

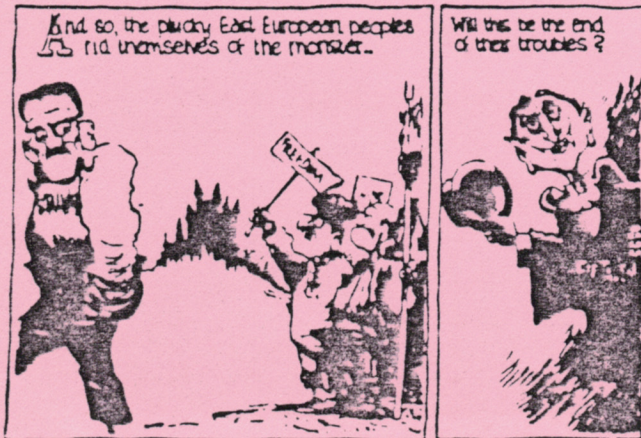
# AT THE CROSSROADS

While we celebrate the developing struggles in Eastern Europe, let's also keep in mind a few points:

- 1) The destruction of Stalinism is only a first step. Whether the new societies and economic systems that arise will be merely a reproduction of Western capitalism or a new kind of free, worker self-managed society will depend on the outcome of struggles which are only beginning.
- 2) Only working people organized in their own interests, allied with students, intellectuals, farmers, ecologists, feminists and other like-minded groups, can achieve truly free societies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Self-proclaimed leaders and aspiring rulers, like Walesa and co. in Poland, can only derail these movements into new forms of class rule.
- 3) Nationalism, ethnic and religious prejudice in Eastern Europe, as anywhere else, can only serve to weaken the struggles for freedom and put new masters in power. If the decline of Russian imperialism (which is hardly dead yet) is replaced merely by a group of little warring states, ready to be swallowed up by Western imperialism, then who has gained?
- 4) Any revolution that stops half-way, and leaves the basic structure of the old bureaucratic state in place, is as good as dead. If this were to happen in Eastern Europe, or if a new state bureaucracy were simply to replace the old one, it would be a tragedy parallel only to the tragedy of the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power away from the popular struggle and imposed their own dictatorship.

Now we don't mean to dampen anyone's enthusiasm for the movements going on in Eastern Europe today. But if these are societies at the crossroads, we must recognize both the possibilities and the risks. Knowing what we want means also knowing what we don't want.

For us in the Workers Solidarity Alliance, real freedom means a society without bosses, bureaucrats or rulers of any type. It means a society without classes or a state, without standing armies or false ideologies. Only a self-governed movement of working people, based on direct democracy and a fighting spirit, organized across political boundaries, can achieve this. If you agree, or just want to talk more about it, get in touch.



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# Free the Charleston 5

## Picketing Longshore Workers Face Felony Charges, Jail

For defending their jobs, five longshore workers -- members of ILA longshore Local 1422 and clerks and checkers Local 1771 in Charleston, South Carolina -- face possible imprisonment on state criminal charges. They and some 150 co-workers planned to picket a ship in their port that was using a non-union longshore crew when the state responded with a massive contingent of law enforcement officers and an altercation ensued. The five have been indicted for rioting, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. They could face trial as early as this February. The South Carolina AFL-CIO, with the help of the national AFL-CIO, has initiated an international campaign to defend them and their locals -- one of which, Local 1422, is overwhelmingly African American.

Besides the criminal charges, the stevedoring company that hired the scabs is suing the two Charleston locals, their presidents and 27 members for \$1.5 million in alleged losses it suffered because of the picket line disrupting work. The suit raises the issue of whether workers can be held financially responsible for industrial actions, and raises the specter of bankruptcy for the locals and these individual workers and their families.

The trouble began Oct. 1, 1999 when Nordana Lines notified the ILA locals it was ending its 23-year relationship with the union and would begin using non-union labor to work its ships. The local responded with picket lines. After peaceful pickets resulted in slight delays to two Nordana ships, the state of South Carolina -- which prides itself on being right-to-work state and advertises itself to investors as having the lowest rate of unionization in the country -- decided it was going to break the longshore union's power.

To protect the "right" of some 20 scabs to work the Nordana ship, Skodsborg, Jan. 20, the state sent in some 600 police in riot gear. Some rode on horses and others drove armored vehicles. Helicopters circled overhead and police patrol boats cruised the waterside of the terminal.

"You would think there was going to be a terrorist attack on the State of South Carolina," Ken Riley, president of Local 1422, said of the police presence.

The police marshalled at the terminal and, for extra provocation, in front of the union's hall about 150 yards away. The longshore workers stayed away from the terminal, letting the police stay out in the rain and cold by themselves and waste lots of taxpayer money. Late in the evening the workers reassembled at the hall and then went out toward the terminal to exercise their legal right to picket.

According to Riley, the police initiated the clash, pushing back the group of pickets. Trying to calm the situation, Riley and other union officers created a buffer between the police and the pickets. At that point one of the cops ran out of formation and clubbed Riley on the head. Then a fight began.

When it was over the police arrested eight longshore workers on charges of misdemeanor trespassing. At this point State Attorney General Charlie Condon rushed in, took the case away from local law enforcement officials, and raised the misdemeanor charges to felony rioting

charges. At a preliminary hearing a judge dismissed the felony charges for lack of evidence, but Condon then went to the Grand Jury and sought and obtained indictments against five of the defendants, on the same charges that had just been dismissed. Condon has made it clear that he intends to prosecute the workers vigorously and has said his plan for them includes "jail, jail and more jail."

At the same time WSI, the non-union stevedoring company that supplied the scab workers, sued Local 1422 and Ken Riley and Local 1771, the Charleston checkers and clerks local, and its president John Alvones for \$1.5 million in alleged financial losses.



# To the Anti-globalization movement:

Dear comrades, we are forwarding the following appeal to you. We hope that you will continue to support the fight of the Charleston 5 and the generalized struggle dockworkers throughout the world.

Syndicalists should contact WDN and Workers Solidarity Alliance member:

David Christain@ dckomatlcom.net@mindspring.com

To the Anti-globalization movement:

We would like to invite you to help plan and build actions in support of the Charleston 5 dockers in South Carolina. Four African-American dock workers, and one white dock worker, are facing years in prison on felony charges for defending themselves against state troopers who attacked their demonstration in January 2000. A nation-wide strike at the ports is being planned for the day that the Charleston 5 go to trial in September. Please get your community and workplace groups to endorse this letter and help shut down the ports.

This struggle brings together the fight against corporate power, state repression and racism. By standing together in solidarity and taking direct action to defend the dockers we can shut down the ports throughout the United States.

These are the facts: Five members of the predominately African American, International Longshoremen Association (ILA) in Charleston, South Carolina are facing serious felony charges arising out of a confrontation in January 2000 between union members and 600 heavily armed state troopers. The workers were demanding an end to the use of the non-union stevedoring outfit, Winyah, from unloading Nordana ships.

The state troopers' attack on the demonstration was a concerted plan by state and corporate officials to destroy a progressive social movement. The ILA in Charleston has opened up its' union hall to other mass, popular organizations and movements, from anti-racism to the environment. It supports the unionization of other workers in a state that business hails as a "right to work state". The ILA in Charleston was also a leader of the campaign to bring down the confederate flag in South Carolina. In fact, the police attack came just after the ILA had led the 50,000 strong protest against the Confederate flag in Columbia SC— the largest protest against racism since the civil rights movement. This is a union that fights for all the oppressed—it represents the best of the labor movement. That is why the government, and the corporations behind them, are intent on destroying this union.

To stop this corporate attack our goal is to shut down the ports throughout the United States on the day that the Charleston 5 go to trial. In order to do this we need to join together with longshore workers on both coasts and set up picket lines at the ports. This action will be joining similar efforts all around the world. A tremendous show of force would send a chilling message to the courts and the employers that our movement for justice cannot be isolated and repressed.

This battle crystallizes all the issues that the anti-globalization



movement has raised:

1. The collusion of the government and corporations to crush workers movements and democratic rights. The attack on the dockers was a concerted, planned attack by state officials and corporate interests. Furthermore, at the national level, the FBI placed infiltrators into the local.

2. Globalization within the US. Corporations like Mercedes Benz and Michelin have flocked to sections of the US South, like the Carolinas, because of the lack of safety and environmental standards and low wages. It is very important that we take a stand to defend workers in the South who have won decent compensation and safe working conditions.

3. The Racism of Globalization. The anti-globalization movement has been discussing how to incorporate in the very important issue of the racism of globalization. The Charleston 5 struggle provides an opportunity to build a multi-racial movement against corporate greed and for workers control.

#### Strategic Targets

The ports are a strategic point in capitals efforts to maintain mobility. That is why they have moved to eliminate the "threat" of the ILA fighters. We can hit capital where it hurts by stomping on their efforts to railroad these 5 courageous fighters.

#### Global Fight Back

After the attack on the Charleston 5 in 2000 dockworkers in Spain refused to unload Noradana ships. This forced Nordana to again use union labor in the port of Charleston.

#### Direct Action!

Thousands of activists rallied June 9th in South Carolina's capitol to demand freedom for the Charleston 5. These activists are now living under house arrest and are not allowed to speak in public. During the protest the strongest and most popular chant from the crowd was the cry:

**SHUT THE PORTS DOWN!!!SHUT THE PORTS DOWN!!!SHUT THE PORTS DOWN!!!**

We can build a nation-wide movement at the ports if we bring together our energy and organizing skills. Workers Democracy Network would like to invite you to join with us to help build a Nation-Wide Strike at the ports.

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Dictatorship is no child of the labour movement, but a  
regrettable inheritance from the bourgeoisie  
Rudolph Rocker

Syndicalists should contact WDN and Workers Solidarity Alliance member:

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