the NAACP, but this seems unrealistic now in Boston, which has a small black population. Furthermore, Boston's black community has seen the court-ordered desegregation as an immediate opportunity to improve the material conditions of education.

Although we emphasized the reactionary nature of the white racist groups that oppose busing, we do not see white workers as irrevocably racist. Indeed, not all of the white people who oppose busing are consciously racist. ROAR and other such groups are consciously racist, and white workers who actively support them are not only opposing busing; they are helping to preserve other material advantages that accrue to whites in the job and housing markets. We do not believe, however, that white socialists should write off the white working class. Socialists should continue to work with white workers around immediate material demands without

sacrificing anything on the race question in order to make political activity easier in white communities. We wrote the editorial to urge the left not to lose sight of the racism issue in its political work with whites.

In order to reach and turn around those white working-class people who are not now in racist groups, socialists need to understand problems from their point of view too. We need to analyze their economic problems, their ethnic traditions, patterns of community life, etc. Any effective strategy needs to address concerns of whites as well as blacks. Even though white people are not really being asked to give up anything substantial, we must realize that many of their lives are being disrupted by the busing crisis. However, much of the disruption has been caused by the racist responses to busing both by groups such as ROAR and by the school administration. As Marya Levenson points out, white as well as black children are being hassled in schools filled with turmoil and anxiety. The existence of these grievances means that there will be an inevitable and ongoing tension in the practice of socialists who work with white working-class people. In the long run class unity often requires support for positions that make political activity more difficult in the short run. This means that the everyday lives and tactical decisions of socialists will often be filled with tension and conflict.

We stress the issue of racism because we think it is crucial for the left to support the demands of oppressed groups. This is different from asking individual white workers to give up privileges they may have. We do not seek self-denial from individuals; we seek collective support for the struggles of oppressed groups. This is the other side of asking white workers to give something up. It is asking them to support changes that are in the interest of the whole class and immediately in the interest of particular oppressed sectors.

The differences that divide workers can only be overcome within the working class itself. We believe that diminishing the differences increases the prospects for class unity and makes it more possible for the working class eventually to take control of the society. Material differences that divide workers in terms of discrimination in jobs, housing, access

to public services like education, and treatment by the state are major stumbling blocks in the way of wider class unity. In this regard differences based on sexual, ethnic, and national lines also play divisive roles.

The struggle for class unity is important because the greater the unity of the class the greater its ability to struggle collectively, and the greater its power. When the working class is divided and white workers as a group receive higher wages than black workers, capitalists are better able to pit whites against blacks. In the South, for example, there is a particularly blatant dual labor market in which most of the better-paying jobs are reserved for whites while the blacks are forced to take the lower-paying, less desirable jobs. But in this kind of segregated labor market the wages of whites are depressed along with those of blacks. With the breakdown of this dual market the wage gap narrows, and the wages of both groups increase; this has already happened in some cases. Similarly, a segregated school system, like the one in Boston, reduces the quality of education for whites as well as blacks and blocks unified action for educational change.

In the short run the victories of oppressed groups in the working class may come at the expense of other sectors of the working class. Nevertheless, these victories create the material conditions for greater unity. With greater unity, the working class would be able to force the capitalist class to pay for these gains. In Boston schools this would mean that the additional costs of improved educational facilities, better instruction, and programs with cultural diversity would be paid for by the capitalists.

The more the working class is divided, the less the capitalist class has to pay for particular advances in certain sectors; the more the working class is united, the more the capitalists will be forced to pay. Racism is a condition that perpetuates disunity. The fight for greater equality is thus a necessary aspect of the fight for liberation. Furthermore, the fight for greater equality is right in itself. We do not see the struggle against a discriminatory dual school system as an attack on the ethnic and cultural autonomy of either whites or blacks. The same struggles for black studies, bi-lingual instruction, and increased community con-



trol will have to continue under a desegregated school system. This is not liberalism. Liberals would create meritocracy; socialists would create equality based on working-class power. That is why cooperation with liberals can only be tactical, and the independence of socialists in those alliances must be maintained.

The desegregation of schools will not necessarily lead to an immediate increase in working-class unity; it may not even lead to an immediate desegregation of jobs, let alone neighborhoods, and it certainly will not lead directly to socialism. It is, however, an important aspect of a socialist strategy, because it will strike another important blow at the kind of segregation that divides workers and limits the possibility of collective action. Too often militants within working-class movements have avoided the race question. We want to re-emphasize that it is impossible for a socialist movement of workers to succeed without actively fighting against racism.

Jim Green and Allen Hunter  
for the RA editors

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In the past year our pamphlet mailings have included the following titles:

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C.L.R. James, *Dialectic and History*; Eleanor Langer, *Hospital Workers* from NEFP; Gary workers for Democracy, *Where's I.W. Abel*; Mitch Zimmerman, *Runaway Shops* from United Front Press; Karl Marx, *The Fetish Speaks* from Black and Red; *Race and Ethnicity in the American Working Class* and *Women and the Working Class* from NEFP; Maurice Brinton, *Bolsheviks and Workers' Control* from Black and Red.

J. Kuron and K. Modzelewski, *A Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto* from Pluto Press; Lori Larkin, *Productivity: The Employers' Attack and How to Fight It* from International Socialists; Alexandra Kollontai, *The Workers' Opposition*; Center for United Labor Action, *Welfare: Why Workers Need It and Why Billionaires Get It*; plus Sheila Rowbotham, *Women's Liberation and Revolution, A Bibliography* from Falling Wall Press; and the first issue of *Jump Cut*, a new radical film magazine.

Mark Naison, *Rent Strikes in New York* from NEFP; *The Class Nature of Israel* from MERIP; Fredy Perlman, *Essay on Commodity Fetishism*; and *A Guide to Working Class History*, sources on the US and Canada, from NEFP.

# Busing in Boston

The last issue of RADICAL AMERICA, which contains the editorial statement on RACISM AND BUSING IN BOSTON, is nearly sold out. Since many groups have been using the article for internal discussions, we have decided to reprint that editorial as a pamphlet. The pamphlet on RACISM AND BUSING IN BOSTON is available for \$.50/copy or \$.30/copy for five or more copies from RADICAL AMERICA, P. O. Box B, N. Cambridge, MA 02140.

"Analysis and reportage of the busing crisis have consumed enough paper to fill a small library. Yet little of the material on the subject has offered a dispassionate overview placing the problem in Boston's historical and economic context. 'Racism and Busing in Boston' from RADICAL AMERICA . . . provides the first unequivocal and Marxist discussion of the issue."

THE BOSTON WEEKLY PHOENIX

"'Racism and Busing in Boston' is the clearest, most coherent piece that I have read on the subject. The historical account was extremely enlightening; the assessment of the social forces and the analysis of the broader implications was sound and free from dogmatism. If we had had such detailed studies of local situations during the early 1960's the civil rights movement would have been much more effective. In brief, 'Racism and Busing in Boston' is 'relevant' in the best meaning of the term. I will urge my colleagues to read it and use it in their classes."

John H. Bracey, Jr.  
W. E. B. DuBois Department  
of Afro-American Studies  
University of Massachusetts

