



REVOLUTIONARY WORKER

Voice of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

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As of November 20, Chairman Gonzalo (Abimael Guzmán) has been held in isolation for...

2 YEARS 40 DAYS

In October 1992, Chairman Gonzalo—leader of the Maoist Communist Party of Peru—was sentenced to life imprisonment by hooded military judges of the U.S.-backed regime in Peru. The fascist regime in Peru is holding this revolutionary leader of the Peruvian people under very brutal conditions in an underground concrete dungeon at a naval base. He is being denied visits by lawyers, doctors and relatives and deprived of proper medical care and reading materials. Peru's President Fujimori has publicly threatened to execute Chairman Gonzalo and boasted of applying psychological torture on him. And a new Constitution, made official last year, reinstates the death penalty which could be used against Chairman Gonzalo and other revolutionary prisoners. The Peruvian regime must be prevented from killing Chairman Gonzalo through the death penalty or by other means.

Fujimori has repeatedly claimed that Chairman Gonzalo has made a call for negotiations from prison. In this situation, what possible excuse can Fujimori now offer for continuing to deny Comrade Gonzalo independent contact with lawyers, doctors and friendly and neutral visitors from outside the prison in a way that meets the basic international standards for treatment of political prisoners and prisoners of war? It is vitally important for people in Peru and around the world to hear what Chairman Gonzalo's views are from Chairman Gonzalo himself—directly and unimpeded. This heightens the urgency of the fight to create an international political climate which compels the Peruvian government to grant access to Comrade Gonzalo by his legal representatives and other friends who can meet and talk directly with him.

Three Main Points

by Bob Avakian
Chairman of the RCP, USA

What do we in the Revolutionary Communist Party want people to learn from all that is exposed and revealed in this newspaper? Mainly, three things:

1) The whole system we now live under is based on exploitation— here and all over the world. It is completely worthless and no basic change for the better can come about until this system is overthrown.

2) Many different groups will protest and rebel against things this system does, and these protests and rebellions should be supported and strengthened. Yet it is only those with nothing to lose but their chains who can be the backbone of a struggle to actually overthrow this system and create a new system that will put an end to exploitation and help pave the way to a whole new world.

3) Such a revolutionary struggle is possible. There is a political Party that can lead such a struggle, a political Party that speaks and acts for those with nothing to lose but their chains: The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

This Party has the vision, the program, the leadership, and the organizational principles to unite those who must be united and enable them to do what must be done. There is a challenge for all those who would like to see such a revolution, those with a burning desire to see a drastic change for the better, all those who dare to dream and to act to bring about a completely new and better world: Support this Party, join this Party, spread its message and its organized strength, and prepare the ground for a revolutionary rising that has a solid basis and a real chance of winning.

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Elections 1994: NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD



What's REALLY Wrong with America?

The system's election season looked like the night of the living dead. Corporations and millionaires spent over \$1 billion buying candidates and financing a nasty TV lightshow of "attack ads." Sections of the population were whipped up to vote by a constant drumbeat of scapegoating—blaming the decay of society on the poor, on Black inner-city youth, on the immigrants, on "violent criminals," and on this country's few raggedy welfare programs.

When this process ended, on November 8, the system coughed up a change in the government. Both houses of Congress now have Republican majorities. Most of the country's states now have Republican governors. Most of the large states now have Republican-controlled legislatures. In California, the anti-immigration Proposition 187 became law.

Overnight, President Clinton seemed shrunken—eclipsed by the new Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich. Playing "interview with a vampire" on endless TV news shows, Gingrich offers a mix of old-style Reaganism and new-style technobabble which he calls "conservative futurism." The time has come, he says, to bury the counterculture forever.

Loudmouth rightwingers will now fill powerful posts heading major Congressional committees, including Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond, the senators from Klan country. Helms is already jabbering about the desirability of invading Cuba and about how leading military officers consider the current President unfit to be "commander in chief."

There were a few exceptions to the overall election trend: A Wyoming proposition for restricting abortion failed. Oliver North, a one-man junta-in-waiting, lost his bid for a Virginia Senate seat. And in Washington, DC, Marion Barry outraged the law-and-order crowd by returning from a drug conviction to regain the mayor's office.

Among some progressive people who welcomed the Clinton presidency, there is fear and depression. They had hopes that new social programs like universal health care would be passed and that abortion rights would be protected by federal agencies. Now, after two years of disillusionment with Clinton, they are bummed out to see a new wave of rightwing ideologues dominate Congress.

In one sense this election was just a case of one representative of the ruling class replacing another. Changes happen in the slaveowner's mansion—but the real problem is the whole slavery system, not who's the overseer of the day.

At the same time, when the media is talking about a "sweeping rightwing mandate for dismantling the welfare state" the capitalist/imperialist ruling class is clearly up to something major.

A New Face of the Enemy

As soon as the election was over, the media claimed that the voters had given Republicans a sweeping "mandate" for "radical change." Republicans announced they would "cut government" and "increase freedom."

This "anti-government" rhetoric is just doubletalk—since the Republicans are clearly determined to greatly *increase* the powers of the state: they intend to finance (and fill) more prisons, step up government execution of prisoners, finance a bigger military, and militarize the Mexico/U.S. border. There is new talk of a "gag-rule" forbidding federally funded doctors from mentioning abortion. And at least ten more state legislatures seem poised to pass laws to further restrict women's reproductive rights.

In California, the re-elected Republican governor campaigned for expulsions of undocumented immigrants, for forcing

teachers and medical professionals to act like INS agents, and called for ID cards for all citizens. Congressional aides are already counting potential votes for a new Constitution amendment that would impose state-sponsored prayer in the schools.

Newt Gingrich claims to be "pro-family and anti-government" while he proposes *breaking up* poor welfare families and delivering the kids to a new network of government orphanages.

How typical it is for boozhwhah American politics to rush toward a police state flying banners that read "Less Government, More Freedom"!

Turning Middle Class Discontent into a Mandate for Cutbacks

The Republican rhetoric of "less government" and "radical change" is an attempt to channel widespread middle class discontent for ruling class purposes.

There is much anger in the United States aimed at the government. This mood

reaches far beyond the oppressed and progressive forces. It has gripped quite conservative, patriotic, and even privileged sections of the people.

The workings of the system have undermined the stability and wealth of millions of middle class people—and there is a widespread fear that the future will be even worse. People believe that the next generation will have trouble getting the basics of U.S.-style middle class life: college education, stable career, home ownership. And most people fear that many of the entitlements *they* expect to use—like social security, medicare, college loans—will not be there when they need them. In general, wide sections of the middle classes think they are being ripped off and they want something done about it.

Both the Republicans and the Clinton "New Democrats" have fanned the idea that the broad middle classes are suffering because *too much* of society's resources are going toward the poor. In the mean-spirited politics of 1994, a section of middle class voters were told that they could *preserve their privileges and status* by supporting major attacks on the poor. But the truth is they are being suckered: At least *half* of U.S. families now get some kind of government subsidy, and the ruling class has no intention to stop after cutting the programs for the poor. The ruling class has been quietly saying that *all* kinds of "entitlement" programs will be slashed to pay for their trillion-dollar debts—including those programs the *middle classes* rely on, like farm subsidies, social security, medicare and student loans.

In other words, the "anti-government" rhetoric of the Republicans is a *codeword* for cutting all government expenditures and regulations that *in any way* benefit the masses of people. Like the earlier conservative slogan "states' rights," "less govern-

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South Central L.A.: People's Doctor Declares

A number of doctors in South Central Los Angeles are taking a public stand against the anti-immigrant Prop 187 law. At a press conference the day after the passage of Prop 187 in the California election, the doctors publicly declared their refusal to go along with the law's requirement to identify and report undocumented immigrants to the government. The press conference was held in front of a medical clinic in South Central and was attended by several local TV stations.

The RW recently spoke with Dr. James Mays, a Black physician who is one of the organizers of this protest. Dr. Mays talked about the impact of Prop 187 on health care for immigrants and his reasons for opposing the new law.

Dr. Mays owns three clinics in or near South Central Los Angeles. His clinics serve poor Black and Latino people in the area. On South Broadway just west of Watts, there are few services of any kind available to the people; his clinic and another medical office next door are two of the only businesses open on the block. Despite a waiting room full of patients, he agreed to sit down on the spot for an interview.

Dr. Mays voted against 187, and he explained why he feels so strongly about opposing the war on immigrants: "The reason I voted against 187 is because of the restrictions that 187 prescribes, and that relates to the medical aspect. As a doctor I cannot be a part of any situation in which I prohibit treatment for anyone, regardless of who they are. I served in Vietnam, and I treated American soldiers. I went out into the villages after we had bombed the villages, and I treated the village people, and some of

them were Vietcong. So as a physician, with my Hippocratic oath and with my personal moral feeling, I cannot *not* treat people."

Various judges have issued *temporary* orders putting off some of the provisions of 187 that relate to health care and education. But the measure has already begun to push immigrants into the shadows. Many immigrants are taking steps to protect themselves, skipping appointments in clinics and other places where they might be asked to produce ID documents. Dr. Mays has seen these effects in his own clinics and knows the impact is being felt broadly. And he has rallied other doctors in the area to take a stand: "All of the doctors around here are [supporting my position]. I contacted them. The chiropractor next door participated in the press conference. He came out and committed himself. I spread the word to every doctor along here to accept Hispanic patients, and they're going to do it."

He has also reached out to bring the community in: "The first three or four days, there was a drop-off. But what we did was, one of the Hispanic medical workers helped make flyers [saying 'Hispanics Accepted' in English and Spanish], and we've been passing them out all over the community. In fact, we're getting ready to get a big sign to put on the front of every clinic, to let them know that they are welcome, that we are accepting Hispanic patients."

"In a community practice, versus a clinic or a hospital, word of mouth is more important than anything else. There's an interesting admixture of cooperation in this type of community. Blacks talk to Hispanics. They find some way to communicate and say,

'Well, you go to Dr. Mays' office, you're going to be accepted, period. There's no prejudice in there because we're all kind of struggling along together.' So for the first two or three days, I think because of the fear, it did drop off, but it's picking back up right now."

Dr. Mays has a private practice, but his patients are poor. Many are on Medi-Cal, and face being cut off if they can't show the right papers. Under the provisions of 187, doctors and other health and social service workers would also face arrest for failing to

turn "suspected" undocumented people over to the authorities. "If that law becomes a fixture, I have a contract with Medi-Cal and they say I can't treat these people—and that's ridiculous."

California Governor Wilson's first move after the election was to direct public health agencies to deny prenatal care and long-term health care to anyone who couldn't prove they were "legal." This action outraged Dr. Mays, who said it was "about the most inhumane thing you can do. It's diabolical."



Westwood, L.A., November 17.



High school walkout against Proposition 187.

Todos somos ilegales! We are all illegals!
Stop the U.S. Government's War on Immigrants!
The unity of the people is more powerful than the government's police-state program!
No compliance! Serve the people regardless of the law!
Don't be a snitch for the INS!
Down with 187!
Down with Operation Gate Keeper and the Militarization of the U.S.-Mexican Border!
Aquí estamos! Aquí nos quedamos! No nos vamos!

Non-Compliance with Prop 187

And he spoke about the impact that Prop 187 could have on a community whose health situation is already precarious: "I'm basically concerned with those preventive measures that we were trying to instill, that we weren't successful in doing, like immunizations for the children. They're going to drift back to the schools, and they're going to spread infectious diseases among the other children—the so-called citizens, many of whom are not immunized. We've already had a problem a couple of years ago when we had a measles epidemic. We have a skin infection, ringworm, that's taking place right now.

"At the state of medicine right now as it relates to the general population—particularly the indigent, the homeless and the undocumented—we're not up to snuff. So what I advocated was: Not only do we just

accept them, I think we should go out and look for them! We should go out and find the people and treat them preventively. Because what's going to happen is, they're going to end up in the emergency room, which is under the governor's accepted treatment plan, and you're going to spend much more money."

Aside from the denial of medical care, Dr. Mays also opposes other aspects of the war on immigrants. He spoke about the proposal from officials at various levels of government for a "national identification card." This is being put forward as an anti-immigrant measure, and it would mean a South Africa-style passbook for everybody. "Eventually, what's going to happen, because of the turmoil in Compton or whatever, you're gonna have identification that restricts you to a certain community.

You might just be restricted to Compton... If you allow certain things to take place, if you allow your freedoms to be slowly taken away, or allow somebody else's freedom to be taken away—not particularly lawful freedoms, but god-given rights to better yourself—then you slowly lose your own freedom. Eventually, there might be a particular identification for certain women or for gays or whomever. You can't allow freedoms to be lost."

The war on immigrants has been opposed by people of different nationalities and social classes, including many physicians. It is especially important that Black people are speaking out against it, since the system tries to pit Black and Latino people against each other, fighting for the bottom rung on the ladder. When asked about this question, Dr. Mays referred to a recent incident in Compton, a small city just south of Watts: "Remember when that big, burly police officer beat on this Hispanic kid? The Black civil rights leaders said, 'We're against police brutality.' What has occurred is that, because there's a commonality of 'enemy'—the system, represented by the police—they united, and that was a very positive gesture. Rather than the Hispanics saying, 'Well, we have a war against the Blacks because it's a Black police officer,' the police officer became the focus of attention, regardless of what color he was.

"[Black people] have to identify with the Hispanics. It is not the fault of the South Americans to come to the United States—with all the television showing all this 'heaven,' and they're living in poverty, and all you have to do is avoid a few border guards, and slip across. The people themselves are trying to improve themselves, the same way Blacks did when they migrated from Mississippi to Chicago or Detroit seeking a better life."

Dr. Mays sees the frustrations among the Black people who are constantly told by the power structure that Latino immigrants have "stolen their jobs." Dr. Mays pointed out that people can't just look at things within the borders of the U.S.: "[The U.S.]

has tentacles that reach throughout society. [The U.S.] has a trade surplus with Mexico, which means jobs for Americans... But we identify a group of people as Blacks were identified at one time—stereotyped as 'these Mexicans' or as 'these Blacks' or whatever. When we do that, I think we let prejudice overshoot our frustrations, which I think 187 has done."

"The fight is not over," Dr. Mays said. "I think the proponents of 187 knew they would have trouble legally, but this gives momentum to a conservative trend. That's what we have to watch." Like many people right now, in the wake of Prop 187's passage, Dr. Mays is chewing over different solutions. He spoke of writing to Congress and other means for reform. But his strong stand of non-compliance with Prop 187 shows that his heart is right with the people.

The mass movement that has arisen in opposition to Prop 187 and the war on immigrants—and the L.A. Rebellion of 1992—gives Dr. Mays a vision of the struggle jumping off to a whole new level: "Particularly in L.A., you have a volatile population... I'm not trying to be an alarmist or anything, but they're going to burn it down. What's going to occur is this—the Hispanics are the molten lava in the depths of the volcano. Wait till this summer, wait till something else happens, like a cop shoots a Hispanic. It's going to explode. You had a billion dollars of damage caused by the riots, and the Rand study showed that the majority of the participants were South Americans, not African Americans. They were walking along together doing it." □

Correction

Last week's article "Students and Truckers Take to the Streets," which was part of the coverage of the protests against Prop 187, mentioned a concert on October 22 that opposed Prop 187 and raised money for the Leonard Peltier Defense Fund and the UFW. The concert actually involved not only Chicano musicians but also performers of various nationalities, which was a very positive and important development.



Immigrant farmworkers in California.

UCLA Sit-in Against War on Immigrants

Protests against Proposition 187 and the war on immigrants are continuing at UCLA. On Thursday, November 17, up to 100 students and others marched through Westwood Village, a major shopping and business district right next to the university, and onto the campus to a rally at the administration building, Murphy Hall. There were about 200 people at the rally. The rally was organized by the UCLA Human Rights Coalition, a new group formed in the wake of the elections, and included students of different nationalities. After the rally, a delegation entered Murphy Hall to demand that Chancellor Young sign a letter refusing to comply with 187. They decided not to leave his office till he signed. In solidarity, some of the other protesters decided to sit in on the first floor. At 6:00, campus police announced that protesters would be arrested if they did not leave. But both groups of protesters refused to go until the university promised not to be a part of identifying and reporting immigrants without documents. Campus police arrested both groups—a total of 28 people.



The RW Interview

The Art of



I ain't seen shit, I ain't heard nothin
 I don't know what happened, I don't speak pig latin.
 I'm a motherfuckin true when it's us against you
 So fuck Starsky, Hutch and Inspector Clousot.
 I was taught don't rely on pigs for protection
 Shit I try not to even ask em fo directions.
 You're in the wrong section of the hood
 For a crime to be inspected
 Got this block infected, you could get ejected...

Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies
 You know the deal the real criminals be dressed in suit and ties
 Who holds the wealth, you do no damage than help
 So fuh me and my folks we finna just do fuh self...

For all the tattle talers and under cover dwellers
 Their heads were placed in helicopter propellers
 And a narc had been snatched up by the seat of his pants
 And his face was driven into a hill of army ants
 A man had been murdered for his Benz and his Fits
 I never saw the assailant, he vanished in the mist.

[Police voice:]
 You know the faces and names, all your stories are polluted
 Tell me the truth before I have you electrocuted

Attempting on my person wouldn't be the wise thing,
 In your thoughts you have fears of my people's uprising.
 The masses rebel, your aircraft propel,
 A cop was shot, seven rounds were expelled.
 His friend went to hell just for being a fascist,
 Burnt uniforms and piles of human ashes...

—"Interrogation," The Coup, from *Genocide and Juice*

On *The Coup's* new album, many stories are told—from the past, present, and future. This rap group comes from the streets of Oakland, California and they deal with the world of those youth who by age 13 are already calculating what's left of their "life expectancy." But these rappers speak with a revolutionary point of view and they invite their audience to consider taking up the same.

In 1993 *The Coup* put out *Kill My Landlord*—an album whose title song is a metaphor for overthrowing the capitalist ruling class. (See review in RW No. 752) The group has just released their second album, *Genocide and Juice* on Wild Pitch Records.

Here the RW exchanges with Boots and E-Rock, the rappers in the group, and DJ Pam the Funkstress.

THE RW INTERVIEW:

A special feature of the RW to acquaint our readers with the views of significant figures in art, theater, music and literature, science, sports and politics. The views expressed by those we interview are, of course, their own; and they are not responsible for the views published elsewhere in our paper.

RW: Why did you all become rappers—what moved you to do that?

Boots: Well, rappin as far as actually doing it is a cultural thing that a lot of people get into without even deciding to. Before you even think about performing it or anything you do it in the hallway, with your friends and things like that. So rapping for me has always been like that, just something that you do for fun. And the more you do it the better it got and people started saying "you should do this"... Then it grew together as I got more politically involved and politically inclined—to want to do it to put out a message.

E-Rock: Basically when I started, like he said, it was the thing. Back then we was just rappin about anything, rappin at school. When I hooked up with Boots, though, he was kicking that conscious type of stuff. And you know me, I was kicking stuff that was around me, and we just put it together, and that's how we formed the Coup.

Pam: I just always loved music as a DJ. I was raised with it, my dad used to sing with his brothers and stuff. And then every time there was a party I was always the first to stand next to the DJ and say, hmmm. So I could see what was happening. That's how I got into it, as far as DJing. I do all the cuts, and all the scratching, all that noise you hear, that's me.

RW: One thing that stands out about your music is that you go after this whole dog-eat-dog mentality that the power structure feeds us and all the conditions that lead people into the gangsta logic. But what I really like is that at the end of the day, it's not the people that you blame—you target the system.

Boots: We try not to preach to or talk at somebody. Because it's where we've come from too, the ideas that we're talking about are stuff that we've had in the past too, so you can't just say, "this is wrong" and "the way you're doing this is wrong." We show what's going on and the reason why it's happening and put it in street language, to where we try to make people see, "damn, that's a dumb way to think, if you look at it like that."

RW: In this new album, you tell stories through these characters, positive and negative characters, like the David Rockefellers, the small-time hustlers, and the woman looking at the young boy who's looking out the project window...

Boots: The woman, that was Jazz Lee Alston, she's a poet.

E-Rock: We do it like that because basically what we talking about—like the government—when people hear it coming through characters like that, they can hear it, they can feel it, they can feel a part of what you're saying, so I mean that's where we're from, that's what we go through on the street.

Boots: We try to stay away from a lot of slogans and catch phrases that's used in the "political world" because a lot of times those are used instead of going into depth about the thing. Instead of just saying, "Organize," "You got to organize," we try to stay so far away from that it makes us go into depth and relate to somebody and stay away from the chants.... The more basic words we use, the more we're forced to just relate to somebody and express what we mean through different ways that don't turn people off like, "Okay, they're talking about me now."

RW: You're talking about typical situations, typical characters, and trying to walk through that minefield of life with them...

Boots: Yeah, basically what we say in "Fat Cats, Bigga Fish" could be said in just a few words: you ain't no hustler, the real hustlers is making millions of dollars. You could say that and add it into a rap, but we broke it down into a story, we told a long story that people could get into, and then brought you in with us, and I think the more you get subjective with an objective goal, you bring people with you.

RW: What do you think are some of the positive trends in hip hop now?

Boots: People being independent with their record deals... Things like people who are starting up venues for just any rapper to come through—independent labels where it's a step away from everything being centered around three or four major labels controlling everything. Once that happens it lets things be a little more out of control. Major labels will embrace whatever they think the underground wants as their own, so that they can get rid of it. They'll put out the music as a way of saying we have free speech. But then when the shit hits the fan, you got everybody looking to the major radio stations and the major publications, but nobody's going through the underground thing. So they have control and they can say, "Well this is hip hop."

RW: In the song "Interrogation" on *Genocide and Juice*, you put forward a sharp attitude on how to deal with the cop enforcers, the enforcers of the rich.

E-Rock: Yeah, they fuck with you all the time. It's like when we came out here we drove to DC and back, and you know how many times we got pulled over? Three. And they was asking stupid questions, like where you going, where you from, you like it out here, where you get the shoes from, huh? Just stupid shit.

Boots: It was like an interrogation.

E-Rock: It's just like in Oakland—they just mess with you. So in that one song we're like, "just leave us the fuck alone."

Boots: It's the whole idea of letting somebody who's killing all these people be the judge over us. There's people in the community who do things wrong to each other. But on the whole we lose out more with the police. And what we're saying—we're not saying nothing should be done—we're saying that the community has to check itself and that the government, in this case through the police, is not gonna do anything helpful to the community. And matter of fact just uses that as an inroad to terrorize everybody. That's basically our stance. And it already is the stance—when the police come around more people know, okay, that's the enemy—whether they're involved in any kind of movement or not.

E-Rock: They ain't there to protect you. They're there to keep you in check... So I don't talk to em. I'd rather take it in my own hands than turn to them.

RW: One of the things I really like about your music is that you take on some heavy ideological questions. Like in the last album, *Kill My Landlord*, a character in one of your songs is accused of something which was done by another guy, some small-time hustler. The character decides he's not gonna drop a dime on the guy because the system has no right to judge them anyway. So it's a real strong stand against snitching to the enemy even it means going to jail.

Boots: That was just a train of thought—we try to say that, with this line of thinking, on an everyday basis, this is what you would think in this situation, just to make it more real.... And we put in the decisions that we would make, and the reasons why we make those decisions.

RW: In the song "Kill My Landlord" you've got this line: "I learned the game and I became a revolutionary/Scary to corporate asses cuz the masses are a loaded gun." Can you talk about how you see your art as part of building for revolution?

Boots: It's basically creating a culture that's making it fertile for a movement to happen. I think art is important in doing anything, in expressing any ideas, in relating to any sort of movement. I don't think it's a power in and of itself. I think that a movement that has some short-term material goals as well as long-term material goals is important and so our place in there is part of creating that culture so a movement can grow—a rather loose-knit movement.... We could make a song just with some tight beats and "revolution, revolution, revolution." [Laughs] But it wouldn't relate to anybody, wouldn't really change anybody's way of thinking or nothing like that. So our job is to relate to people and make these little connections, these little decisions, these little things which lead people to want to be involved in a movement.





RW: One of the really vexing problems for the people, and something that is very controversial in rap, is the role of women—in the art and in the political movement and in society generally. What do you all think about this?

Pam: One reason I am with this group—I'm not trying to stereotype things—but as opposed to somebody else, they don't disrespect women, not in front of me at least. [Laughs.] No, they don't disrespect women.

Boots: Well, you know, a lot of times women are not encouraged to take roles that are aggressive.

Pam: I'm an aggressive woman.

Boots: They're usually the dancers, as opposed to the rappers or the people who make the music—as it is throughout any society that's driven by capitalism, because they have to split everybody up and that's just a divisive way of doing it.

We have Pam in our group—you'll see she's a big part of the show. She's an actual part of the group, so in that way we're trying to show by her example that, okay, there's a lot of inroads to be done. Hip hop is just a reflection of everything else that's happening, and women are always being left out, and not just left out—

Pam: Looked at as being this type—

E-Rock: People use women as objects where they're actually human beings with brains. We don't put that image on women, cuz they're more than just an object, they more than just a body... We respect women for being a woman.

Boots: On our logo we have a woman. I remember the first couple weeks we had it people were saying don't you feel uncomfortable with a woman logo? I mean I don't hear that anymore, I guess cuz people got used to it. But it was a very strong statement—a woman who has a child and stuff,

realizing the risk she is taking cuz she has a gun—it's actually from a photograph you've probably seen from Angola, we just turned it into a logo.

RW: Women are also a big part of the picture that you draw in the song "The Coup"—which is the story of an uprising.

Boots: Yeah, we made sure it's both, cuz people sometimes take as a strength only actual physical strength, when there's a lot of things that women add to society, so there could be a lot of things women add to revolution too, just as much as men. But a lot of times that image isn't portrayed because going on the stereotype of men being stronger, that's the image that's put out for revolution. But throughout history women have played a major role in revolutions, not always publicized as much.

RW: Tell me what the response has been to your first record—

Pam: *Kill My Landlord*? Everybody likes the title.

E-Rock: People liked the album, but a lot of people didn't know it was out. They respected where we came from as far as "Kill My Landlord" and what we were talking about, they could feel it. A lot of people they want to talk about what we're saying but they just don't. It's a choice—you can either talk about that you got money and you're living large, frontin, or you can talk about what's really going on. A lot of people shy away from talking about what's really going on because...

Boots: They don't have answers.

E-Rock: They don't have answers to it so they'll talk about, "Yeah, I got this, I got the gold, it sounds good." It's like a category—if you're like that you're accepted or whatever. But we was like a mouthpiece.

People were scared to talk about it, but when they heard us, they'd say, "Yeah, that's exactly what I was saying." It was cool. I think it influences them because they're like, "Okay, somebody else is doing something that's talking about this situation that's going on," so that would be able to give them the inspiration to talk about it too. They feel that they can get somewhere with it.

Boots: Anywhere our record was known we could go into some of the neighborhoods where people would say, "Oh, you shouldn't go there, you're not from there." And we would go there and people would come up, "Oh, what's up, you're cool"—in cities all over the country. People know where we're coming from and they like that and they already felt like, "I know who you are," so they accept us. Like you know sometimes we will see somebody that's rolling, like a small-time dope dealer, and they'll get out of the car and say, "I love what you all are saying." It's kinda crazy, cuz you know we don't just have crowds of people that wanna hear some positive music. We have lots of people who really don't care what they listen to usually, but they like us for what we're saying. A lot of what people get caught up in—when they do music that has a message they do it for those people who want to hear that message. And we do it for people that really just want to hear something else. Cuz I think that—why just be influencing the same people?

People do what they think is right and what they think is right is only based on what they know. We give them other information, we tell them the conclusion too, that would come from the information that we have... I don't think our music is gonna make somebody change their minds about something, but I think what it does is let people think about it and opens the way for anything else to come into their life, the other ideas, in another form, to come into their lives, to change them or whatever. And

hopefully, at the same time, for people who already consider themselves revolutionaries it can be—feel like a theme song or something, you know what I'm saying?

RW: Sure! I know there are a lot of revolutionary people who are very moved by your music.

Pam: You'd be surprised how many people actually listen and know what we're saying in a song—breaking it down.

RW: You must listen to all kinds of other music too. I hear it in your record.

Boots: Yeah, I got thousands of records.

E-Rock: Yeah, not just rap, R&B—

Boots: We listen to a lot of stuff, Arabic music, all kinds. What I do is go by garage sales and get a box of records and listen to them. I don't listen to it in any kind of order—a lot of them don't even have covers on them. I listen to a lot of stuff that was just put out by local people all over the world that might not have gotten out of their area. A lot of people use the same music they know people are going to like—cuz it's been used a few times before and it's sold hundreds of thousands of copies. But we try to use [different] music—like we have a live string section in our stuff. We got a sample of R2D2 in "Santa Rita Weekend." We just do stuff, but we try to keep it to something people can bob their heads to. It's kind of like a scavenger way, things that are left over, we put them together and make them something that's strong.

Pam: I hope the record gets out to the people—let them realize, give them a chance to listen to it lyrically-wise, cuz like you say the lyrics are right to the point—we're making it for the people. □

Special to the *RW/OR*

Report from Chiapas Campesinos with Gu

Part 6: Zapatista Territory

by Michael Slate

Following the New Year uprising in Chiapas, correspondent Michael Slate travelled to Mexico to explore the roots of the new insurgency and the situation of the campesinos. In this series, Slate shares his findings with the *RW*. In the concluding parts of this series—which will be published over the next few weeks, Slate takes us into Zapatista territory:

On the Trail of the Uprising

It rained sometime around dawn, and at 7 a.m. a gray mist still hung over the mountains that lined the horizon. Early morning was the busiest time down at the market in Ocosingo. Mounds of fruits and vegetables of every type and color imaginable filled the concrete vendor stalls. Indigenous peasants jammed the aisles of the market, buying and selling supplies and goods. One

old woman from an outlying village arrived at the market with a few live turkeys hung upside down and slung over her shoulder. A small trickle of blood ran down her shin from the turkeys constantly pecking at her leg as she walked.

It was just before the Easter holidays so the market was especially busy. Hundreds of bullet holes scarred the walls, the vendor stalls, the tin roof and the steel support beams of the market—the only sign of the massacre of indigenous peasant rebels by the Mexican army during the January uprising led by the EZLN, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional. Across the street from the market, Mexican army troops leaned against the sandbag walls of one of their rooftop machine gun nests and tensely watched the crowds in the market and the surrounding streets.

Empty cargo and livestock trucks with large metal skeleton frames on the back—like the monkey bars in urban playgrounds—were parked up and down the streets bordering the market. The drivers were eating, talking with their friends, or trying to catch some sleep before making the long trip home. The trucks from some of the more remote villages had already travelled five to eight hours and were scheduled to do a return trip later in the afternoon. These trucks were the main form of transportation for the indigenous campesinos going back and forth from the countryside.

We were headed out to a town in the territory controlled by the EZLN—known as the Zapatistas. We found a truck headed in our direction and climbed up on the back. It was loaded down with food and other

supplies and about twenty indigenous campesinos and campesinas all headed deep into the hills and forests beyond Ocosingo.

At the edge of the city the Mexican army stopped our truck at a roadblock. The roadblock was only a small part of a huge army encampment. Heavily armed soldiers—dug in deep on both sides of the road—kept their guns ready for anything. Tanks and artillery sat out in the middle of a field, only partially hidden by camouflage netting. The soldiers ordered all of us off of the truck. And while one group of soldiers checked everyone's papers, another searched the truck and the supplies for gasoline or other items that local peasants might be smuggling out to the Zapatistas.

Federal Judicial police sat on a hillside watching the roadblock, and the sound of gunfire from an army practice range just over the hill cracked the intense silence at the roadblock.

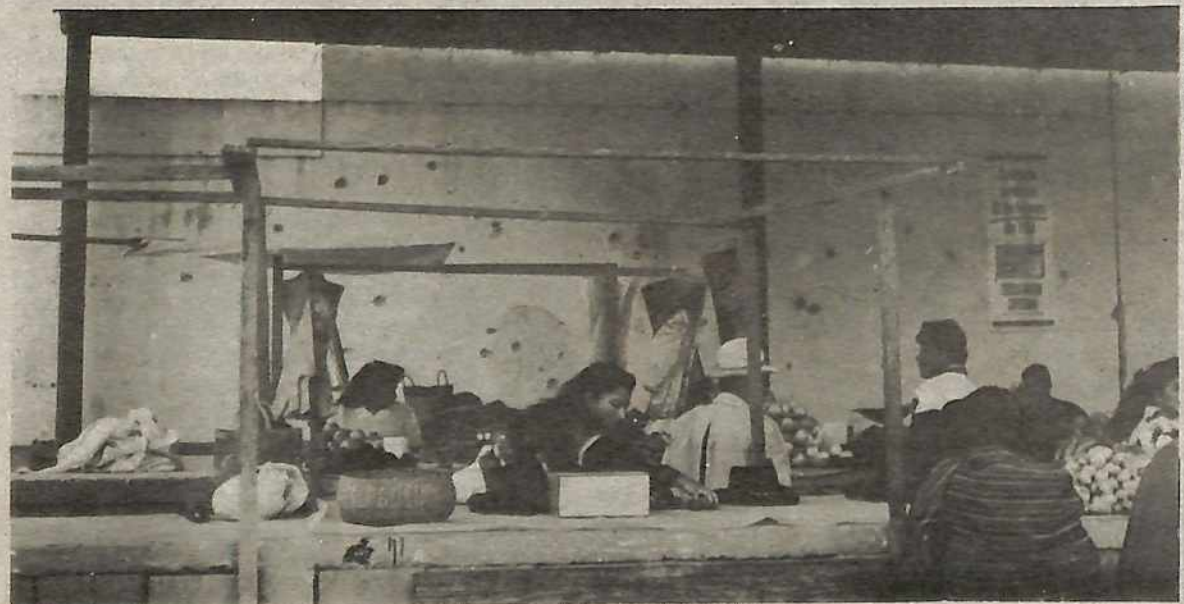
A couple of kilometers past the roadblock our truck turned off the paved highway and onto the narrow and rutted dirt road that ran out to EZLN territory. There was nothing but pasture and woods lining the road for miles. Huge parcels of land were marked as government or army territory while other huge pastures were marked off as the property of a rancher or finca owner. Handpainted signs along the road pointed out the location of local water wells. Small clusters of mud huts sprang up unexpectedly and every now and then the truck stopped to let off or pick up passengers.

As the truck geared down to a slower crawl and pulled over to park, a column of men suddenly came down out of the woods and began unloading boxes of food—cooking oil, boxes and boxes of Ramen instant noodles and other supplies. They were from an ejido located miles back in the forest and this was one of their regular supply deliveries.

While the campesinos unloaded the truck and loaded up huge bundles to hang from the straps around their foreheads, my thoughts raced back to what had happened out here during the New Year's Rebellion and the days that followed. The EZLN organized and led thousands of indigenous peasants from the villages and ejidos out here and in other parts of the highlands in an armed uprising that stunned Mexico and focused all eyes on the campesinos and the issue of armed revolution. The peasant rebels slipped through the night and, armed with old and small weapons—including knives, sticks and traditional weapons—took over four county seats in the Chiapas highlands. The Zapatistas also sharply contested with the Mexican government troops



Army rooftop guardpost.



Marketplace in Ocosingo. The wall is pockmarked with bullet holes from shots fired during the Chiapas rebellion.

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Photo: Joshua Schwartz



Peasant rebels in Chiapas, 1994.

for control of three other smaller towns. They attacked government buildings and destroyed financial and criminal records—temporarily removing a major source of suffering for the indigenous campesinos. They sacked government offices and state-run stores, turning supplies and equipment over to the people in the towns. They attacked prisons—totally destroying the local jail in San Cristóbal—and freed the prisoners. They fought the army in Ocosingo and at Rancho Nuevo—the largest military outpost in southern Mexico.

All throughout the highlands, big landowners and arrogant cacique political bosses fled in terror as campesinos inspired by the uprising seized land and fought back against their oppression. On the eve of the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—which would bring new levels of exploitation to the Mexican countryside—the indigenous peasants of Chiapas issued a hard slap in the face to both the Mexican rulers and the U.S. imperialists.

The uprising was brief. The rebels were on the offensive for only a few days. The Mexican government hit back hard. Over a hundred people were killed, with some estimating the casualties at over 400 dead. Hundreds were arrested throughout the highlands and many were tortured. The Mexican army rampaged through indigenous villages and towns. U.S.-supplied helicopters and Swiss airplanes were used to strafe and bomb the indigenous peasant communities.

By January 7 all of the cities captured by the Zapatistas were back in the hands of the government. By the middle of January a cease-fire was called and a short while later the EZLN and the Mexican government began a dialogue about the demands raised by the EZLN as part of a peace process. In some areas of the Chiapas Altos white flags flew on top of houses, supposedly to show support for the peace talks. These flags were not all that common in the poorer peasant communities, and in other areas people often flew them in hopes that it would keep the army away from their homes.

Shortly after the first stage of the dialogue process ended, the Mexican ruling party's presidential candidate was assassinated. The government immediately and

dramatically increased the military presence in the highlands of Chiapas and especially in the areas close to the EZLN bases. There were reports of government troop movements in the areas around Ocosingo and Las Margaritas, and the Zapatistas reported that the government was setting up and getting ready to close a pincer around the EZLN territory. Military planes made constant flyovers of the territory behind the Zapatista lines, and one area near the town of Altamirano reported that a military plane had dropped a bomb on an ejido sympathetic to the EZLN. The "peace process" was temporarily suspended. The EZLN put all of its troops and territory on red alert, and the situation was still very tense as we made our way into Zapatista territory.

It was blistering hot as we paused on a rock where a small dirt road broke off from the main dirt road and headed up a hill toward one of the EZLN roadblocks guard-

ing the entry points into their territory.

A few baby pigs thrashed about in the underbrush. Two riderless horses galloped up a hill towards a town controlled by the Zapatistas. A local youth was waiting for a cargo truck headed back into Ocosingo. As he talked to us about the January rebellion, the young campesino scanned the horizon—hoping that one last truck would come so he could see his girlfriend.

He reached down in the dirt and picked up an empty bullet casing. He tossed it over to me and explained that it was from a major battle between the Mexican army and the EZLN right at that spot in the road.

"At first we were all scared here. I mean, they were not letting anybody in or out during those times. We didn't know what was going on. There was a 40-minute fight right here in January. They shot at each other a lot—the Mexican army and the Zapatistas. The Mexican army came up here and the Zapatistas attacked them and

forced them back.

"We were scared. But up there, everybody supported the Zapatistas. And when they published their demands, when they said what their demands were, then we weren't afraid of them. Their demands were the demands of the peasants. They listed the needs of the peasants.

"They always say on television and the radio that Chiapas is the poorest place in the country. They say Chiapas has been abandoned.

"The government gives us no help. They always come around and promise everything—especially in election years...But still we have nothing and some are very rich and have lots of land. That's why the struggle happened.

"The Zapatistas began a struggle. It is a process, the struggle is a process and it is good that it happened. But it is not over yet and nobody knows how it will end."

Continued on page 10



Government roadblock in Chiapas.



EZLN guerrillas enter Ocosingo, January 1994.

Report from Chiapas

Continued from page 9

Struggle in the Land Where "Things Don't Grow"

Jaime swept his arm out towards the hills way over on the other side of the dirt road. "For a long time really, people have been very badly treated. So, from the time of the 1910 Revolution, people came here and then, what happened? What happened is that they settled on the hills. They only gave us the land that is here on the hills. What can you grow on a hillside? Nothing. Things don't grow."

Jaime was a civilian representative of the Zapatistas and he was giving us an overall orientation on the situation in his town and among the people. Though I knew that there were many differences between the Zapatista strategy and the Maoist path of New Democratic Revolution and protracted People's War, I was anxious to learn more about the organization and practice of the EZLN in the areas they controlled and their relationship with the peasants.

Jaime explained that the EZLN was composed of some members who were mainly military soldiers and others who mainly did political and civilian work in the communities. The Zapatistas responsible for civilian work carried out political organizing and education among the people and helped administer the various areas under the control of the EZLN.

The tiny town was one of the poorest I had seen in Chiapas. It was almost entirely mud and stick huts—no electricity and hardly any water. There was one faucet for the entire town but it only dripped water, and a bucket was hung over the faucet to catch each drop. We were told that it often took more than a day for the bucket to fill.

All the way out to the town we saw long concrete poles laying alongside the dirt road. Jaime told us that they were supposed to be electric poles for the eventual electrification of the countryside. He said the poles suddenly began appearing on the rural dirt roads shortly after the January uprising. People in the area joked about what it would take to actually get the poles erected and some wires strung out between them. So far the only sign of the government-sponsored project was the name "Solidarity" (the main government poverty program) painted on the backboards of the

town basketball court.

"Before, when they began to build the highway between San Cristóbal and Comitán, people here were paying highway taxes for that, for light, all of that," Jaime said, with a disgusted gesture. "And we still don't have those things here. We've been paying for these things, and we don't have them. It's a form of really repressing the people. That's why people get mad. The last 'centavo' you have, it goes to taxes. And not just that. There's the increase in the prices of merchandise. And what you produce, you get paid real cheap. So they're totally wiping us out. There's nothing left."

Jaime leaned against an old truck parked in a clearing in the middle of the town. The truck had the name of another campesino organization painted on its side, but this organization advocated working with the government to resolve the suffering in the countryside and really had not functioned in this town for a while. Many of the former members of this organization were now supporters and members of the EZLN.

"It's not that people don't work the land," Jaime explained. "You can work the land, but it just doesn't produce. The plowing is done seasonally. The hills are rocky and people dangle on the slopes. So there's

not enough for people to consume. It is not good land. It is all poor people who live and farm in the hills. There are no rich people on the hills. The rich people live in the flat lands and near the rivers. They can grow food and live good there. Here we don't even have water. Most of the time we have to go to the river. It's 4 km from here. There was a small stream closer but it is dried up now.

"So people have been here a long time. Since the time of our ancestors, many people have died suffering. It's not a good life for the poor. They don't have enough to eat, they don't have what they need to benefit the family, there's not enough.

"Our children get no education here. The teachers that were here before have not come back since January. There have never been any doctors here. When people get sick we have to take them to the hospital in the city. But it is very hard to get sick people to any hospital. You've seen how the road is—full of holes and when it rains it is even worse. Before the road was here we had to carry our sick people to the hospitals in the city."

It was a story we had heard over and over in our conversations with the peasants in our travels in Chiapas.

I asked Jaime about the fincas and big landowners in the area. He pointed to a barbed wire fence back towards one end of the town. He said that there were many large landholders in the area, including the one who owned the land behind the barbed wire fence—a finca of more than 4000 hectares.

Jaime told us that the town was founded by their relatives who left the finca to establish an ejido in the days after the Mexican Revolution.

"Our ancestors, our grandfathers, died on these fincas. Everyone here used to be a peon. When our people left the finca to first settle these lands the ranchers sent people to attack them. They sent people to bring us back to work the finca or to kill us. Before, in the time of our ancestors, people made 5 cents, 25 cents. Now it's just 5 to 7 pesos, working from dawn to dusk. So people feel that.

"The work is very difficult. In the city, people don't really know what it's like. Working the fields is very hard work. You work the cornfields, and when you don't have work, people go out to sell their labor. But there you get paid after a period of two or three months. Even though you need things right away, they don't pay you. You feel bad about it, but for a long time it's been like that. And not just here. All over Chiapas it's like that. So people feel that. They feel really scorned.

"Many people go to the city to look for work, but in these jobs they give you twice the work. You have to work extra hours and it's hard work. Many people here in this area can't speak Spanish. So many of us can't even go to the cities because we can't

Photo: Joshua Schwartz



read so we can't even know where to ask for food. There's so many things. People couldn't take it anymore and had to organize."

Jaime explained that most of the big landlords fled into the city when the peasants rebelled in January.

Roots of Rebellion

The EZLN was born in the remote indigenous villages of the Lacandón Forest—the Selva—and the southeastern mountains. In addition to the long-time indigenous residents, the Zapatistas also gathered a lot of support from among indigenous settlers who arrived in the Selva 30 or 40 years ago—people driven out of other parts of Chiapas by repression or land starvation. In interviews published in *Tiempo*, the main newspaper in San Cristóbal, and *La Jornada*, a nationwide leftist newspaper, Sub-comandante Marcos, the EZLN spokesperson and the leader of the military operations of the Zapatistas, talked about the origins of the EZLN.

According to Marcos, the EZLN began with a small group of urban and educated young radicals moving out to the rural mountain areas to live among and organize the indigenous people ten years earlier. Marcos said that these early radicals were influenced by and learned from the heroes

denied that the EZLN is a vanguard leadership of the revolutionary struggle in Mexico. Instead, he has spoken about the Zapatistas being a facilitator for the birth of a new society based on participatory democracy.

This emphasis on criticizing political vanguards echoes the political philosophy of Che Guevara, and it has won the EZLN much sympathy among the middle classes of Mexico—who take some comfort in the fact that EZLN does not claim to be a proletarian vanguard. Within the ranks of the EZLN, and more broadly among their supporters, there is a wide array of views on all of the key questions of the day.

Raul, another civilian representative of the Zapatistas, jumped into the discussion. Raul had a lot of experience with the repression brought down on the indigenous people by the Mexican government and he counted this as high among the conditions leading up to the rebellion and the widespread support for the uprising throughout the area.

Raul told us that the Mexican army was especially brutal in this area in the days after the uprising. Repeated bombing and strafing of the village and milpas was aimed at driving the Zapatistas and their supporters out of the area. And the army had actually marched within a few kilometers of the village where the local residents

ment and especially what he and other Zapatistas saw as the one-party dictatorship of the PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which has run the government for more than 65 years. While there was overwhelming support for the January uprising and the armed struggle in general, there was a lot of informal debate in the ranks of the EZLN and among their supporters over how exactly this dictatorship can be changed. Most of the people we spoke with saw the need for waging an armed struggle, but this wasn't the same as seeing the need for a protracted People's War and a New Democratic Revolution.

Although Raul enthusiastically upheld the peasant rebellion, he did not see the armed struggle as part of a struggle for nationwide power. He viewed the armed struggle as both a last resort and a hammer to hold over the head of the regime in order to force it to listen to and respond to the needs of the people. And even if the armed struggle didn't bring about a total change, Raul thought that it might at least bring about a situation where the peasants could get some partial benefits. We spoke for a while about how he saw ending the oppression of the people.

"I think that for a long time we've been talking with the government, with commissions, acting authorities, and we've never gotten attention. That's why now we as peasants think that we need to struggle. With the legal road, they didn't pay any attention to us...and now? If we don't fight in this way, the government is going to finish us off. That's why we began this struggle."

"We did it through their legal road. We didn't start off with weapons. We went through the legal road first. Twenty years, right here. Struggling and struggling and struggling, and they told us, 'Yes...such-and-such day, such-and-such month,' and nothing ever happened. You can see it right here in this community. What is there? There's nothing here from the government. No schools, no electricity. The school that's here, people put up themselves with their own money from the ejido. What do you see? There's nothing here."

"There's no other way, only taking up weapons. Many peasants would rather die in war than in misery. Die fighting. We know that we're going to die in the end. That's how it is, everybody is going to die one day anyway. So we can't just stay with our own thoughts."

"There was a dialogue with the government. But it's just promises. We'll have to see if they fulfill them. Before the dialogue happened, people thought that they would fight and fight their whole life. We'll have to see if they give everything that they promised. Things haven't really changed. Some proposals have been made. But in terms of change, not yet. It hasn't been confirmed yet. The government, the Commissioner, promised that these things could be done, but who knows? If it's true, then things can begin to change, but if they don't, well then."

Message to the North

As our discussion with the first few Zapatista representatives began to break up, a small crowd gathered around us. Some were just there to check out the visitors. Others had taken a deep interest in our discussion and were eager to talk. Most of the campesinos that talked with us that day knew about the NAFTA treaty from the education of the Zapatistas, but they knew very little about the life of the people in the U.S. In many ways, the NAFTA treaty—combined with changes in the Mexican constitution that threatened to dispossess the peasants of their land—had brought things to a head and triggered the January uprising.

The campesinos saw the U.S. as a very wealthy country where everyone is rich, and they were shocked and outraged to discover that there were actually poor people inside the borders of the U.S. They peppered us with questions as we told them about the Los Angeles rebellion, the condition of the people, including the situation of immigrants in the U.S. Broad smiles greeted the news that many people in the U.S. supported the Chiapas rebellion. The Zapatista members and supporters quickly drew the links between their situation and that facing the proletarians and oppressed people in the U.S. And many of the campesinos were very happy to hear that there is a growing revolutionary movement inside the beast of the north.

José, a young man who had joined the EZLN as a full-time military cadre five years earlier, spoke for many in the crowd. "The U.S. has the same politics as the government there in DF (Mexico City). The U.S. is the same. The U.S. is here controlling Salinas in Mexico. That's why the U.S. come down here to Mexico. And the U.S., they don't really look at Salinas like he's the President, they see him more as their 'manager.' Salinas is manipulated by the President of the U.S. That's how we see it."

"It's the same. The same capitals that they have here, their people are 'capitalenas.' That's who most supports them. What's happening is that the U.S. wants to run the world, be the owner of the world, that's why they're doing what they're doing. It's not just Mexico, there's other countries that they also control. The United States is always intervening, controlling every nation. That's what the U.S. wants to do, be the owner of the world. That's what we think. For a long time we've thought that."

"What's needed is to gather the masses, the nations, together so that they see this. They have to get through to the U.S. Sooner or later it has to come to the United States. That's it, there's no other way."

"Tell our brothers in the U.S. and other countries how we live. Tell them that here in southern Mexico there are people just like them, that there are people who are poor like them, who can't read like them. Tell them that we are suffering just like them." □



Peasants blockade a road in Chiapas.

Photo: Joshua Schwartz

of the Mexican Revolution—like Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa—as well as all of the other radical and guerrilla movements that had gone before them. They also studied movements around the world, especially those in Central America and read from authors as diverse as Mao to military manuals put out by the U.S. Pentagon.

The early Zapatista core spent a long time preparing for the day they could launch their uprising. According to Marcos, along with military preparations and training there was much emphasis by the young radical group to join with the local indigenous people in their struggle for reforms. The young radicals joined with the peasants to fight for land and other basic needs in legal protests to petition the government.

In the beginning the Zapatistas also worked in the community to take up things like medical care, education and other needs of the people. Not only was life in the mountains and jungles completely new to them, but most of the indigenous people they set out to organize spoke little or no Spanish.

Marcos and other people speaking for the Zapatistas described the beginnings of the EZLN, the army, as being rooted in self-defense measures taken up against attacks from the *guardias blancas*, the armed goons organized by the big landowners and ranchers and known as the white guards. According to Marcos it was this process of living and struggling together with and learning from one another that provided the support base, membership and influence the Zapatistas have today.

Over the last ten years or so the Zapatistas have built up an organization with its strongest base among the Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolobal and Chol indigenous communities. And, while the EZLN still credits all of the various influences that shaped it in the past, it has evolved into an organization that tries to merge together indigenous traditional organization and leftist grassroots democracy. Marcos has vehemently

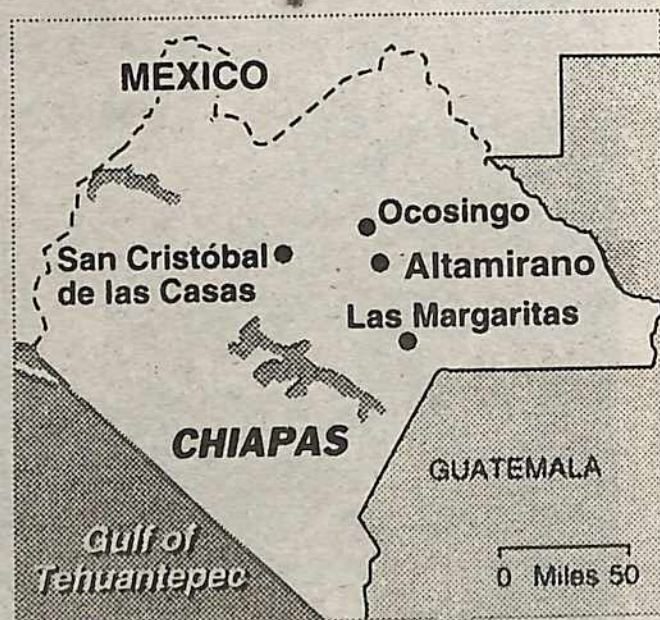
stood them off in a long and intense gun battle.

"There's a lot of repression from the government. If you ask for land, they don't resolve it. There are requests for land that have gone on for 30 or 40 years without a solution. If a request for land is authorized, then the owner of the finca or the landowner send people to evict you. Even though it's been authorized and people are already there, they come take it back anyway. Many people many times have suffered that. Not just once. All over Chiapas, people have suffered that kind of situation, that kind of abuse. Why so much repression? We have to defend our rights too. That's why people put themselves on a struggle footing."

"If the government sees somebody that has a little bit of awareness and supports the cause, then they either have them killed or kidnapped or they send them to jail. So many times that's happened. Indigenous people fill the jails. The people that the authorities go after are mainly the people that always participate in the activist communities. That's exactly who they look for and that's who they've thrown in jail."

Raul, who described himself as a long-time member of the Zapatistas, talked some about how the campesinos suffered in the past and how things have changed. He made a point of emphasizing that he thought one big change was that people today were not going to bear their oppression in silence. "It's changed from how it used to be. They've changed how to exploit people. Before on the fincas there were stone corrals that poor people made by themselves. People carried these huge stones on their backs. They endured it. But now people are beginning to open their eyes. We're living in misery and exploitation, and that's not good. Well, with so much misery, what are we going to do? We have to just throw ourselves into the struggle and see how it goes, either we win or we lose."

Raul, like most of the people we spoke with in this area, hated the Mexican govern-



Map: New York Times

East Timor Protests Break the Silence



Timorese students occupy the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta.

In the last issue of the *RW*, we reported on the hidden history of East Timor—the brutal 19-year occupation by the U.S.-backed Indonesian regime which has killed hundreds of thousands of Timorese people. As we pointed out, U.S. President Clinton went to Indonesia on November 15-16 for the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation conference and shook hands with the butcher Suharto—while trying to downplay the bloody nature of his fascist regime. But the plans of Suharto and his U.S. godfathers to “focus on economic issues” were rudely and righteously disrupted by the oppressed Timorese people and their supporters around the world. Their actions were a strong blow against the U.S. government’s complicit silence and hypocrisy on East Timor.

Early Saturday morning, November 12, a number of Timorese students and workers living in Indonesia converged on the U.S. embassy in Jakarta. This appeared to be a well-planned and coordinated action. They scaled the tall spiked fence surrounding the compound and staged a demonstration inside the embassy parking lot, unfurling banners and shouting slogans for independence. Twenty-nine Timorese made it into the compound; another fifty or so were arrested there or as they made their way to Jakarta from other parts of Indonesia. The whereabouts of most of those arrested is unknown, and it is feared they have been

“disappeared” by the fascist Indonesian regime.

The occupation of the embassy was profoundly embarrassing for both the Indonesian regime and the U.S. It has ripped a gaping hole in the U.S. government’s supposed “concern for human rights.” One news report said it “overshadowed” the Asia-Pacific trade summit. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was forced to express his “sympathy” for the Timorese. This was crude hypocrisy, coming from a top representative of a government which has supplied the Indonesian regime with hundreds of millions of dollars in military weapons. And Christopher refused the demand of the Timorese protesters that he and Clinton meet with them.

The Timorese who climbed into the embassy compound were not given any food or water or even allowed to use the bathroom until late Sunday. As we go to press, they are still in the parking lot of the embassy. Meanwhile, hundreds of Indonesian troops have surrounded the embassy, preventing anyone from talking with the Timorese.

The embassy action was also a bitter blow for the fascist Indonesian regime, which had brought 17,000 extra police to Jakarta in order to suppress any protests. One mainstream news report summed up, “The protests appear to have wrecked Indonesian hopes of presenting a stable,

modern and economically successful image to world leaders.”

At the same time as the occupation of the embassy, students in East Timor held a pro-independence demonstration and memorial service. This action marked the third anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre, when Indonesian soldiers opened fire on unarmed students and demonstrators and massacred hundreds of Timorese. Only a few months ago, another pro-independence demonstration was brutally put down by Indonesian troops who killed two Timorese.

Last week’s demonstration went without incident. But shortly afterward, an Indonesian killed a Timorese in an argument in the central market in the capital city, Dili. The Indonesian responsible was one of 150,000 that have been moved to East Timor and have taken over the economy. The Timorese had objected to being kicked out of his market space by the Indonesian and was killed during the argument that broke out.

The murder typified the treatment of the Timorese at the hands of the Indonesian occupiers—and the youth of East Timor responded in dramatic fashion. Over 1,000 took to the streets, attacking property owned by Indonesians, burning cars and stoning hotels, shops and houses. In street battles throughout the day, the youth threw rocks and bottles and hurled tear gas back at the Indonesian riot police. There are reports

that one or two Timorese were killed and that further clashes took place the next day. This major uprising marks a significant growth in the militancy of the Timorese youth, and is further proof that the U.S. and Indonesian governments have been far from successful in breaking the determination of the Timorese people.

Supporters of the Timorese around the world also took action. In Washington and San Francisco, supporters occupied parts of the Indonesian consulates in solidarity with the Timorese in Jakarta. There were numerous arrests and confrontations with Indonesian and U.S. State Department officials. Others demonstrated throughout the U.S. and the rest of the world.

In addition, two progressive U.S. journalists who had nearly been killed at the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 were arrested this month when they attempted to reenter East Timor. Despite the claims by the Indonesian regime that the territory is “open” to all visitors, the journalists were taken to an army base and held for a day before being released in Jakarta. The journalists have announced that they plan on getting to East Timor one way or another.

The protests by the Timorese people prevented Clinton and the U.S. ruling class from being able to completely ignore the East Timor issue at the APEC conference. The mainstream U.S. media was forced to give some coverage to the embassy protest and Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor. And U.S. officials announced that in a private meeting with Suharto, Clinton urged him to “respect human rights” and give more “autonomy” to the Timorese people. But such words cannot hide the bloody hands of the U.S. backers of the Indonesian regime. Even as Clinton talked about “human rights,” his cabinet officials were announcing \$40 billion in economic deals with the criminal Indonesian rulers.

The actions of the Timorese youth broke the silence that the oppressors had imposed on the truth about East Timor—and exposed the hypocrisy of the U.S. government’s talk of “human rights.” People around the world witnessed the courage and determination of the oppressed Timorese people, undiminished after 19 years of genocidal occupation. As one Timorese in the embassy said, “We have come this far, so why should we give in now?” □



Indonesian troops in Dili, East Timor.

Coming Next Week

RW Interview With Mumia Abu-Jamal

Beginning next week: A two-part interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal from the state prison in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. A Black Panther at age 16, an award-winning radio journalist censored by National Public Radio, and the only political prisoner in the U.S. currently facing execution, Mumia tells his story.

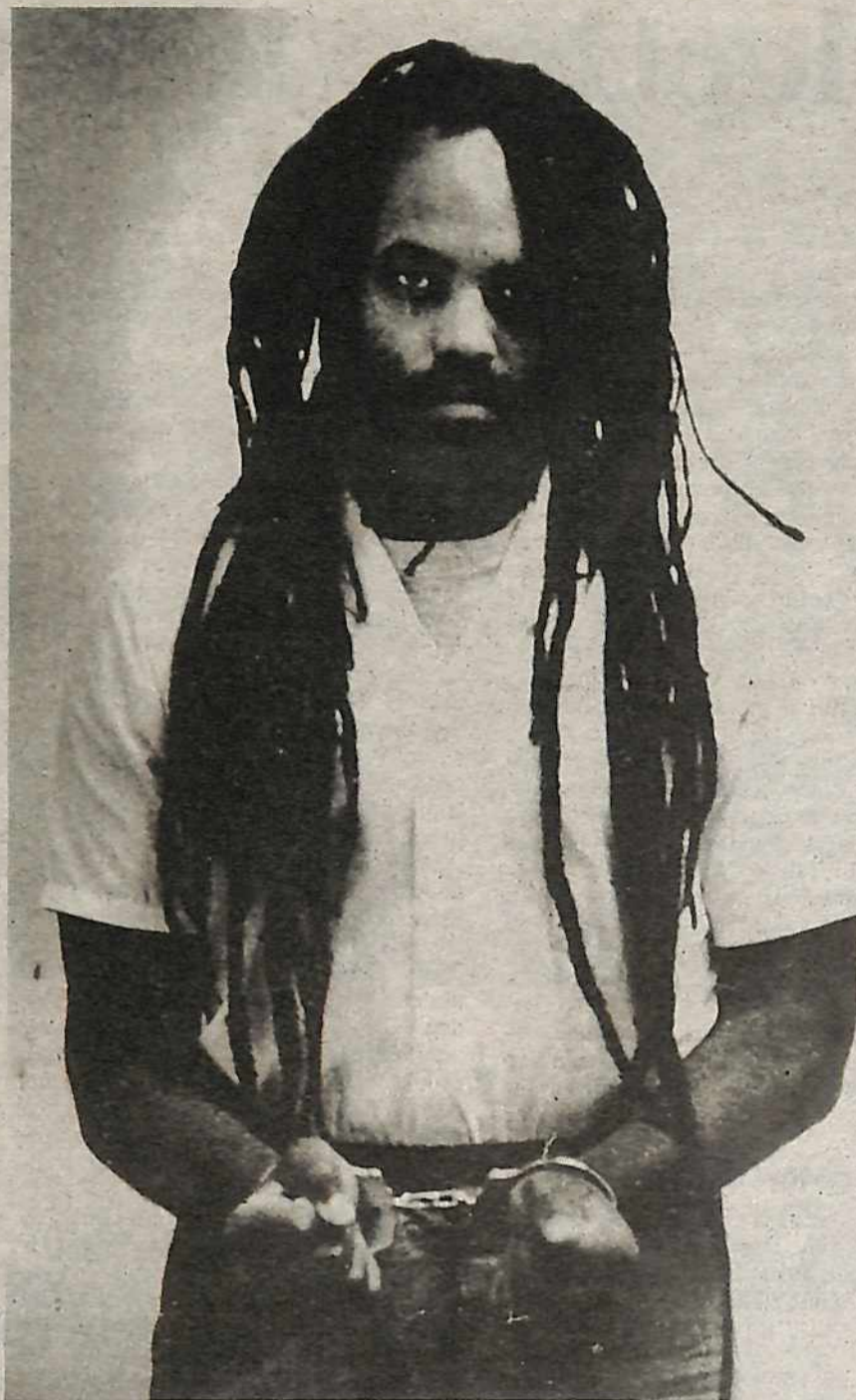
In this exclusive interview conducted by the *Revolutionary Worker*, Mumia talks about how his eyes were opened to oppression, how the Black Panther Party was formed in Philadelphia, censorship in the bourgeois media, the importance of the revolutionary press, the nature of the judicial system, the potential of today's revolutionary youth, and more!

The following is an excerpt from this interview:

RW: This December will be the 13th anniversary of your incarceration and the 25th anniversary of the police assassination of Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Black Panther Party in Illinois. A lot of people now see the "informal executions"

of the '60s turning into the formal executions of the '90s. What is your message to those organizing to stop the legal lynching of Mumia Abu-Jamal?

Mumia: My thanks to them, first of all, for their good and radical work. Second of all, don't give up the fight. I continue to write. I continue to resist. I continue to speak truth to power. I continue to rebel against the system that tried to kill me 13 years ago, and continues to try to kill me today. I know that for some people 13 years ago, depending on your age of course, is an eternity ago. For others it seems just like yesterday. What should be clear to everyone, no matter what your perspective, is what happened about a year ago, the NPR flap, should make it very clear to anyone that this government that tried to kill me in December of 1981 still wants me silent and dead today. So the struggle continues. The fight continues. As Fred Hampton would say, "The beat goes on."



Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Call to Prisoners for Statements on the 13th Anniversary of Mumia Abu-Jamal's Arrest and the 25th Anniversary of the Assassination of Fred Hampton

Many prisoners who read the *RW* will remember the day they heard that Black Panther Fred Hampton had been murdered in his sleep by the Chicago police on December 4, 1969. It was a landmark day, a day of waking up for lots of radical and progressive people in the U.S. and around the world—forcing people to recognize the brutal and murderous nature of this system. And many younger readers are now learning about this history.

December 9 is the 13th anniversary of the day when Mumia Abu-Jamal was beaten, shot, and nearly killed for the crime of being the voice of the voiceless and for standing up against police brutality. Mumia was railroaded for the murder of a Philadelphia cop and has been on death row now for over 12 years. Throughout his imprisonment Mumia has continued to speak out against the system, bringing revolutionary truth to millions of people through his writings—in spite of attempts to censor him.

Recently, National Public Radio refused to air a series of commentaries by Mumia after they had been taped. And the fight to prevent the execution of Mumia has become even more urgent with the election to office of a viciously pro-death penalty governor and legislators in Pennsylvania (and elsewhere in the U.S.).

A call for Countrywide Campus Programs December 4-9 put out by Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Refuse & Resist, and Equal Justice, U.S.A. said: "We failed to stop the execution of Fred Hampton on December 4, 1969, but today we can and must stop the execution of Mumia. In the heightened reactionary climate of the '90s, the government wants to do through the legal mechanisms of the state what it had previously had to do through gangster-style tactics. If this legal lynching goes down, it will be the first legal execution of a political dissident in the U.S. since the Rosenbergs



Fred Hampton.

in 1953."

We call on readers of the *Revolutionary Worker* in prison to write statements on what these two anniversaries mean to you. You have looked to Mumia for steadfastness and inspiration, and you need to let others on the outside know about that and how important you feel it is that the people don't let them kill Mumia!

Many prisoners around the country have recently organized an art and cultural event to highlight and support Mumia's struggle. And some prisoners have already submitted work to the Art and Writing Against the Death Penalty Show. On the occasion of the anniversaries of Fred Hampton's assassina-

tion and Mumia's arrest, we invite prisoners to send comments/statements to the PRLF and we will forward them to the organizer of the art exhibit. We will also read your statement at events being organized by Equal Justice, U.S.A., Refuse & Resist, Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and others during the week of December 4-9, and we will submit them to the *RW* for possible publication.

Send your statements to: PRLF, c/o RCP Publications, P.O. Box 3486, Chicago, Illinois 60654, or call them in to (312) 227-4066.



Mumia Abu-Jamal after he was shot and arrested by Philadelphia police, 1981.

Elections 1994

Continued from page 3

ment" is also a codeword for opposing federal civil rights regulations. It is a demand that issues of school bussing, school curriculum, hiring policies, etc., should be handled in each local area, where religious rightists and racists often feel they have the upper hand.

The new Senate leader Bob Dole explains that "less government" also means "cutting regulations on business." He makes this sound like a plan for "creating jobs by helping small businesses survive"—but in reality it is a way to gut the few flimsy legal protections people have: like workplace safety regulations, environmental protection laws, affirmative action in hiring and promotion, and even minimum wage laws.

Much of the middle class discontent and anti-government sentiment has been channeled into reactionary ways—by forces like Perot, Gingrich, and the Christian Right. But that isn't the only thing going on. The political anger and mistrust that the middle classes feel toward the government also represents an opportunity for the revolutionary movement to win potential allies to its side. The truth is that the ruling class can't fundamentally offer the middle classes a future worth having, as Chairman Bob Avakian stressed in his recent series in the RW.

The Phony "New Mandate"

TV commentators talk like this election produced some huge new "mandate" for the extreme Republican right. The facts show a different picture. Only a minority of

eligible voters, 37 percent, voted on November 8—millions of them voted for conservative candidates, but the picture is not much different than it has been for a decade.

According to vote analysis (*New York Times*, November 13) the numerical vote in House races was evenly divided—50 percent to Democrats and 50 percent to Republicans. This is only a small shift in previous voting patterns. For example in the last "off-year" congressional elections, in 1990, 52 percent of the votes went for Democrats and 48 percent for Republicans. This year there was a shift of about 2 percent of those voting compared to 1990—representing only 0.74 percent of the eligible voters. The system's pollsters say that this shift was mainly among a small section of so-called "Perot independents"—older, conservative, middle class folks who are deeply disgusted with government policy.

While every wiggle of these voter-trends is analyzed in the newspapers, the establishment does not seem to have released any analysis of the majority who didn't vote. They correctly consider the majority abstention an embarrassment for their system. The media only reports that many working people, poor people and Black people were "not energized" to vote this year. Meanwhile, millions of immigrant workers were the target of reactionary election politics in California—but are completely barred from voting.

In the 1994 congressional elections, less than 20 percent of eligible voters voted for Republicans—and this represented only a small shift in voting patterns. Why should this be accepted as a special "mandate" for extreme government policies?

The extremism that has entered official politics has far more to do with the needs of the ruling class than it has to do with "shifts in the electorate."

What the System Has in Store

After the election, the first response of the White House was to announce that Clinton could see "common ground" with the Republican Right. Talk of "universal health care" has evaporated—now the White House agenda focuses on passing tighter immigration controls, new "anti-crime" bills, and extreme welfare cuts. Clinton shocked the liberal world when he said he won't rule out supporting a School Prayer Amendment to the Constitution. Presiden-

tial aides say that Clinton will dedicate himself to promoting "family values" in the weeks ahead. *Newsweek* (11/21) wrote: "Even Ted Kennedy is a prison-building, parole-bashing crimefighter now."

There are many signs of deep splits within the ruling class: The bitterness of the election, the intense maneuvering now going on in Washington, and sharp policy disputes. But at the same time, it is clear that the ruling class as a whole is moving to step up its war on the poor. Not only did the election bring more Reaganite swamp-creatures to power—but Clinton himself seems eager to join up.

In the heyday of U.S. imperialism, during the 1950s and 1960s, the ruling class was able to respond to social problems by developing a complex system for distributing crumbs and payoffs. The system never delivered on liberal rhetoric of "wiping out poverty and inequality"—but a limited "social net" was in place, including welfare, social security, medicaid, federal aid to schools etc.

Now those days are gone. While the U.S. ruling class declared themselves the "victors of the Cold War," the truth is that they had driven themselves deep into economic crisis and multi-trillion-dollar debt. Much of the manufacturing base of the U.S. has decayed into a "rustbelt" while new technologies and global restructuring are rapidly transforming where and how production



timidated by—but it requires the revolutionary outlook of the proletariat, a radical rupture with the present system and its values, to grasp this, to even recognize let alone seize the opportunities amidst the extreme circumstances."

The Need for Organized Struggle and Revolutionary Politics

Some people say, "How can you talk about revolution when the country is picking rightwingers over moderates and liberals? We have to start by out-organizing the rightwingers in the elections, before we can even talk about making radical changes."

This outlook is a serious misreading of the current situation. We certainly need to out-organize the reactionaries—there is no time to waste. But we need revolutionary organization to mobilize the masses of people to fight the system. Elections are an arena of the oppressor—and there is no way for the oppressed to build their power or defend their interests there.

What is needed is for the oppressed proletarian people to step out—taking militant independent action in our class interests and in the interests of all the oppressed. We need to take on and defeat the moves of our ruling class enemy. As that happens it will become even more possible to develop alliances with other class forces for whom this system fundamentally offers no solutions.

It is useful to remember that the great high tide of revolutionary struggle in 1968 coincided with Nixon's victory over the Democrats. The fact that Tricky Dick won the White House hardly meant that the ruling class had things under control. In fact, the changes then happening in the electoral system were part of a growing polarization of politics and society that was overall quite favorable to the revolutionary movement.

Today, there are powerful, restless forces in this country, capable of taking on the oppressor. In the same election that put Gingrich on frontstreet, we witnessed the rapid growth of a new mass movement of resistance to California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187. A saying of Mao Tsetung captures this moment: "The enemy is sharpening his sword, we must sharpen ours."



is done. The U.S. ruling class feels intense pressure to drive down the living standards of millions of people to be "competitive" with rivals in the world marketplace. The workings of the capitalist system itself require the ruling class to implement extreme measures on its homefront—whether the chosen rulers are Democrats or Republicans.

Chairman Bob Avakian has said: "There is and will increasingly be sharp polarization in society. Overall the 'middle ground' will be increasingly shrinking and the position of conciliation characteristic of the middle forces will be undermined as things come to a head. All this is a good thing—not something to shrink from or be in-



New York: Prisoners Protest Conditions at Rikers Island

As we go to press, Riker's Island Prison in New York City is being rocked by prisoner protests. According to press reports, as many as 5,000 out of more than 16,000 prisoners have refused to eat and work for some period of time. The protests are in response to budget cuts and increased brutality by the corrections officers that are making the conditions for the prisoners even more difficult. The budget cuts have hit all areas of the prison—the food is worse, there are less social workers to assist prisoners, GED classes have been eliminated and medical care has been slashed.

El Diario, a Spanish-language paper in New York, reported that a spokesperson for la Neta, one of the Latino gangs inside the prison, gave them a list of the prisoners' demands. The demands include better food and medical care, reinstatement of GED classes, an increase in the number of social workers to pre-budget cut levels and the transfer of abusive guards who harass prisoners and their visitors. The prisoners say that if their demands are not met by November 21, they plan to extend the protest throughout Riker's. Family members and friends of the prisoners are also planning to build up their protests outside the prison entrance.

Mayor Giuliani has proposed an additional \$31 million in budget cuts. They include proposals to eliminate Riker's 900-bed drug treatment program, the grievance investigation unit and the nine-member independent board that monitors prison conditions, and the use of video cameras to watch prisoners in some cells. There is much infighting within the ruling class over these cuts, and there are bourgeois forces who are opposed to Giuliani's plan—not because they care about prisoners' rights, but because they are afraid that such drastic cuts will lead to prison uprisings. The media coverage has focused on these differences—while virtually ignoring the inhumane conditions for the prisoners.

Under Giuliani's program of locking up many more poor people for so-called "quality of life" crimes, the number of prisoners in the city's jails is mushrooming. According to the *New York Times*, there are 19,448 prisoners now in the city's prisons compared to 18,772 a year ago—and that number is expected to rise to 25,000 by the spring. Most of these prisoners will be held at Riker's. A large portion of the prisoners in Riker's have not been convicted of a crime but are being held while they await trial.

The *RW* spoke with several Latina/o youths who have relatives inside Riker's. They said that two Latino gangs, the Latin Kings and la Neta, started the protests but that prisoners of other nationalities have

Correction

In last week's issue, the headline for the article on the Chicago protest against public housing lockdowns and police sweep was not accurate about the number of people involved in the march. As we reported in the article itself, at its height the march included 750 to 1,000 people in the streets. Organizers estimated that more than 2,000 had participated in various forms during the five-mile march around the Robert Taylor Homes.



Relatives of prisoners at the police barricades outside Rikers Island.

joined in. According to the youth, the prisoners are not receiving regular meals—and when they do eat, they are only given white rice, white bread and water. One sister described how her friend "sat down in front of the food, and the guards told him to get up a minute later. He couldn't even taste the food, and they told him to throw it out. He said, 'No I want to eat at least some of my food,' They said, 'No, you better get the fuck up and throw out that food.'"

One youth talked about how the guards are messing with prisoners even more than before: "The prisoners' commissary money has been taken away by the guards. Some prisoners have been put in trailers without heat. They've been sending them out to the

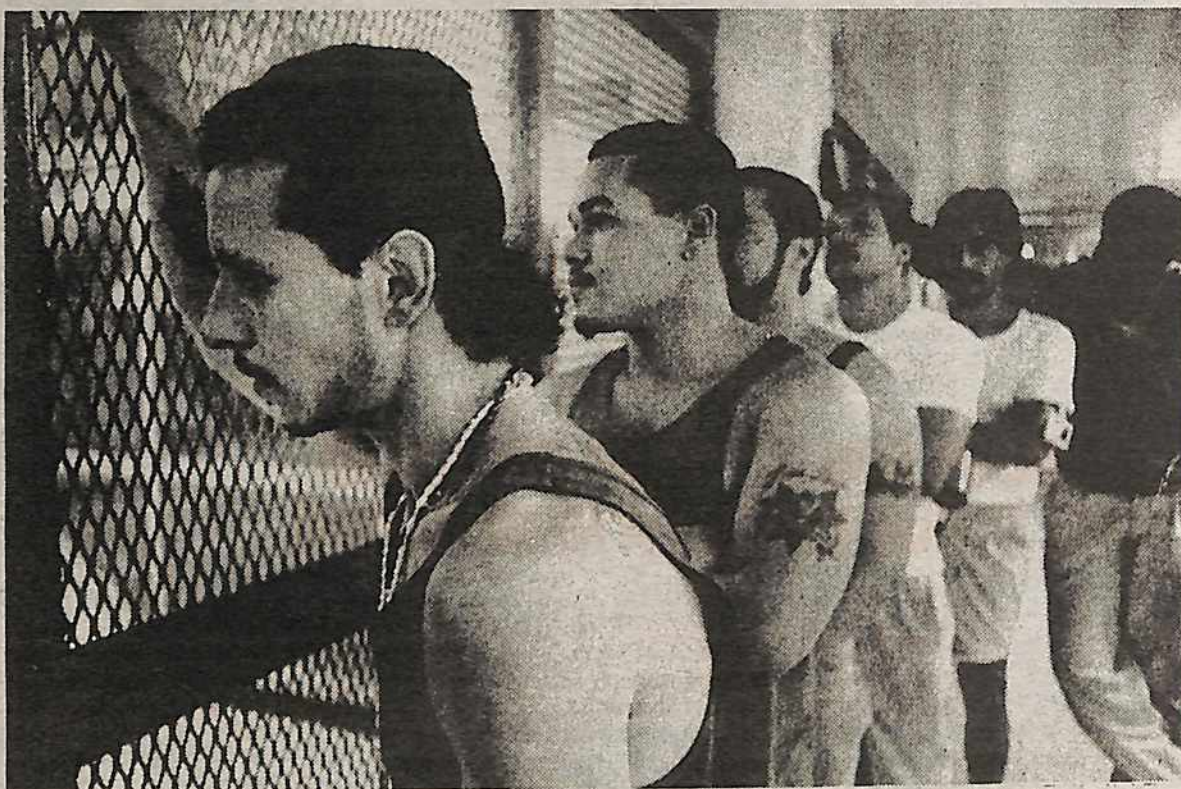
yard at 4, 5 o'clock in the morning. Then 5 o'clock is when they eat breakfast, when they can go outside and also if they want to get a haircut. How are they going to do these things all at the same time? They're just messing with them. And then the rest of the day, they have to lay on the bed. They're going to cut phone and TV privileges. They already started to do it, because nobody has called me today."

The guards play on contradictions among prisoners to try and set them against each other. The prisoners have reported that guards smuggle weapons in to give to certain prisoners. One youth told us, "This guy I know, I visited him today, and he said that they [some other prisoners] almost cut

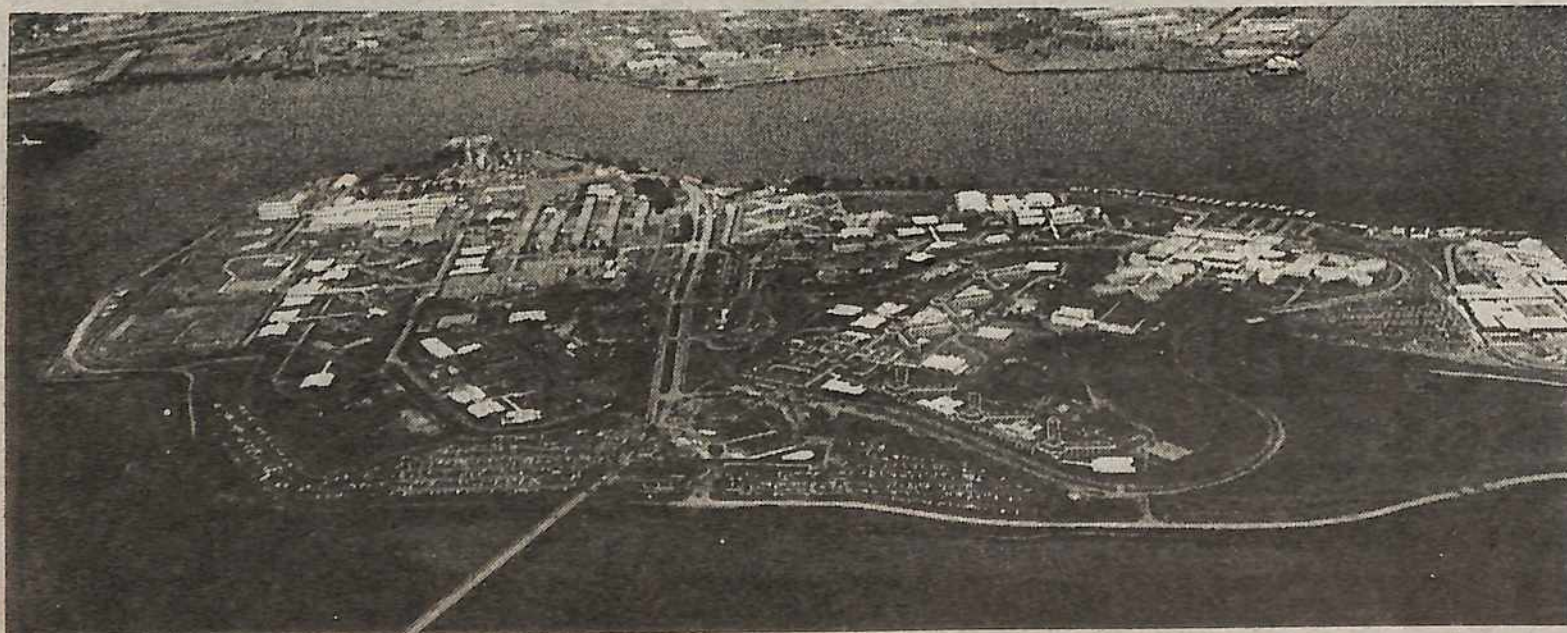
his throat and that they cut his friend's neck—but the cops didn't do nothing, and he had to take off his shirt and wrap it around the guy's neck or the guy was gonna die. The cops were not doing nothing. They don't care. They just want to see them in trouble."

The media talks about the "problems" the guards have dealing with the "violence" of the prisoners—while all but ignoring the guards' brutality against the prisoners. One youth said, "The officers in there are too violent with the inmates. They stabbed one inmate, and no one knows who it was. This was a week ago. And yesterday, four officers beat up an inmate so badly that he's in critical condition.... The officers are being so violent with them, you know, treating them like if they were animals." The authorities never bothered to call this man's family. His wife found out he was in the hospital after she arrived at Riker's for a visit.

The prisoners have been trying to get their message out. They have asked relatives and friends to contact the media. One Latina high school student told us: "I called all the channels. Channel 7 did not want nothing to do with it, because of the gangs and because they think they're violent. Channel 1 was there, but Channel 1 was only covering about the cops, and they didn't cover the man that was in critical condition. The *Daily News* pretended to be writing down what I said, and then they never called me back. They hear somebody young, so they might be thinking it's a joke or I'm lying, you know? They think that Black and Spanish people are garbage. That's why they [the prisoners] are in there. There's a lot of people in there and they hardly have not done nothing, and they giving them years. They're not telling the truth. They're not printing the truth." □



Rikers Island inmates.



The 687-acre Rikers Island prison complex.

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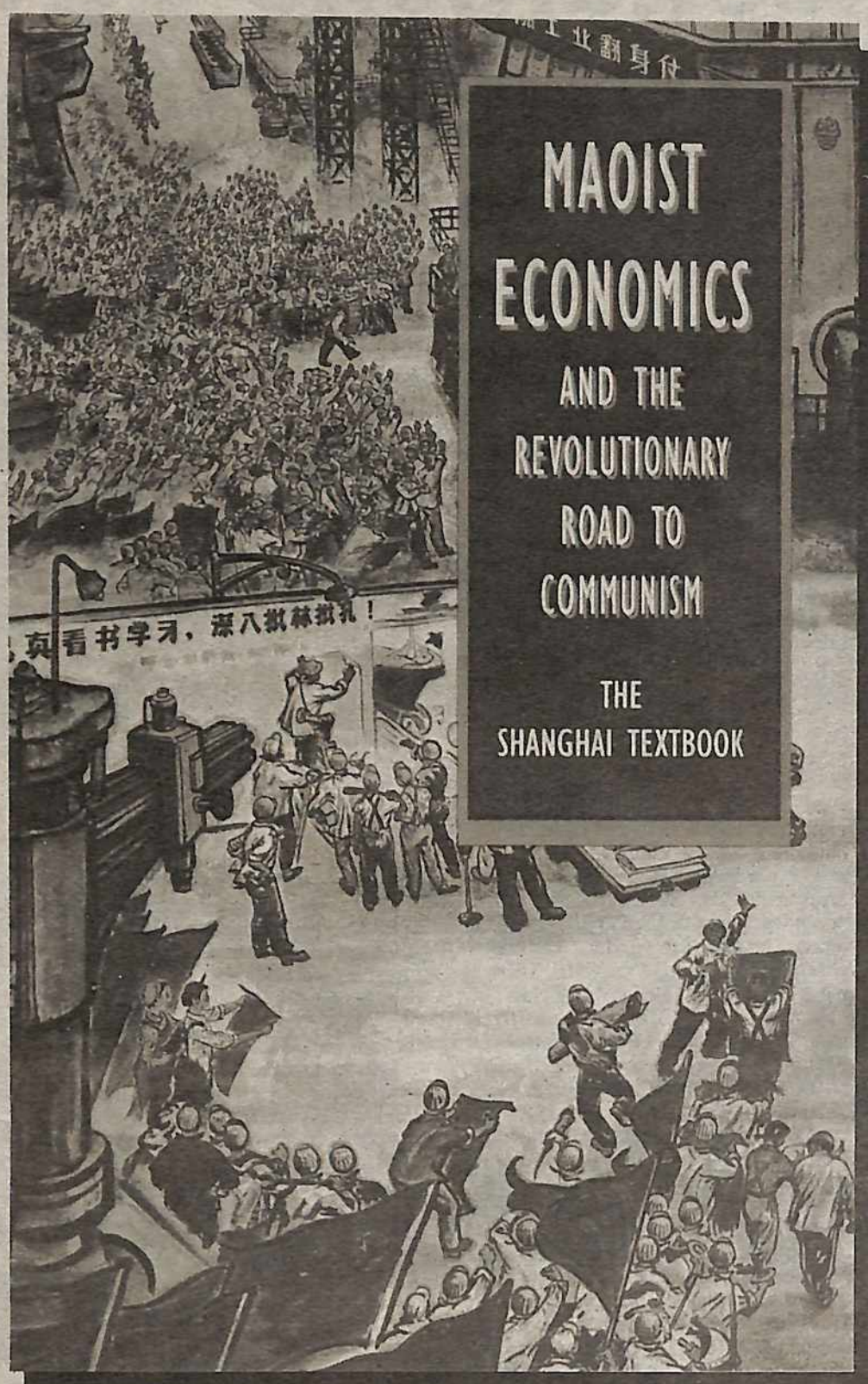
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