

Monthly Supplement

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A History of The Progressive Labor Party part 8

The San Francisco State Strike

Spurred forward by the militancy of the ghetto rebellions of 1967-1968, and bringing much of that militancy onto the campus, the San Francisco State Strike erupted on Nov. 6, 1968. Progressive Labor Party cadre played a decisive vanguard role in helping to develop and lead the strike to become the biggest, most militant, and longest struggle in the history of the U.S. student movement. The anti-racist strikers paralyzed the university and kept it from functioning for three months.

Background

The strike did not fall out of the sky on Nov. 6. It was the continuation and further development of the student movement at State which had been developing since the fall of 1966. This movement had been focused on racism and the imperialist war in Vietnam and the role of SFSC in supporting both of these crimes. Two major struggles marked the year prior to the strike: (1) During the fall of 1967, the editor of the Administration-controlled campus paper ran a series of racist articles and a "cartoon" attacking Muhammed Ali (who had just refused induction for Vietnam) and the newly-formed Black Students Union (BSU). When nine members of the BSU went to the Editor's office to protest these racist slurs, a fight broke out which resulted in the racist editor being taken to the hospital on a stretcher. The

nine black students were suspended by "ultra-liberal" President Summerskill and racist hysteria broke out on campus amongst white students. PLP and Worker Student Alliance (WSA) forces in SDS, together with the BSU, staged a militant demonstration in the Administration building demanding that the racist articles be suspended and the 9 black students reinstated. About 150 anti-racist students participated in this action, while 800-1,000 stood outside in support of the administration yelling racist epithets at us. The Administration also had some racist supporters inside the ranks of the movement in the person of the "RYM" faction of SDS and the Trotskyite YSA," both of which argued against the demonstration (they were defeated at the general meeting the night before) and then attempted unsuccessfully to sabotage the action the next day.

(2) During the spring of 1968 PLP and SDS continued the anti-racist struggle and linked it to the war. This effort culminated in late May with a sit-in occupation of the Administration building led by SDS, PLP and the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) demanding preferential admissions of minority students, re-hiring of a Chicano professor who was being fired, and removal of the AFROTC training program. The sit-in lasted 5 days and involved 800-1,000 students with 25 being arrested. Two of the demands were won and another was partially

granted. Mass struggle was exposing President Summerskill's "liberal" cover and his "resignation" was "accepted" by the Board of Trustees at the end of the sit-in.

Issues of the Strike

The main issue of the strike was racism, specifically the racist nature and policies of the university. The main demands were:

* 1) Preferential admissions for all minority students who apply to SFSC. Increased financial aid for these students, including dormitory housing if needed.

* 2) Retain English instructor George Murray for the 1968-69 academic year. Murray was a black teacher being fired for a campus rally speech in which he called for "armed self-defense against the racist police forces" after the cops had murdered a 17-year-old black youth in Oakland.

* 3) Creation of a School of Ethnic Studies with a Black Studies Department, Chicano Studies Department, Asian Studies, etc. All administrators brought in to deal with these Departments were to be of minority background.

* 4) Immediate preferential hiring of 50 full-time minority faculty.

* 5) That Helen Bedesom, notoriously racist Director of Financial Aid with a history of

(continued inside)



Massed students brave the cops during the 1969 strike at San Francisco State College.



harassing and insulting minority students, be fired and a minority person be hired to replace her.

* 6) That Nathan Hare, who was in charge of all Black Studies courses, receive salary commensurate with other Department chairmen.

* 7) Once the strike was on, amnesty for the strikers and removal of the police forces from the campus became an added demand.

The demands for preferential admissions, preferential hiring of minority faculty, to block the racist firing of Murray and to kick out the racist Bedesom were important anti-racist reforms which were in conflict with the racist policies of the university. Thus the primary aspect of the strike demands was progressive and anti-racist. The demand for preferential admissions was sparked by the blatantly racist admission policies of the university Administration: Over 70% of the students in San Francisco's Public schools were black, Latin or Asian; yet less than 4% of the student body at S.F. State was non-white. The same racist policies prevailed in regard to hiring of faculty: vicious racists like Bedesom were protected and anti-racist faculty like Murray and others were fired.

From the early days of the strike, the PLP made a clear (and public) class analysis of the demands for minority administrators and Ethnic Studies. PLP pointed out that the job of all administrators is to carry out policies in the interest of the Board of Trustees and the rest of the ruling class. This was borne out in practice as the half dozen minority administrators at State first tried to prevent the strike and then tried to sabotage it. In contrast to the administrators, most minority faculty joined and supported the strike. PLP also pointed out that the demand for Ethnic Studies did not deal with the CLASS CONTENT of the education students were to receive: a sharp anti-racist, pro-working class outlook or a nationalist, pro-ruling class outlook. The ruling class would not long oppose setting up Ethnic Studies Departments if they were confident these departments were to teach bourgeois ideology. Moreover, we made it clear that "student control" (part of the Ethnic Studies demand) was a sham, that the ruling class would control its universities as long as they held state power and that only a united, militant student movement could protect anti-racist teachers from firing. This was borne out in practice four weeks into the strike with Hayakawa offered to set up a Black Studies Department in exchange for dropping the other demands. And, though "student-faculty control" was granted in words, the fact it was a sham was exposed after the strike when Murray and two other militantly anti-racist black teachers were fired from the Department over the recommendation of the student-faculty committee. Our analysis of these two demands did not prevent PLP from fighting to win on the rest of the demands of the strike.

Strike Preparations Begin

The Strike Committee began calling its first mass meetings two days before the strike started. These meetings were marked by sharp political struggle, the outcome of which was crucial to the development of the strike. Specifically, there were four major right-wing and racist positions advanced by the RYM faction of SDS and their Trotskyite supporters:

* 1) "The main issue is not really racism but 'due process' and 'campus autonomy.'" The RYM was tailing the faculty Academic Senate on this one. The Academic Senate had denounced the Board of Trustees' racist firing of Murray because they were just about to take similar action themselves! PLP sharply pointed out that "autonomous racism is still racism."

* 2) "Picket lines and mass organizing for a strike is a drag; we should set up our own 'radical' counter-institution off campus." This would have been a life-saver for the ruling class. The Board of Trustees would have been overjoyed to have the radical anti-racist students go do their own thing off campus, isolated from the rest of the student body and leaving the racist policies of the university unchallenged. When the "counter-institution" position of the RYM had won out at Columbia the previous spring, the struggle quickly collapsed.

* 3) "White students can't relate to racism. We need to add some white (sic!) demands." Here was the racism of the RSM and the Trots laid bare! PLP exposed this racist position and showed how racism was a key prop of the ruling class that affects all oppressed people, including white students; and that all students must unite against the racist anti-working class nature of the university.

* 4) As the logical culmination of these positions the RYM-Trot group proposed that white strikers should have veto power over the tactics and strategy of the minority students! These racist revisionists were scared to death of the militancy of minority students. Thus they attempted to set up an internal brake on the militancy of the strike.

The PLP struggled sharply and clearly against these racist positions and, after considerable discussion and some fierce debate, they were defeated. Many students at the strike meetings had participated in the "Gator suspensions" struggle and the Sit-In and thus were better prepared to reject the racism of the RYM and Trots by the time of the strike.

Taking care of a racist scab.



This article on the 1969 strike at San Francisco State will be continued next week in CHALLENGE.

"profess

[Progressive Labor Party in Minnesota anti-nazi classic. Afterward we discuss

When it first appeared in 1938, the expensive merchandise of the movie above the ordinary level." (Franz Ho

But although it drew high praise when find it on the late night movie. That's *Masses*, a leftist magazine of the Thi

distinction between propaganda and a Secondly, the film portrays worker

racism. And the parallel to America, I

The film centers on Professor Mam political activities that involve his c

communists work to oust the nazis f beginning of the movie.) Unfortunately which the film criticizes.

The Reichstag is burned and the naz escape to the underground. Professor surgeon's gown. Later, after coming speech, but is machine-gunned down

The effects of racism on "Aryan" wo and food, as the nazis spend money on workers infants and children starve

The communists' failure to fight for home to roost. The communists in t attempt to isolate them from the mass

Nevertheless, as *New Masses* stated but it is not a defeatist picture." By

fascism. The audience is left wanting made in 1939, when the strength of the masses.

One drawback of the movie is that liberal petty-bourgeoisie. But whether betrayed by our leaders) Democrats

condition. The communists, on the ot their ties with the noncommunist mas

After showing the movie, we discuss relevant to today. The spread of raci obvious parallel to the movie. We agr and not just in words. And we agree

two things are not done, we decided working class of 1933.

This film won't be shown by the boss it deserves.

The Godfather pa

The *Godfather Part II*, starring Al Pacino hour sequel to *The Godfather*. It is a long movie which even in the bourgeois sense of can be rated as lousy.

THIS MOVIE IS INCOHERENT AND acting stinks. It is a cheap Hollywood trick to the money success of the first *Godfather* (w as well expect a Son of the *Godfather's* something like that). CHALLENGE-DE wouldn't recommend seeing this movie aspect.

But, this paper is not interested in review movie from the point of view of their bo values, we have to see it from a political view. The movie does show the corruption Mafia and how they control politicians an some businesses (we might as well add t bosses of this country make the Mafia lo Mickey Mouse in all their crimes against s but we don't have to go to a movie to see w facts us every day in our lives.

One thing that the movie shows is the cor that capitalism breeds. A good example v situation in Cuba before Batista got kicked shows how U.S. imperialism brings mise corruption to wherever it goes.

AS A MATTER OF FACT THE MO very interesting for what it doesn't say. Para the producer of this movie, is owned by the G Western conglomerate which is owned Rockefeller clan. Gulf and Western happens 90 companies in the Dominican Republic, wh Cuban scenes of *The Godfather Part II* were Gulf and Western happens to be the big perialist boss in that country. It so happens the corruptions showed in the movie in rela Batista's Cuba can be multiplied many ti relation to the U.S. puppet government of Balaguer in the Dominican Republic. Unempl is over 40 per cent down there; killing of v and revolutionaries is a common occurrence