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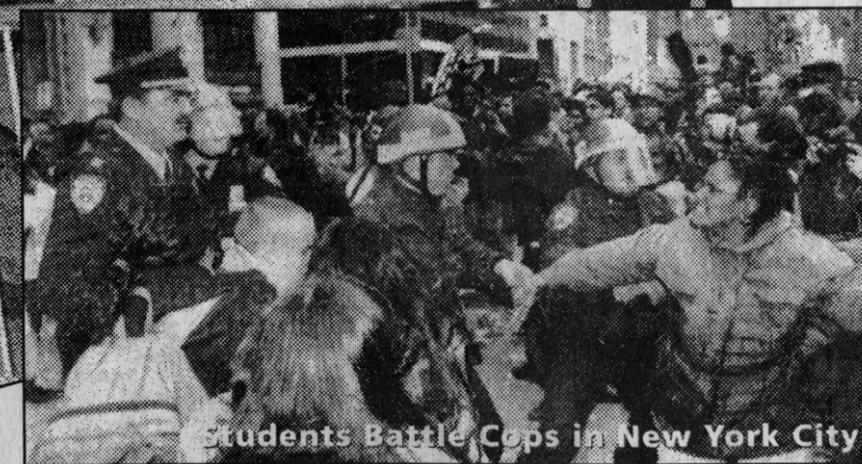
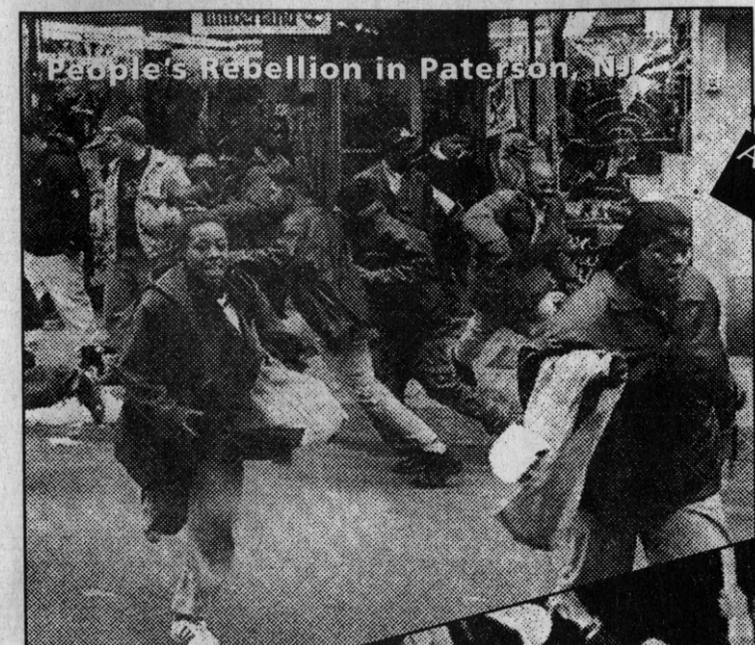
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New York Budget Cuts Spark Militant Mass Movement

BY CHRISTOPHER DAY

On February 27, 8,000 students, mainly from the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY), attended a rally organized by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) at the New York state capitol in Albany against dramatic proposed cuts in the state budget for higher education. The NYPIRG rally was organized to coincide with a day of student lobbying of state legislators. But many of the students gathered in Albany were in no mood to beg politicians for what they consider a basic right. Growing impatient with an endless array of speakers emphasizing the importance of registering to vote and writing to our legislators, groups of students organized an impromptu march that managed to capture the whole crowd. After marching up and down a long mall the students started to march past the state capitol building which was guarded by no more than a dozen cops on horseback. Students waving the flag of the Dominican Republic were the first up the stairs of the capitol building. For a moment the crowd hesitated and then proceeded up the stairs to the doors of the capitol. The NYPIRG organizers panicked and pleaded with the crowd to return to the rally site. It was too late. Several hundred students poured into the lobby of the capitol building chanting, among other things, "Revolution! Revolution!" before the NYPIRG organizers, working with the cops, managed to secure the doors and prevent the rest of the students from getting in. The rest of the crowd

then marched several blocks to the administrative headquarters of SUNY where the police were better prepared. After several unsuccessful attempts the crowd managed to push through the police and get into the SUNY building, where they remained for about twenty minutes. The demonstration obtained only local Albany coverage in the capitalist media.

While the students were not prepared to transform these spontaneous actions into effective occupations, their insurgent spirit was an indicator that the movement against the budget cuts was going to be militant. This pattern was to repeat itself several times, with the rank and file of the student movement breaking through the boundaries established by their self-appointed leaders.

OPENING MOVES

Several days later on March 1, 20,000 hospital workers organized by 1199 (eleven-ninety-nine), the hospital workers union, marched from the Empire State Building to Bellevue Hospital in opposition to proposed cuts in Medicaid and hospital funding. Over the next several weeks the movement began to turn up the heat. When recently-elected Governor George Pataki came to speak in a New York City hotel his path was blocked by AIDS activists and students. On March 15, speak-outs were organized by faculty at many CUNY schools. At Hunter, a CUNY college, a speak-out turned into a confrontation with the police after theater

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A scene from March 23.

Québécois Left Fights Class War

BY NICK PHEBUS

January 25 saw one of the biggest student mobilizations in the history of Canada. More than 80,000 students coast to coast have shown, in a militant fashion, their opposition to the Canadian government's proposed reform of social programs. All in all 80 campuses were on strike across Canada, the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) estimates that more than 70,000 people took to the streets that day and over 10,000 were on picket lines on different campuses. In Montréal alone, more than

12,000 people took to the streets in a giant demonstration. This was the culmination of a mobilization of almost all Canadian social forces against a government that wants to deepen the poverty of marginalized people.

The spark for this struggle was a series of propositions to "reform" the social "safety net" announced on Oct. 5, 1994, by the Liberal federal government. They want to make deep cuts in welfare, unemployment insurance and post-secondary education. These proposals were the culmination of a decade during which

both the Liberal Party, in power most of that time at the federal level, and the Tories, also in power during that time, have adopted a neoliberal approach. Slowly but surely, they have used propaganda to put into the minds of the masses the idea that the people benefiting from social programs are parasites and thieves. They also began to create a general climate of panic about the national debt and used this argument as an excuse to attack the poor, who supposedly cost a lot of money. They slowly dismantled those programs.

For example, since 1992 the amount paid by unemployment insurance has been reduced from 60 to 55 percent of the average paycheck. The number of people eligible has been cut by 102,000, and the duration of benefits has been reduced. The government has also attacked welfare recipients through a law requiring those who are able to work to accept any program the government offers, or have their checks cut. At the

same time, the government gave more and more money to the rich through subsidies and tax deductions, not to mention "under the table" rewards.

The response to these attacks was minimal, in part because the once-militant union movement has accepted the ideology that the workers and the boss have the same interests. Since the mid-1980s, union militancy has been falling. In Québec, for example, during the 1970s and 1980s, the average number of strikes each year was 243. But in 1992 there were only 159, and in 1994 only 133.

These years of setbacks have been the prelude to the general attack that we face now, and to the social movement that began a fight against the federal government in October, 1994. My focus in this article will be on Québec, so we should know something about the left organizations here; especially in Montréal.

THE QUÉBEC STUDENT MOVEMENT

From 1975 to the early '90s, the student left was dominated by one militant orga-

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Fifteen thousand took the streets in Montréal during the Jan. 25 general strike.

People's Rebellion in Paterson, New Jersey

BY PAC

Paterson made national news from Wednesday, Feb. 22 until Sunday the 26th. The news began when a rookie narcotics cop, Ronald Cohen, shot 16-year-old Lawrence Meyers in the back of the head on the evening of Monday, Feb. 20. Meyers was under narcotics surveillance when he was approached. He ran, and Cohen, with his gun drawn, chased him to a fence. Eyewitnesses state that when Cohen could not get Meyers off the fence, he shot him in the back of the head. Meyers was unarmed.

When the story broke in Tuesday's paper, Meyers was listed in critical condition and on life support. Officials reported on Wednesday that Meyers had died. This sparked a march to City Hall, almost entirely composed of Black youth.

Several self-proclaimed Black leaders of the city spoke, asking all to remain calm and to wait for a police investigation. They were all booed. The masses were out to get their own justice.

Cops were initially held back, but eventually were let loose upon the crowd of 300-400. Street fighting followed, both cops and demonstrators were knocked to

the ground, and the rebellion began. Members of the angry crowd smashed store windows and threw bottles at the police and city hall. After several minutes, people left the City Hall/downtown area and police shut the streets to traffic.

During these events, members of the Paterson Anarchist Collective (PAC) distributed hundreds of "No Police State" leaflets and copies of *Plain Words/Copwatch* to a crowd in search of direction. Later that night, PAC members monitored police radio to discover that cops around the city were being attacked. Sniper fire, rocks, and bottles were aimed at police throughout the night. In the meantime, on Wednesday, when television news reported the uprising and that Meyers was "clinically" dead, the Lower East Side Class War Organizer (LESCWO) had responded immediately to the crisis situation and remained in Paterson through the entire rebellion. PAC began to organize literature to distribute the next day. Late Wednesday night an emergency one-page issue of *Copwatch* was produced along with a flier urging Paterson to rise up

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Reflections on Kent State

BY MEG STARR

This May marks the 25th anniversary of the Kent State massacre, when four white students were killed and six others were wounded by the Ohio National Guard during an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University. During May 1970, over one hundred people were killed and wounded in US demonstrations—protesting the invasion of Cambodia and issues of domestic racism. In other murderous attacks, two students were killed at Jackson State (an all-Black college), also rallying against

the war. Nine African-Americans were killed in Augusta, Georgia, and 11 Chicano-Mexicano students were attacked with bayonets at the University of New Mexico.

Kent State has gained its legendary importance because it marked the first time that the white mass part of the student movement suffered deliberate fatalities at the hands of the white ruling class. It was preceded by years of murderous attacks on both the civil rights movement and the Black power movement.

Kent State University in Ohio was a large state school with a high percentage of working

class students. In 1965, the Kent State Committee to End the War was started. By 1968, Kent had a very militant, anti-imperialist chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In the fall of 1968, Kent SDS joined the Black United Student Organization in occupying the administration building, calling for an end to police recruiting on campus. In the aftermath of that demonstration, when the administration threatened to press charges against the occupation organizers, all 500 of the university's Black students walked off campus and the charges were dropped.



National guardsmen fire tear gas at Kent State University students on May 4, 1970.

CUNY

(Continued from page 1)

students in a mock funeral procession were followed by about 100 students into the street where they were attacked without warning by the police. Eight students were brutally arrested. On March 16, about 3,000 students organized by the CUNY University Student Senate (USS) marched from the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) to the World Trade Center.

STUDENT STRIKE ROCKS NEW YORK

On March 23, 30,000 students turned out for a demonstration organized by the CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts with the explicit aim to "Shut the City Down." Only about 20,000 were able to get to the rally area around City Hall. The rest were prevented from getting to the rally by the police and clogged the streets surrounding the rally. The crowd included thousands of the 14,000 High School students who walked out of classes that day. When the students at City Hall attempted to get through the police barricades and into the street in order to march on Wall Street they were met with horses, mace and billy-clubs. Seventy-five students were arrested and many more were maced or otherwise injured. Reporters and photographers were also caught up in the police riot. Eventually the repeated attacks by the police broke down the determination of the crowd, which gradually dispersed. Several thousand students regrouped at BMCC nearby and several hundred organized a march to 1 Police Plaza, police headquarters, where the people arrested earlier were being held. Later that evening Police Commissioner Bratton attempted to speak at a previously scheduled event at Hunter College. Students disrupted the event by shouting Bratton down with accusations about police brutality at the demonstration. After one of the students was thrown out of the room a crowd of students gathered outside and chanted loudly throughout the event. As Bratton left he was pursued by an angry crowd of students chanting "Cops Off Campus! Run Bratton Run!"

The news blackout on the movement against the budget cuts was finally broken. The March 23 demonstration got front page coverage in every English and Spanish language daily in New York in addition to extensive national and international coverage.

LIBERAL HUCKSTERS STIR

The March 23 demonstration seriously shook the power structure by announcing the existence of an autonomous working-class student movement outside the control of any of the traditional "progressive" forces of New York City politics. The CUNY Coalition refused to let any politicians speak from the stage. Ruth Messinger, the liberal Democratic Manhattan Borough President, was told to get off the stage. The response to the March 23 demonstration was immediate. The "left-wing" of the Democratic Party, in the form of the Rev. Al Sharpton and 1199 President (and vice-president of the New York State Democratic Party) Denis Rivera, called for a march from City Hall to Wall Street on April 4.

The April 4 demonstration had many lessons to offer the new student movement. Rivera and Sharpton promised the CUNY Coalition that they would be "equal partners" in organizing the demonstration. They were everything but. About 5,000 people, mainly students, turned out for the demonstration. 1199 did not mobilize its own membership in anything like the significant numbers they turned out for March 1. 1199 overrode the CUNY Coalition on several important issues from who would get to speak to how the marshals would respond to police provocations. At one point after several students had made uncompromisingly radical speeches, Denis Rivera took the microphone and threatened not to participate in the march if there were any more "provocative speeches." The crowd, including many 1199 members, booed Rivera. Al Sharpton had to intercede to save his and Rivera's political fortunes. In an expert piece of demagoguery, Sharpton played the firebrand, riling the crowd up with chants of "No Justice, No Peace," and then turned around and announced that any "provocateurs" would be "handed over to the police." Those who were familiar with Sharpton's past as an FBI informant didn't

doubt his willingness to collaborate with the cops.

April 4 cost the movement some momentum but it also taught some important lessons about alliances with "progressive" Democrats. After April 4 the momentum returned to the individual campuses. At SUNY Binghamton, Governor Pataki's car was stoned by students as he attempted to visit his daughter who was participating in an event on campus. On April 11 about 20 students at the City College of New York (CCNY) in Harlem initiated a hunger strike in a 24-hour access building on campus. That night CCNY president Yolanda Moses called in the police to arrest the hunger strikers and their supporters when they refused to vacate the building at 11 p.m. In 1969 CCNY was the site of an occupation that led to open admissions at CUNY. Since then there has been a tradition of not bringing the cops on campus. Moses' decision to use mass arrests against a hunger strike outraged not only other CUNY students but also community activists in Harlem and Washington Heights. Only minor charges were brought against the 47 arrestees, but they were held in police custody overnight and the hunger strikers were denied any fluids in a blatant effort to break their resolve. The next morning the hunger strikers returned to CCNY, and by early evening they had been joined by several hundred supporters from the community, from other CUNY schools, and from Columbia and other private schools. That evening a decision was made to avoid arrests and to leave the building when ordered to. The crowd then marched in the rain for several hours in a spirited demonstration through Harlem. Answering an offer of sanctuary from Columbia students the crowd attempted to gain access to Columbia but were blocked at the main gate by police. The crowd then rushed a smaller gate and about half the people got in before the cops were able to close the gates and arrest three students. After a brief occupation of the lobby of a library the crowd decided to disperse. The next evening Gov. Pataki ventured into New York City, attempting to speak on Staten Island. He was met by an angry crowd of transit workers, school bus dri-

In 1968, the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago had a profound effect on the SDS chapter at Kent State, just as they did around the country. Due to confused politics about participation in the electoral process, national SDS had vacillated about protesting at the convention. When Robert Kennedy—the "peace candidate"—was killed, SDS agreed to join the Yippies, the Poor People's Campaign, and the Black Stone Rangers in the streets of Chicago. The brutality of the Chicago Police Department and Mayor Daly helped more white students understand that US social and political problems were systemic and not just about one evil president or party.

By spring 1969, SDS chapters had mushroomed to 304 around the country. At Kent State, 100 members religiously attended SDS meetings. For the Spring '69 offensive, in coalition with the Black United Student Organization, SDS and the movement at Kent had formulated four demands. Two were focused on racism, one was to end the war in Southeast Asia, and one was to get ROTC and military recruiters off campus. On April 4, when a demonstration took the demands to Kent's administration building, the doors were locked and demonstrators scuffled with police. The university charged the students with "felony incitement to riot" and the police department charged them with attacking police officers. Eventually, a deal was brokered in which only four student leaders of SDS served time. They each served six months.

In June 1969, as the early gay and women's movements were gathering strength, the Stonewall Rebellion erupted in New York. As the movement grew, however, National SDS broke up into several competing factions. Half of the students joined the Progressive Labor Party, which argued that the movement should focus on a traditional Marxist analysis and concentrate on organizing the working class. They ignored the Black Panther Party and other oppressed nationalities within the US, who argued that the US is a "prison house" of colonized peoples, as well as an imperialist power abroad. The other half of former SDS students went into the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) faction. This group believed in a strategy of reaching out to white working class youth, trying to align

vers threatening to strike, and students who successfully shouted him down.

BUDGET OF THE DAMNED

There are budget cuts and there are budget cuts. The state budget proposed by Gov. Pataki includes cuts so devastating in their impact that they could do nothing but spark massive resistance. The cuts include dramatic reductions in the budgets for AIDS, chemical dependency and other health programs, Medicaid and other forms of medical assistance, and particularly sharp cuts in higher education. The effects of the cuts on CUNY give a sense of the general character of this budget. Pataki's proposed budget calls for a 25%, or \$162 million, cut in funding for CUNY. To absorb these cuts he has proposed a \$1000 tuition increase. At the same time he is slashing financial aid. The effects of the cuts are already being felt. Staff and adjuncts have already been laid off at some schools, library hours have been reduced and early registration has been canceled. It is estimated that by the Fall 10% of CUNY students will be unable to return to school and 20% of classes will be cut as a result of this budget.

CUNY has traditionally been the escape from lives of poverty and misery for hundreds of thousands of poor and working-class New Yorkers. Until 1969, when open admissions was won CUNY was almost all white and tuition was free. By 1976 CUNY was predominantly Black, Latino and Asian, and for the first time tuition fees were charged. Since then there has been an almost unrelenting attack on CUNY. Each budget proposal is accompanied by a vicious campaign to demonize CUNY students as undeserving of higher education. Pataki's budget proposal is in effect an effort to destroy CUNY as a serious university offering a broad liberal education to working-class youth.

One of the astounding things about Pataki's budget, however, is that it is visiting similar cuts on the more white and middle class upstate SUNY schools. Because of inequalities in how CUNY and SUNY are funded, and because of the relatively more privileged position of SUNY students, SUNY will be able to absorb the cuts more easily than CUNY. But the cuts

them with the Black liberation movement and with other movements of oppressed and colonized peoples around the world. RYM believed in militant direct action.

By the Fall of 1969, RYM had further divided and one RYM sub-group formed the Weathermen. Student meetings with the Vietnamese and student work with the Black Panthers helped persuade Weathermen and the other factions of RYM that they should organize off-campus and bring the revolutionary movement into other sectors of society. During September 1969, the Chicago Eight were on trial for the demonstrations at the Democratic Convention. Weathermen called for a new set of national actions in Chicago, later known as the Days of Rage, to take place at the beginning of the trial. Though only 500 people were involved, which was a big blow to Weather, the tactics used in Chicago were repeated by other groups in many other activities later that spring. The demonstrators fought the police with helmets on, in organized affinity groups. There was one day of women-only actions, which marked a new stage in Weather's development of a position on "liberation through participation" regarding women.

While none of the ex-SDS activists concentrated much attention on the campuses in the fall, a new and somewhat spontaneous series of organizers and groups continued the movement that SDS had helped to generate. At Kent State, ex-SDSers who were first-years and sophomores (among them a student named Allison Krause), organized for the Washington Demonstration Against the War in November. Over half-a-million people attended, making it the largest anti-war demonstration of the decade. Over four hundred people were arrested. Weathermen helped younger students organize for the actions.

On December 4, 1969, Mark Clark and Fred Hampton—two Black Panther organizers in their twenties—were murdered while they slept by the FBI and the Chicago police. At around that same time, part of the Weathermen went underground. Their decision was motivated by a desire to help form a "second front" in support of the Vietnamese and the Black Panther Party. They planned to use the power and freedom that comes with clandestinity to pursue armed propaganda actions and radical organizing. Black Liberation Army chapters

directed at SUNY and at Medicaid have created a broad working- and middle-class alliance against the cuts that has put the cuts in serious jeopardy and Pataki on the political defensive.

...OR DOES IT EXPLODE

For the majority of CUNY students, going to college is an enormous struggle. Few CUNY students can count on significant financial support from their parents. The vast majority of CUNY students hold down at least one job. Many have children or other family members to take care of. Many are the first in their families to ever attend college. For these students, for their families, and for their communities, a CUNY education represents their deepest hopes and aspirations. The proposed budget cuts are a direct assault on these dreams and aspirations. For every one of the 200,000 students in CUNY there are at least ten more people watching to see what will happen. Every CUNY student forced out of school by these budget cuts represents younger sisters and brothers or friends on the block who will give up hope and numb their despair with drugs. The budget cuts are quite simply a matter of life and death for the communities affected.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER COMES HOME

One of the main battles within the anti-budget cut movement has been over where the budget cuts are coming from. Liberal groups ranging from NYPIRG to 1199 have emphasized the mean-spiritedness of the cuts and have focused their attacks on the Republican politicians in Albany. Over and over one hears from these quarters the refrain that the politicians don't know what the cuts will do to the people who will be affected by them and that the purpose of the movement is to let them know. In contrast to this, the CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts took a somewhat more explicitly anti-capitalist position that the cuts are part of the general process of capitalist restructuring taking place around the world and that the real power behind the budget cuts is on Wall Street, not in Albany. But even in the CUNY Coalition there is a lack of clarity.

were already forming in many areas, as ex-Black Panthers responded to repression and to political escalation.

On April 29, 1970, Nixon announced his intention to invade Cambodia. Suddenly, the student movement, in its most spontaneous and mass form, erupted. Howie Emmer, one of the SDS/Weathermen leaders at Kent, later recalled that "it was as if everything SDS had been saying for six years—that the war wasn't just a mistake, that it was part of ongoing US imperialism—had finally clicked for people."

Emmer was one of the four students who had been jailed for the previous April's actions, and coincidentally he was released from jail later that same day. Along with the other three released student leaders, however, he was permanently banned from Kent State's campus.

The newly revitalized student movement continued to grow in numbers and militancy. On May 1, the Kent State ROTC building was burned to the ground, becoming one of 30 ROTC centers throughout the country to be burned down during the month of May 1970. There were two nights of organized rioting in the town, during which only banks and police cars were damaged. The atmosphere in Ohio was very tense, and the realities of state repression loomed. The governor called out the National Guard, placing them on the college campuses. He announced that the four student leaders just released from jail were communists and criminals, and that they were the ones behind all the trouble.

The typical FBI-devised rhetoric helped isolate and criminalize the entire student movement. The students on campus who had planned a peaceful May 4 demonstration had their permit denied. But intransigence was the tone of the times—from the Vietnamese, quietly tunneling their way to victory under American propped-up Saigon, to the Black Panthers, providing breakfast programs and self-defense patrols in their own neighborhoods. The ad-hoc Kent Demonstration Committee rallied without a permit. When warned by the police, they refused to move. The National Guard opened fire on the unarmed demonstrators, killing four.

Whether the Guard was trying to kill the demonstration's leaders or not isn't clear. With the exception of Allison Krause, who

had been a member of SDS, the other students who were killed had not been very actively involved. The names of Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, and Bill Schroeder may not have been significant to the movement before May 4, 1970, but they live on today as symbols of the possibility of white resistance and the consequences of rebelling against a repressive state.

Rage at the Jackson, Kent State, and Augusta massacres intensified resistance during May. At Hunter College in New York City, a Third World Coalition blocked three doors of the college on May 12 to protest the college's lack of response to the deaths in Augusta. The Mississippi United Front for Self-Defense, a coalition of African-American student and anti-poverty groups, called for armed self-defense. From coast to coast, thousands of students blocked highways and fought the police. Howie Emmer remembered: "I was saddened by the deaths at Kent State, because I'd been there and it felt very close and personal. But I was heartened by the enormous response of the students around the country, who did not back down."

In the short run, the white movement did become more militant. However, organizers of that time also believe that Kent State eventually became an obstacle for the movement. Alan Berkman, a Weather activist from Columbia University, suggested that "the state drew a line in the sand, past which white supremacy wouldn't protect activists. After that spring, for many reasons—Kent State included, the movement spiraled down."

In the early 1970s, the white student movement—along with all the other important US-based movements—began to fall apart. US involvement in the war in Southeast Asia was "officially" over in 1973. For many white students, the war was their major issue, and on-going change of the society had played a secondary role. At the same time, Nixon poured a huge amount of money into local red squads and the FBI Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to destroy the movements which tried to continue the struggle. The FBI viciously attacked and killed Black Power, American Indian Movement, Mexican, and Puerto Rican leaders. Brainwashing campaigns were directed at every weakness in the movement's ideological

unity. FBI agents exploited the racism which existed in the white student and white women's movements. They used the sexism that existed among all male radicals, as well as everyone's paranoia and sectarianism, to split groups and coalitions apart.

At the same time, "liberal" individuals and programs sponsored by the ruling class wooed the most conservative wing of the movement towards electoral politics and "enticing" reforms. This strategy, unsurprisingly, worked best among the white middle class sectors of the movement. A few white revolutionaries of the 1970s, who grew out of the Kent and student struggles, concentrated on developing new armed organizations. Though they were often arrogant, and misunderstood the importance of mass democratic work occurring simultaneously with revolutionary activity, they were able to build early underground groupings. By the 1980s, a small number of white radicals continued to experiment with more sophisticated clandestine formations. They were brutally repressed at an early stage of development, during a particularly non-revolutionary period of US history.

I think that—like the Zapatistas—we should reject the errors of our radical past: vanguardism, lack of democracy, and arrogance. At the same time, we must be able to unashamedly claim the experiences and ideologies that can inspire and inform our work today. Many of today's US political prisoners were revolutionary participants in the student movements of the 1960s. They are our primary resources in creating, remembering, and critiquing our own radical history that so many would prefer we forget. We must hold on to the history in which the murders of Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, and Bill Schroeder—along with the martyrs of Jackson State and Augusta, of the Panthers and all the others—are mourned and remembered on the streets. Only by remembering and honoring our collective histories, and those who helped to make them, will we stay true to our continued resistance.★

Meg Starr is a member of Resistance in Brooklyn (R 'n B), a small, Brooklyn, NY-based affinity group. She was a member of the Free Puerto Rico Committee, and now also works with Women's Health Action Mobilization (WHAM!).



March 23

Frequently, activists argue that the budget cuts in higher education will be bad for New York's economy because CUNY produces so many people who are trained to work in high-paying skilled professions, as if the ruling class has just made a big blunder in calculating the effects of the budget. In fact the budget cuts are perfectly rational from the point

of view of the rich. In the new global economy the high-paying jobs that supported the US's large middle class are being greatly reduced. At a time when the pool of high-paying jobs traditionally reserved for the white middle-class is shrinking, CUNY is producing thousands of Black, Latino and Asian competitors for those jobs. This undermines the ability of

the system to maintain a stable base of support in the white middle class. It is also producing raised expectations among an enormous layer of well-educated people of color that the system cannot deliver on. From the point of view of the rich, CUNY costs a lot of money and is

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Calendar

May 13
10-year anniversary of
the bombing of the
MOVE House by the state.
11 am-5 pm
1199C Union Hall
(Juniper & Locust Streets)
Philadelphia, PA
Info: (215) 387-9955

May 19
Malcolm X and Ho Chi Minh's Birthday

May 19-21
Arrowbear Anarchist Conference
A gathering in a small
mountain community two
hours drive east of Los Angeles.
Info: (310) 490-7284

June 2-4
Social Ecology and the Urban Alternative
The Annual Conference of
the Institute for Social Ecology
New York City
Info: (718) 963-4839
(718) 832-3609

June 15-26
Food Not Bombs International Gathering
and protest of the United Nations' use of
violence on behalf of transnational corporate greed
on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the UN.
San Francisco
Info: (800) 884-1136

June 25
Stonewall 26—Burn the City Down!
New York City



March 23

CUNY

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contributing vital materials to future social explosions. The budget cuts are, in effect, long-term riot control.

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKING PERMITS

The anti-budget cut movement is a very broad one and there are enormous contradictions between the various forces it has brought together. Perhaps the sharpest contradiction has arisen between the "left-wing" of the Democratic Party as represented by 1199 and the more autonomous CUNY Coalition. While 1199 has a membership of tens of thousands of working class people who will be directly affected by the cuts, the leadership of the union is in the hands of people who will be affected in a very different way, the cuts will undermine their claim to institutionalized power. By contrast, the CUNY Coalition, in spite of many failings, is honestly led by students who are not directly concerned with future political careers. The March 23 demonstration was more than an attack on the budget cuts. It was a challenge to the ability of the Democrats to keep opposition to the budget cuts within the bounds of protest-as-usual. The Democrats and the rest of institutionalized progressivism (the unions, churches, etc.) are in deep trouble. They have lost much of their traditional support among white workers to the right. Their one remaining claim to viability is their ability to rein in the unruly elements of the more despised sections of society. It is clear that on the whole the system is choosing to rely more heavily on repression (cops and prisons) than on the strategy of co-optation represented by the progressive Democrats. Demonstrations like the one on March 23 only reinforce the idea that the ungainly bureaucracies of institutionalized progres-

sivism are as ineffective and irrelevant as they are expensive.

The hastily organized April 4 demonstration was nothing more than a cynical attempt by politicians and bureaucrats to get out in front of a mass movement and then bring it back under control. The failure of the March 23 demonstration was our failure to break through police lines and march on Wall Street. The CUNY Coalition had deliberately decided not to get a permit for such a march in order to avoid working with the police in blunting the power of our own demonstration. Denis Rivera and Al Sharpton sought to capitalize on this failure by organizing a permitted march from City Hall to Wall Street. They succeeded in moving 5,000 people from point A to point B, but in so doing they sacrificed what made March 23 powerful even in its failure, the willingness of 30,000 people to show up to a demonstration with the explicit intention of shutting the city down to defeat the cuts.

THE CUNY COALITION

The CUNY Coalition was formally initiated at the start of the Spring semester by the president of student government at Bronx Community College, but most of the work to build the coalition appeared to be carried out by the International Socialist Organization (ISO), a Trotskyist group, working with the student government at the CUNY Graduate Center. While the ISO has large chapters at a number of private colleges in New York, the only CUNY campus where they have a significant presence is the CUNY Graduate Center. Initially, CUNY Coalition meetings were supposed to rotate from school to school, but because of the superior facilities offered by the Graduate Center the meetings became fixed there.

Both the ISO and the Graduate Center are considerably whiter in composition than the rest of CUNY. CUNY Coalition meetings have a majority of white students while the movements on the various campuses are overwhelmingly made up of people of color. In addition to the ISO and the Graduate Center a

number of other tiny Trotskyist groups representing almost no significant base on the campuses decided to make CUNY Coalition meetings a forum for airing their various party lines at great length. The net effect of all this was an atmosphere of distrust and poor communications between the largely white leadership of the Coalition and its largely Black, Latino and Asian bases on the campuses. This played itself out on March 23.

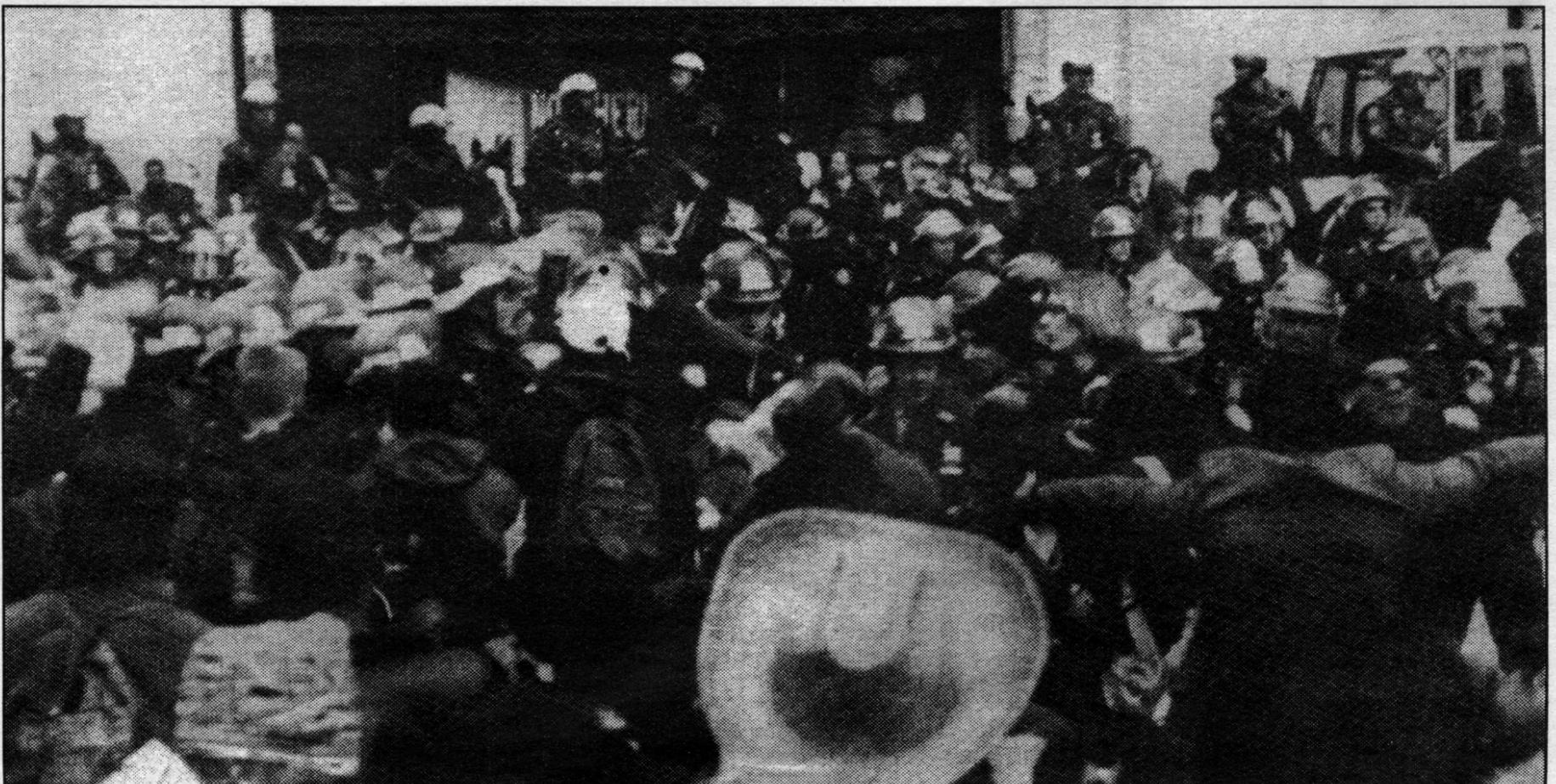
March 23 was the largest demonstration by youth of color in New York history. While the call for the demonstration emphasized our intention to shut the city down, the Trotskyists inflicted an interminable program of speakers, including every vaguely progressive union bureaucrat any of them had ever met, on a crowd eager to get into the streets. Security for the demonstration was organized independently by each school with a coordinating apparatus that never actually worked with the consequence that there was no effective stage security and everybody with a buddy over 175 pounds could get on the stage and demand a turn on the microphone and many did. After almost two hours of music, speeches and visible chaos on stage, the announcement was made that we were going to march to Wall Street. The problem, of course, was that there were several thousand cops gathered and ready to stop us. The bigger problem was that there wasn't the coordination within the crowd to break through the police lines. While some of the failure of coordination can be blamed on technical problems, the real failure was political. The lines of trust and communication between campuses had not been built up to the point that they could overcome the predictable technical and logistical screw-ups.

In spite of these weaknesses March 23 also demonstrated the incredible power represented by the CUNY Coalition in the fighting spirit displayed by thousands of students over the course of the demonstration. March 23 announced the existence of thousands of students, primarily students of color, who are prepared to do whatever it takes to defeat the budget cuts. If the CUNY Coalition failed to turn this potentiality into

an effective action to actually shut down the financial center of the world, it must be credited with making that potentiality clear to the students of CUNY and to the world.

THE BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

For the past several years we have witnessed the almost complete disintegration of any sort of radical oppositional politics in the US. The movement against the budget cuts in New York is a significant reversal of this trend. Also, events like the Los Angeles rebellion have demonstrated the existence of broad and deep contempt for the existing order and a willingness to take to the streets to challenge it. While it is still in its earliest and most vulnerable stages, we are right now witnessing the birth of a new movement. The anti-budget-cut movement is not a tired re-run of all the failed last stands of the old left of the '80s. It has successfully mobilized thousands of people who have never participated in any sort of politics before and their vitality is palpable. This spirit was expressed clearly the day after March 23 when students at Hunter College gathered to sum up the demonstration and to talk about where they wanted to go. While the room was filled with pacifists, militants, democratic socialists, anarchists, communists, nationalists, Christians, Muslims, and independent radicals, there was a profound feeling of unity. When it was suggested that everybody take a minute to say what it was that they stood for and wanted the group to stand for that unity was made clear. Although our commitment to defeating the cuts and defending CUNY had brought us together not one person mentioned either. All but two people spoke specifically of revolution. One Palestinian student said simply "I believe in love" and was met with loud applause. The right has overplayed its hand. Pataki's budget has given birth to a movement that will not be going away soon. He has compelled us to speak openly about our desire for a new society and the love of the people that motivates it. Nothing is more dangerous to the powers that be.★



March 23