

## Stalinism—Gravedigger of the Revolution

# How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled



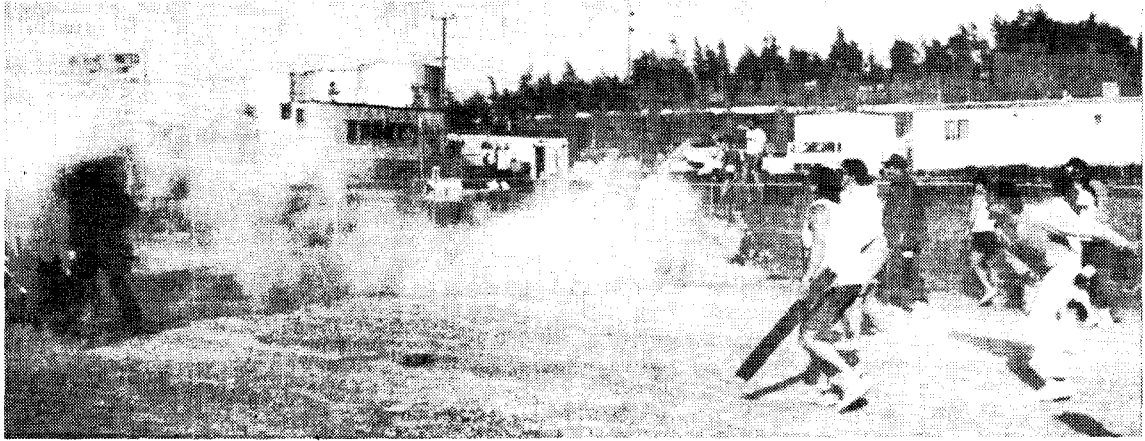
Spartacist

**For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Yeltsin Counterrevolution!**

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**Striking miners clash with company security guards and RCMP riot squad outside Yellowknife's Giant gold mine.**



Lee Selleck, The Press Independent

## Victory to Yellowknife Gold Miners!

The determined struggle of the Giant gold mine strikers in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories against Royal Oak Mines Inc.'s scabherding, union-busting attack is echoing across the country, drawing solidarity from unionists fed up at being on the receiving end of assaults by company after company, government after government. For over six months members of the Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers (CASAW) Local 4 have stood as hard as the rock they mine—despite being shot at and teargassed by the RCMP, despite over 100 arrests and 45 firings, despite a massive witchhunt launched by the company, cops and capitalist press following a September explosion in the mine in which nine scabs died.

As CASAW's newsletter *Fools' Gold* wrote, the battle at Royal Oak "is developing into one of Canada's historic labour struggles." This is the first time in Canadian history that there has been scabbing on a hard-rock mine strike. Royal Oak has spent over \$2 million hiring scabs (from outfits like Vancouver's Pro Con Mining and Tunneling) and turning the mine site into an armed camp patrolled by Pinkerton cops imported from the U.S. complete with vicious dogs, night-vision cameras and "intelligence-gathering equipment." These thugs-for-hire have been backed up by the courts and nearly 75 RCMP cops who at every step act "as agents of the company," as CASAW national president Ross Slezak said.

Enforcing an anti-picketing injunction that was slapped on the union right from the start, the "Royal Oak Mounted Police," as strikers call them, fired shots as they confronted angry unionists on June 2. But the strikers weren't cowed—they defended themselves with baseball bats, clubs and axes. Strikers drove out the first group of "security guards" brought in and successfully stopped the busing in of scabs, forcing the company to fly them in by helicopter. Women have organized in CLASS, the CASAW Ladies Association Support System.

When the September explosion ripped through the 750-foot level of the mine, the company and the RCMP launched a deadly witchhunt. Despite immediate, emphatic denials of any union involvement in the incident by CASAW spokesmen, the RCMP quickly declared it a case of "criminal homicide" and "multiple murder," looking to hang the union. Encouraged by company bosses to "kick some ass," scabs unleashed a reign of terror, attacking strikers in the bars and on the streets. One striker told *SC* that he'd "been threatened to be shot" and related that the wives and children of others have been forced to flee the town, fearing for their safety.

The companies, their cops, courts and media are bringing their full power to bear, trying to crush this militant strike as a warning to all labor. In a July letter to the NWT Federation of Labour, the Partisan Defense Committee called for "*coordinated, mass labor action*"—in Vancouver to shut down Pro Con's anti-union outfit, in Northern Alberta to close their airstrips. An injury to one is an injury to all! The organized working class has the power to do it, but not if it plays by the bosses' rules. The Royal Oak bosses are playing hardball. To win, labor's got to do the same."

In Toronto and Vancouver, Trotskyist League and PDC supporters have organized support for CASAW Local 4 in their unions. The Toronto Local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) at its 24 November membership meeting passed a motion to send a donation to aid CASAW "in their struggle against the scab-herding, union-busting Royal Oak Mines Inc. and its allies, the RCMP and the courts." The motion urged the labor movement and especially the Steelworkers, who organize two other Royal Oak-owned mines, "to use their power to help win a victory for CASAW Local 4 and all labor." A similar motion was passed by CUPE Local 391 in Vancouver, where Telecommunications Workers Union Local 1 also

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# No More Givebacks! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

## Tories, NDP Wage War Against Workers and the Poor

Working people and their families are bearing the brunt of the worst capitalist crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Real unemployment, including those who've given up the near-hopeless search for work, has hit 15 percent, highest in the industrialized world. In Montreal, 27 percent of the working-age population is on welfare or UI. Toronto newspapers have taken to publishing ghoulish stories "predicting" how many of the city's tens of thousands of homeless people will freeze to death this winter. And this even as their haughty editorialists crow that the "victory over communism" in East Europe and the ex-USSR demonstrates the superiority of the capitalist market economy!

Now the reviled federal Tories have turned the screws even tighter. Their December mini-budget freezes wages in the federal public sector, slashes social service and unemployment payments, and *eliminates UI altogether* for anyone who quits a job or is fired "for cause." In a display of imperial arrogance worthy of Louis XVI, Mulroney's (un)employment minister Bernard Valcourt sneers that the jobless should be "proud" to have their meager benefits "diverted" to pay off the government's massive deficit—\$35 billion and growing by the minute.

At the same time, NDP provincial governments in Ontario, B.C. and Saskatchewan are savaging health and education spending, while launching their own offensives against the labor movement. Last year the Bob Rae government in Ontario threw postal union leaders in jail and used anti-labor legislation to break a strike by Toronto transit workers. Provincial treasurer "Pink Floyd" Laughren now threatens that "if unions don't keep to low wage demands he will be forced to consider wage freezes and wage rollbacks" (*Globe and Mail*, 28 November).

The Ontario NDP recently announced another \$600 million in spending cuts, which will cost 4,000 more health-care jobs as well as bed closures and longer surgical waiting lists. Breaking one election promise after another, it has "postponed" for six years (!) the pay equity program for low-paid women workers, hiked university and college tuition fees (again) and abolished student grants altogether. In B.C., meanwhile, the NDP government has denounced striking community college teachers for being "lucky to have jobs at all." Angry teachers picketed a recent B.C. NDP convention, while in Saskatchewan the government employees union has begun rotating walkouts against a three-year wage freeze and NDP austerity program.

These latest onslaughts by the Tories and the NDP provincial regimes have deepened the frustration among working people and the poor. As a result, even the NDP's most stalwart labor agents like the leaders of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) have become rattled. Whining that the Ontario NDP is "more and more talking the language...of the right-wing government in Ottawa," CAW president Buzz Hargrove told a recent union convention that "The honeymoon is over.... People are saying: 'What's the difference?' The rhetoric is the same, the cutbacks are the same. For what reason did we elect you?"

Yet while some social-democratic union tops now feel the need to take rhetorical distance from the NDP governments,

this is emphatically *not* because they mean to lead the kind of hard class struggle that's so urgently needed. Quite the opposite. Like their NDP parliamentary counterparts, the labor misleaders are committed down the line to "making capitalism work." Necessarily, this means enforcing the bosses' interests *against* those of the working people.

In the face of today's deep capitalist economic crisis, the union bureaucrats have offered up the biggest smorgasbord of



SC photo

**St. Catharines, December 12: Angry autoworkers rally against GM plant closures.**

concessions and givebacks this country has seen in decades. Leaders of the CAW and other unions at Canadian Airlines have surrendered \$200 million in givebacks, including a 12 percent pay cut. Steelworkers leaders have "negotiated" a 10 percent wage cut plus 300 layoffs at Sidbec-Dosco and another 630 layoffs at Stelco in Hamilton. Voyageur bus drivers, organized in the CBRT, have accepted a salary rollback to help finance a company court suit charging "unfair competition" by VIA Rail. Thus the drivers are whipsawed by *their own leaders* against the railwaymen, who are also organized by CBRT!

Just about the only "fightback" the labor brass are spoiling for is one against working people abroad. Their rallying cry, echoed by the NDP, is for protectionist trade war. At a 12 December demonstration in St. Catharines, Ont. protesting the closure of two General Motors facilities, a CAW Local 199 official demanded strict quotas on Japanese imports, thereby alibiing GM's North American bosses. His bellicose tirade was seconded by NDP MP Dan Heap and Canadian Labour Congress chief Bob White (both darlings of the reformist left),

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## “Humanitarian” Cover for Imperialist Occupation

# U.S., Canadian Troops Out of Somalia!

DECEMBER 17—Tens of thousands of U.S. troops are pouring into the Horn of Africa. The massive U.S. military intervention, dubbed “Operation Restore Hope,” is being joined by over 1,000 Canadian soldiers in “Operation Deliverance.” With public opinion horrified by the images of Somali children slowly starving to death as local warlords seize most of the food aid, the racist North American rulers say they are acting out of “humanitarian concern.” But the idea of the U.S. imperialists, who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, raped Vietnam and trained generations of torturers in Latin America and elsewhere (all with the support of their Canadian junior partners), as a force for humanitarian relief is grotesque!

The famine in Africa is *caused* by imperialist exploitation, which has driven the population into conditions of poverty that are below the minimum level of survival (see “Imperialism Starves Africa,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 561, 16 October). Deprived of food and currency reserves, the African nations are decimated by natural disasters like drought, or political and economic crises. For over a year after Somalia broke down into clan warfare and famine, the imperialist leaders turned their back on the mass starvation there. And virtually nothing is being proposed to assist the more than a dozen other African countries which, faced with the worst drought in a century, are being wracked by starvation.

No doubt many in Somalia and elsewhere believe that the U.S. presence can only be beneficial since things could scarcely get any worse. Yet ultimately, direct American military intervention in Africa can only result in increased oppression and exploitation of the African people. Massive firepower is being poured in: artillery, tanks, armored cars and helicopter gunships, with an aircraft carrier battlegroup offshore for reinforcements and possible bombing missions—against untrained and undisciplined bands armed with light weapons. Already U.S. and French troops have unleashed murderous barrages against unarmed civilians, claiming “self-defense.”

What interests the U.S. in Somalia is that they see it as an ideal military base, strategically situated astride the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, providing a forward base for intervention in the Near East. The U.S. was the main supporter and arms supplier to Somali butcher Siad Barre from the late 1970s, when President Carter wooed him away from being a Soviet client, until the late 1980s, when the end of the Cold War made the Horn of Africa lose much of its strategic interest to Washington. But since the Gulf War, the U.S. is intent on reinforcing its strategic presence in the region vis-à-vis its imperialist rivals.

Washington is trying to pretend this is going to be a quick



Malahca/SIPA

**U.S. imperialism’s global cops land in the Horn of Africa.**

operation, while in reality preparing for a prolonged military occupation. General Colin Powell talked about withdrawing U.S. forces “in a few months,” but quickly hedged, saying the Marines would remain stationed off the Somali coast as a “posse,” ready to intervene again, and that “a few units” of ground forces would remain in Somalia indefinitely to support UN “peacekeepers.” And UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali insisted that, in addition to distributing food relief, an aim of the intervention is to “maintain security in the region” and “reconciliate” warring clan chiefs. A CIA report, summarized by the *New York Times* (2 December), estimates that the prospects for setting up a stable Somali government are bleak, and proposes a UN protectorate or trusteeship by which a country (unnamed) would rule Somalia on behalf of the UN “until the territory is ready for self-government.” Thus, Somalia would be recolonized in the name of “the white man’s burden” of bringing “peace” and “civilization” to Africa.

As usual, the American imperialists can count on the unflinching support of their northern neighbors. The Tories, Liberals and NDP unanimously backed sending Canadian troops whose mandate, according to External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall, will be to shoot first and ask questions later (*Toronto Star*, 5 December). One has to wonder if among those shot first by this “mission of mercy” will be the two Somali women deported from Canada just three months ago after immigration officials ruled they would not face “any unusual, undeserved or disproportionate hardship” back home.

After snapping to attention with a “support our troops” campaign two years ago in the Gulf War, the NDP social democrats once again are beating the drums for imperialist aggression. Knowing that U.S. imperialism is hated by millions around the

world, Audrey McLaughlin frets that "it is fundamentally not healthy for [the U.S.] to act as the dominant force in such an operation" (*Toronto Star*, 9 December). So the New Democrats joined with the Liberals in parliament to call for Canadian troops to remain in Somalia after "aid routes" are secured, in order to act as "peacekeepers."

Canada's "peacekeeping" facade has been exceedingly useful to Washington over the years, helping provide a "neutral" and "democratic" cover for anti-Communist adventures and neo-colonial plunder (see "The NDP and Imperialist War," *SC* No. 83, Spring 1991). From the U.S. war against Korea and China during the 1950s, to the "international observers" it sent to back up the U.S. against the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants, to assisting in the murder of 100,000 Iraqis in Bush's "Desert Slaughter," Canada has served its senior allies in Washington well, along with its own imperialist interests in the unbridled superexploitation of Third World peoples.

### Western Imperialism and the Yugoslav Bloodbath

Now Mulroney is calling to send in the troops to "make the peace" in Yugoslavia, once again in the name of supposedly "humanitarian" concerns. The communal civil war there, with "ethnic cleansing" carried out on all sides, has created more than two million refugees, and continues to do so at a rate of more than 1,000 a day. The UN estimates that more than 400,000 people could die this winter of cold, disease and starvation. While publicizing Serbian war crimes (and ignoring those of the fascistic Croatian regime), the U.S., Canada and West Europe are refusing to accept more than a handful of refugees from the slaughter.

Having whipped up nationalist conflicts in Yugoslavia in the interests of capitalist counterrevolution, the imperialists now seek to contain the nationalist furies which have made Yugoslavia the Lebanon of Europe. But the country's breakup is intertwined with *interimperialist* rivalries. The secessionist regimes in Croatia and Slovenia—before World War I provinces in the Austro-Hungarian Empire—were set up in the summer of 1991 as clients of the newly reunified German Fourth Reich. Serbia, on the other hand, is historically a Balkan ally of British and French imperialism.

Although politicians in North America now ritually denounce Serbian "aggression," U.S. imperialism is not fundamentally

hostile to a strong Serbian state. Thus the Bush administration gave special dispensation for an American millionaire of Serbian extraction to become prime minister of the rump Yugoslav state. The U.S. rulers would like to have a more pro-Serbian posture, provided that Serbian nationalist strongman Slobodan Milosevic is replaced by pro-Western "democrats," that is, direct agents of Wall Street and Washington.

If, despite these factors, U.S., Canadian and/or West European troops do intervene in Yugoslavia, revolutionaries must give military support to Serbia against the imperialist invaders. While we support no side in the present communalist bloodletting, we resolutely oppose the imperialist blockade and any attempt to bring the "new world order" to Yugoslavia. This would only further inflame national hatred among the Balkan peoples, as well as intensify their exploitation by Western capitalism.

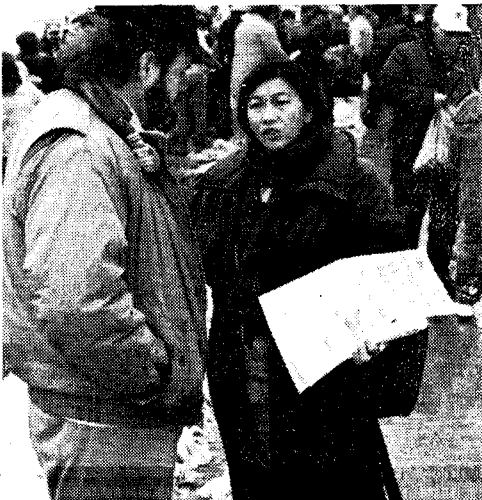
The myth of a "humanitarian" imperialism has captivated various rad-libs and social democrats, who are today supporting the imperialist invasion of Somalia and call for military intervention in Yugoslavia. In Europe, Alain Krivine, leader of the French section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat, likewise signed an appeal calling for European imperialist intervention in Yugoslavia. In sharp contrast, the International Communist League makes no concession to the so-called "democratic" bourgeoisie. We fight to mobilize the working class to bring down the imperialist system through international socialist revolution.

U.S. imperialism is seeking to assert its world leadership by acting as a global policeman. But American power rests on a decaying economic base, and its decline cannot be reversed by taking over small and impoverished Third World countries. The Pentagon's military power can change the real balance of economic forces only if it is successfully directed against Japan and Germany: a replay of World War II, only this time *starting* with nuclear weapons.

Today the U.S. military, with its Canadian junior partner in tow, must act as cops of the world because the ruling class of this continent *exploits the working people of the world*. Only if the capitalist bloodsuckers are overthrown by the multiracial working class of North America can the drive toward a new world war be halted and social wealth be made to serve the interests of all humanity.

—Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 565, 11 December

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# Stalinism—Gravedigger of the Revolution

## How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled



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Capitalist-restorationist forces under Boris Yeltsin have now consolidated a fragile bourgeois state. At right, Yeltsin's Russian cops attack demonstrators outside Congress of People's Deputies on December 10.

### For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Yeltsin Counterrevolution!

November 7 marked the 75th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. But the workers state erected by the Bolshevik power, far and away the greatest conquest of the international proletariat and a momentous leap forward for humanity, did not survive its 75th year. The period of open counterrevolution ushered in by Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist countercoup in August 1991 has, in the absence of mass working-class resistance, culminated in the creation of a bourgeois state, however fragile and reversible. The task facing the Soviet proletariat today is socialist revolution to restore proletarian power and reforge the Soviet Union on the foundation of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik internationalism.

The ascendancy of Yeltsin and capitalist-restorationist forces backing him was a pivotal event in determining the fate of the Soviet Union, but it was not conclusive. In our August 1991 article, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", which was immediately translated into Russian and distributed in over 100,000 copies throughout the Soviet Union, we wrote that workers mobilizations should have cleaned out

the counterrevolutionary rabble on Yeltsin's barricades, thus opening the road to proletarian political revolution. As a result of Yeltsin's victory:

"The first workers state in history, sapped and undermined by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, lies in tatters. The state power has been fractured, the Communist Party—its bureaucratic core—shattered and banned from the KGB and armed forces, the multinational union is ripping apart as one republic after another proclaims secession. "But while Yeltsin & Co. now see a clear field to push through a forced-draft reintroduction of capitalism, *the outcome is not yet definitively decided....* Opposition from the factories against the ravages of capitalist assault could... prevent the rapid consolidation of counterrevolution."

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 533, 30 August 1991

In the interim there was no decisive action to stop that consolidation. Politically atomized by nearly 70 years of Stalinist usurpation of political life, paralyzed by the CIA-supported pro-Yeltsin "free trade unions" and the virulent chauvinist poison of numerous Stalinist remnants, the multinational Soviet working class has been overwhelmed by the counterrevolutionary tide. The Yeltsin regime seized the advantage to tear away at every vestige of the Soviet degenerated workers state and push through the piecemeal consolidation of the counterrevolution. Quantity has now turned into quality.

But the situation cannot long continue as it is. For Yeltsin

and other restorationists to nail down a solid capitalist regime, sooner rather than later a bloody reckoning is likely, signaling to the masses that there is a new order. With explosions of struggle by workers driven to desperation, or even without them, the nascent bourgeois forces will move to impose heavy-handed order through a "strong state." The recent vicious crackdown, using Russian OMON riot police, on a strike by air traffic controllers foreshadows the would-be exploiters' determination to repress any working-class resistance. The rising racist hysteria against people from Central Asia and the Caucasus in major Russian cities creates the climate for pogroms. With ethnic conflicts brewing on a dozen fronts on the periphery of the Russian republic, from the Baltics to Abkhazia in Georgia and the Transdnister in Moldova, to the longstanding nationalist civil war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus, the possibility of a Yugoslav-style fratricidal bloodbath is all too real.

The Soviet workers state—which once served as a beacon for the exploited and oppressed of this globe, which destroyed Hitler's Holocaust machine, which for decades kept U.S. imperialism from turning its nuclear arsenal on the world's semi-colonial peoples—is, dead. But the class struggle is not. The nascent bourgeois states in Russia, the Ukraine and elsewhere are fragile, isolated and internally splintered. They do not rest on the solid foundation of a cohered capitalist class. The new entrepreneurs consist of little more than petty speculators and mafia gangs, while sections of the old industrial hierarchy of factory managers are in the process of imposing their weight. The armed forces are bitter and demoralized.

The only thing which is certain in the ex-USSR today is increasing uncertainty and instability. On the eve of the December 1 session of the Congress of People's Deputies, Moscow is awash with rumors of coups, countercoups and "creeping coups." Meanwhile, Yeltsin is engaged in furious negotiations with Arkady Volsky, head of the powerful industrialists' party, who is in league with the militarist Russian vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi. The volatility of the present situation is captured in the recent electoral victory of the ex-Stalinist Democratic Labor Party in Lithuania, ousting the rightist nationalist Sajudis movement from office. It did not take long for the realities of capitalist immiseration to drain away the nationalist euphoria which had intoxicated the Lithuanian people. However, the new Lithuanian leader Brazauskas reportedly has the same economic policies as Volsky-Rutskoi.

Meanwhile, the working class of the ex-USSR is faced with one assault after another. Society is disintegrating, mass unemployment looms. Industrial production has dropped 18 percent since the beginning of 1992, while investment has plummeted by 50 percent. To prevent a total collapse, the government has been pumping credits into industry: the state budget deficit is escalating to a trillion rubles, and debts of industrial enterprises are over 2 trillion. The result has been hyperinflation, variously estimated at an annual rate of 14,000 percent (*Moscow Times*) or 20,000 percent (*Commerzant*). In the month of October alone, the ruble fell by half its value. Since January the price of bread has climbed on the order of a hundredfold. As the economy decomposes, the bulk of the population teeters on the



ICL banner outside January 1992 Soviet officers conference in Moscow: "No to capitalist counterrevolution! Yes to the gains of October!"

Spartacist

brink of outright starvation. Any spark could set off the tinderbox on which Yeltsin and his cohorts sit.

We Trotskyists of the International Communist League, who have fought tooth and nail against ascendant counterrevolution, say: Stalinism is dead, but communism lives—in the class struggle of the world proletariat and in the program of the revolutionary vanguard. The internationalist program through which the Soviet Union was created has been carried forward under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the Trotskyists uniquely who warned that the continued stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracy over the Soviet workers state would lead to the destruction of October, who fought for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism and counterrevolution, and called on the Soviet proletariat to sweep away the Stalinist excrescence through political revolution while there was still time.

The "Russian question" has been the touchstone for revolutionaries and the defining political question of the 20th century. Leading up to the Second International Conference of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) earlier this autumn, discussion focused on an assessment of the developments in the former Soviet Union since August 1991. The main conference document described the piecemeal consolidation of a capitalist state:

"Recent developments continue to point in a dire direction. Stories abound in the press of 'primitive capitalist accumulation,' i.e., theft: Managers and former bureaucrats are scrambling, using all manner of shady practices to get their hands on socialized property—encouraged, abetted and advised by international imperialism. The recent strike by air traffic controllers in the Russian federation was decisively broken by the Yeltsin government using the OMON and elements of the MVD and KGB. An African student at Patrice Lumumba University was shot down by the Moscow militia amidst a hysterical racist press campaign. Tons of volumes of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin are being destroyed in a pure ideological anti-communist frenzy."

—"For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky!"

The conference drew a balance sheet on these events and unanimously endorsed a 26 September document which said:

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August 1991: Plotters of "perestroika coup" kept tanks idling in Red Square instead of sending them against counterrevolutionary HQ at Yeltsin's White House. ICL statement (right) declared: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!"

**Бюллетень Спартаковцев** **SPARTACIST**  
 Прогноз № 1

**Обанкротившийся сталинизм открывает шлюзы для капиталистической реставрации.**

**Советские рабочие! Долой ельцинско-бушевскую контрреволюцию!**

27 августа 1991 года Рабочие Советские Союзы в Великобритании и в ряде других стран провели демонстрацию в поддержку советских рабочих, выступивших против контрреволюционного путча в Москве. Демонстрация прошла в форме митинга, который собрал около 100 человек. Участники митинга выразили поддержку советским рабочим, которые встали на защиту социализма и демократии. Они также потребовали от ельцинских и бушевских властей прекратить контрреволюционный путч и вернуть власть советским рабочим. Демонстрация была организована в рамках программы «Советские рабочие: Долой ельцинско-бушевскую контрреволюцию!».

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# Workers State Strangled...

(continued from page 7)

"The August 1991 events ('coup' and 'countercoup') appear to have been decisive in the direction of development in the SU, but only those who are under the sway of capitalist ideology or its material perquisites would have been hasty to draw this conclusion at that time." It resolved "to note and draw conclusions from the position that the degenerated workers state of Stalin and his heirs has been destroyed."

In the founding program of the Fourth International, written on the eve of World War II, Leon Trotsky wrote: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." This crisis of proletarian leadership is no less acute today. To the beleaguered multinational proletariat in the ex-USSR and socialist-minded elements in the army and intelligentsia, we say: the key task facing you is to cohere a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, forged in struggle around the internationalist program which led your forebears to victory in 1917.

## Why Didn't the Workers Rise Up?

The working class of the ex-USSR and the world proletariat as a whole must digest the lessons of this bitter defeat. Since 1917, the social democracy has served its bourgeois masters by directly aiding and abetting imperialist revanchism in seeking to destroy the conquests of October. Since rising to power over the backs of the Soviet working class through a political counterrevolution in 1923-24, the Stalinist bureaucracy imposed a suffocating isolation on the first workers state, suppressing one international revolutionary opportunity after another. In the name of building "socialism in one country," the Stalinists—through terror and lies—methodically attacked and eroded every aspect of the revolutionary and internationalist consciousness which had made the Soviet working class the vanguard detachment of the world proletariat.

The isolated workers state was subjected to the unremitting pressures of imperialism, not only military encirclement and an arms buildup aimed at bankrupting the Soviet economy, but

also the pressure of the imperialist world market. As Trotsky wrote in *The Third International After Lenin*: "it is not so much military intervention as the intervention of cheaper capitalist commodities that constitutes perhaps the greatest immediate menace to Soviet economy." Although the planned economy proved its superiority over capitalist anarchy during its period of extensive growth, as the need for quality and intensive development came to the fore the bureaucratic stranglehold more and more undermined the economy. Finally, through his perestroika "market reforms" and acquiescence to capitalist restoration throughout East Europe, Gorbachev opened wide the floodgates to a direct counterrevolutionary onslaught by Yeltsin & Co.

The bourgeoisie and the Stalinists alike have long sought to identify Lenin's October with Stalin's conservative bureaucratic rule. But nationalist Stalinism is the antithesis of Leninist internationalism. The Soviet degenerated workers state (and the deformed workers states which later arose on the Stalinist model) was a historic anomaly, resulting from the isolation of economically backward Russia and the failure of proletarian revolution to spread to the advanced imperialist countries. Stalinism represented a roadblock to progress toward socialism. As Trotsky wrote in "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" (November 1937):

"That which was a 'bureaucratic deformation' is at the present moment preparing to devour the workers' state, without leaving any remains, and on the ruins of nationalized property to spawn a new propertied class. Such a possibility has drawn extremely near."

While the Stalinist regime was able to prolong its existence as a result of the heroic victory of the Soviet masses over the Nazi invasion in World War II, Trotsky's Marxist analysis has ultimately, unfortunately, been vindicated in the negative.

Why did the Soviet working class not rally to defend its gains? How did the counterrevolution triumph and destroy the workers state without a civil war? In his seminal 1933 work laying out the perspective of proletarian political revolution, Trotsky polemicized against social democrats and proponents of various "new class" theories who claimed that under Stalin's



rule, the Soviet Union had imperceptibly changed from a workers to a bourgeois state without any qualitative transformation of either the state apparatus or the property forms:

“The Marxist thesis relating to the catastrophic character of the transfer of power from the hands of one class into the hands of another applies not only to revolutionary periods, when history sweeps madly ahead, but also to the periods of counterrevolution, when society rolls backwards. He who asserts that the Soviet government has been *gradually* changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, running backwards the film of reformism.”

—“The Class Nature of the Soviet State”  
(October 1933)

There was certainly nothing gradual or imperceptible about the social counterrevolution in the ex-USSR, which has been extremely violent and convulsive throughout the former Soviet bloc. However, Trotsky also advanced the *prognosis* that a civil war would be required to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union and undo the deepgoing proletarian revolution.

In a wide-ranging discussion in the ICL two years ago on the counterrevolutionary overturns in East Europe and the DDR (East Germany), it was noted that Trotsky had overdrawn the analogy between a social revolution in capitalist society and social counterrevolution in a deformed workers state (see Joseph Seymour, “On the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe,” and Albert St. John, “For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective,” *Spartacist* No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91). Where the capitalists exercise direct ownership over the means of production, and thus are compelled to violently resist the overthrow of their system in order to defend their own property, the preservation of proletarian power depends principally on *consciousness* and *organization* of the working class.

Trotsky himself emphasized this point in his 1928 article “What Now?”:

“The socialist character of our state industry...is determined and secured in a decisive measure by the role of the party, the voluntary internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, the conscious discipline of the administrators, trade union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc.”

—*The Third International After Lenin*

And again, in “The Workers’ State, Thermidor and Bonapartism” (February 1935), he stated: “*In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously.*”

When Trotsky wrote these articles, the memory of the October Revolution was still a part of the direct personal experience of the overwhelming mass of the Soviet proletariat, albeit already considerably warped by Stalinist falsification and revision. In the intervening decades, the nationalist bureaucracy did much to extirpate any real understanding of what came to be iconized as the “Great October Socialist Revolution.” In Soviet mass consciousness, World War II, dubbed by the Stalinists the “Great Patriotic War” and suffused with the Russian-nationalist propaganda Stalin churned out during the war, came to supplant the October Revolution as the epochal event in Soviet history. In the end, Stalin and his heirs succeeded in imprinting their nationalist outlook on the Soviet peoples; proletarian internationalism came to be sneered at as an obscure “Trotskyite heresy” of “export of revolution” or, at best, emptied of any content while paid cynical lip service.

With Gorbachev’s “new thinking”—i.e., his cringing capitulation to each and every imperialist ultimatum—even lip service to the ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution went by the boards. The Soviet soldiers who had been told, and believed, that they were fulfilling their “internationalist duty” in fighting against

the reactionary Afghan mujahedin on the USSR’s border, were then maligned for perpetrating “Russia’s Vietnam” against Afghanistan. Gorbachev’s ignominious pullout from Afghanistan and his green light to the imperialist annexation of the DDR served only to further a sense of defeatism and demoralization among the Soviet masses, while the so-called Stalinist “patriots” who denounced Gorbachev’s concessions did so only



Spartakist

**East Germany, 1991: German, Polish ICL comrades distribute Trotskyist literature to 300 Soviet servicemen attending commemoration of Red Army victory over Nazis.**

to beat the drums for Great Russian imperial ambitions, explicitly harking back to the time of the tsars.

Even so, the spontaneous strikes which erupted in the Soviet coal fields in the summer of 1989 against the ravages of Gorbachev’s “market socialism” dramatically demonstrated the potential for militant working-class struggle. As Russian social democrat Boris Kagarlitsky documents in his book *Farewell Perestroika* (1990), the strike committees in many areas became “the actual centre of popular power,” organizing food distribution, maintaining order, etc. As we pointed out at the time, the Kuzbass strikes “have quickly generated organizational forms of proletarian power, including strike committees and workers militias” (“Soviet Workers Flex Their Muscle,” *WW* No. 482, 21 July 1989).

These developments pointed to the possibility of authentic soviets, which—by drawing in collective farmers, women, pensioners, soldiers and officers—could have served as the basis for a new proletarian political power, ousting the bureaucracy through a political revolution. But when the Gorbachev regime reneged on its promises to the miners, pro-imperialist agitators trained by the “AFL-CIA” moved into the vacuum of leadership and set up the Independent Miners Union, organizing an activist minority of the miners as a battering ram for Yeltsin.

However, a majority of the miners as well as the rest of the Soviet working class remained passive in the three-sided contest between the Yeltsin-led “democrats,” Gorbachev and the more conservative wing of the Stalinists. The mass of workers were wary, if not outright hostile, to the pro-Western advocates of a “market economy.” Unlike in Poland during the rise of *Solidarność*, the forces of capitalist counterrevolution were *not* able to mobilize the Soviet masses in the name of anti-Communism.

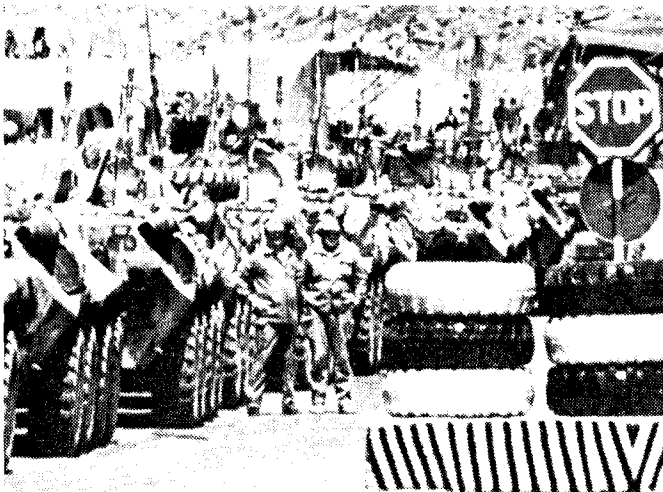
At the same time, the bureaucratic elite (the so-called  
*(continued on page 10)*

## Workers State Strangled...

(continued from page 9)

nomenklatura) was totally discredited by the flagrant corruption and cynicism of the Brezhnev era. Occasional appeals to defend "socialism" made by the more conservative elements of the Gorbachev regime, such as Yegor Ligachev, fell on deaf ears. The Stalinist "patriots," organized for example in the United Front of Toilers (OFT), were able to mobilize only a relatively small number of worker activists.

Atomized and bereft of any anti-capitalist leadership, lacking any coherent and consistent socialist class consciousness, skeptical about the possibility of class struggle in the capitalist



Nickelsberg/Time

**Kremlin's treacherous withdrawal from Afghanistan emboldened U.S. imperialism, demoralized Soviet masses.**

countries, the Soviet working class did not rally in resistance against the encroaching capitalist counterrevolution. And, as Trotsky noted in *The Third International After Lenin*: "If an army capitulates to the enemy in a critical situation without a battle, then this capitulation completely takes the place of a 'decisive battle,' in politics as in war."

### The Army and the Bureaucracy

What then happened to the armed forces, the core of the state in the Marxist understanding? In *The State and Revolution* (1917), written against the reformist view that the working class could simply appropriate the bourgeois state for its own purposes, Lenin emphasized: "Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the *old* state machine, but in this class *smashing* this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a *new* machine." Similarly, social counterrevolution requires the smashing of the proletarian state and the creation of a new state machine serving the bourgeois. This task was vastly facilitated by the Stalinist political counterrevolution, which effected a qualitative degeneration in the workers state issuing out of the October Revolution.

At the base, the Soviet military was affected by the same pressures and paralysis as the rest of society. The upper strata of the military command, on the other hand, were a component of the Soviet bureaucracy. Trotsky explained that the bureaucracy was a brittle, contradictory caste whose role was that of an intermediary between the workers state and hostile imperialist encirclement. This contradictory position generated within the bureaucracy a range of contradictory political impulses: "all

shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)" (Transitional Program). Reiss was a leading cadre of the Soviet intelligence service who declared for the Fourth International and was murdered by Stalin in 1937; Butenko was a Soviet diplomat who defected to Mussolini's fascist Italy.

The dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the conflicting political appetites it harbored, remained even after the bloody purges of the 1930s exterminated any remnant of the Bolshevik "Old Guard." But while resting on and deriving its privileges from proletarian property forms, the Stalinist bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to their defense. It could play no independent role in society. Under the impact of any sharp frontal assault, either from the revolutionary proletariat or the counterrevolution, the bureaucracy would shatter. As Trotsky wrote:

"When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in midair. Should it still attempt to resist, it will then be necessary to apply against it not the measures of civil war, but rather the measures of a police character....

"A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State"

In the case of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the bulk of the bureaucratic stratum went over to the side of the insurgent pro-socialist proletariat. In contrast, more recently in the Soviet Union, the steady pressure of conciliation to imperialism and internal market forces pushed ever-greater sections of the bureaucracy into the camp of capitalist restoration, for whom Yeltsin early on became the chief spokesman.

The utter incapacity of the bureaucracy to play any independent role was forcefully demonstrated in the events of August 1991. Behind the seeming incompetence of the "Emergency Committee" (made up of Gorbachev's chief lieutenants)—its failure to arrest Yeltsin or even to cut off his direct line to Washington—lay the fact that these stodgy bureaucrats had no alternative to the program of restoration and their refusal to in any way antagonize the imperialist powers. Had the workers sprung into action, mobilizing to clear out the despised profit-gouging "cooperativists," speculators and ruble millionaires who manned Yeltsin's barricades, this would have indeed directly posed a civil war between the proletariat and the active forces of counterrevolution, and marked the beginning of a *proletarian political revolution*. Fearing proletarian mobilization far more than counterrevolution, not a single element of the so-called "hardline" Stalinist "patriot" opposition to Gorbachev/Yeltsin tried to organize resistance to the Yeltsinite forces, hiding instead behind the impotent proclamations of the coup committee.

Having seized the reins of power, the Yeltsin regime immediately moved to reorganize the top echelons of the military, putting in a layer of younger officers who were marked either by subservience to Yeltsin (e.g., Shaposhnikov) or by strident Russian nationalism, while seeking to buy off broader layers of the officer corps with salary increases. At the same time, there was a self-purge, as numbers of pro-socialist officers left the army in disgust over the anti-Communist ban. In any case, as

Trotsky remarked in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937): "a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people [from the state apparatus] than a revolutionary party."

The juridical dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 left the all-Union armed forces—nominally under the command of the stillborn "Commonwealth of Independent States"—suspended in midair, a "sixteenth republic," as some dubbed it. An officers conference in the Kremlin the following month registered overwhelming sentiment for maintaining the military as a multinational institution. But, as we warned at the time, "to

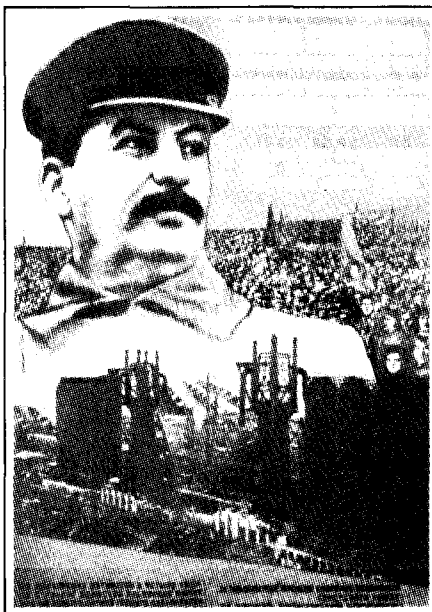
preserve the multinational Soviet state and army requires salvaging the socialized property upon which it was created." Had the working class moved, sections of the military would undoubtedly have gone over to its side. Instead the centrifugal forces set into play by Yeltsin's counter-coup and formalized by the December 1991 decree moved to tear the military apart and eliminate what remained of the workers state. Nationalism, as in the chauvinist drum-beating over Moldova, has been a driving force in cohering an armed force loyal to the new capitalist order.

The use of Russian OMON forces to break up an anti-Yeltsin protest in February marked the emergence of a repressive apparatus loyal to the new regime. With the Ukraine and other republics creating separate armies and demanding loyalty oaths from Soviet troops stationed on their territory, in May Yeltsin decreed the formation of a distinct Russian Army, appointing the relatively young general Grachev, a strident Russian nationalist who proclaimed his allegiance to Yeltsin during the coup, as the new Russian defense minister. An article in the CIA's "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty" *RFE/RL Research Report* (21 August) observed:

"In many important respects, the appointment of General of the Army Pavel Grachev to the post of Russian defense minister on 18 May 1992 marked the beginning of the post-Soviet period in the security sphere, much as the creation of the CIS in December 1991 had marked the end of the Soviet period in the political sphere."

Navy Day, on July 26, was marked by the hoisting of the old tsarist naval emblem, the St. Andrew's Cross, throughout the fleets, while Navy chief Admiral Chernavin proclaimed: "The Russian fleet must retrieve its flag, not because Soviet sailors were ashamed of the old flag but because it no longer corresponds to the spirit of the Russian navy" (*Independent* [London], 27 July). The flying of the tsarist banner over the Kronstadt naval garrison, a bastion of Bolshevism in the October Revolution, and atop the cruiser *Aurora*, whose fusillade against the Winter Palace signaled the victory of the Petrograd proletarian insurrection, aptly if grotesquely symbolized the dismantling of the Soviet workers state by the triumphant forces of counterrevolution.

Yeltsin and his counterparts in the other republics now have the beginnings of bourgeois armies. But the loyalty of these



Charlo/Gamma

**Stalinist myths: Poster proclaims that "Victory of Socialism in Our Country is Guaranteed." Leonid Brezhnev, Henry Kissinger celebrate "détente."**

armed forces to capitalism has yet to be tested in blood. Noting that "the entire military could fragment along political or ethnic lines," one observer noted that "Russian leaders will be extremely wary of using the army to maintain domestic order" (Mark Kramer, "The Armies of the Post-Soviet States," *Current History*, October 1992).

### Who Is Guilty for the Catastrophe?

There was no lack of "Trotskyists" who took their stand on Yeltsin's barricades (in some cases, literally) and/or moved with shameless haste to declare the Soviet Union dead and buried. Thus they finally disencumbered themselves of the albatross of (ever more formal and empty) defense of the Soviet Union, which the bourgeoisie has hated and sought to destroy since the October Revolution.

In his 1933 article, Trotsky warned of the "tragic possibility" that the Soviet workers state "will fall under the joint blows of its internal and external enemies":

"But in the event of this worst possible variant, a tremendous significance for the subsequent course of the revolutionary struggle will be borne by the question: *where* are those guilty for the catastrophe? Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State"

And that is what the International Communist League has done. To the extent our limited forces permit, we have fought to provide a revolutionary pole to win the Soviet working class to a program to reverse and defeat the counterrevolution. Our comrade Martha Phillips, murdered in Moscow last February, made the ultimate sacrifice in fighting for that cause.

Five years ago, when the first openly counterrevolutionary force—the anti-Semitic nativist fascists of Pamyat—reared its head in Moscow and Leningrad, we called for proletarian-centered mass mobilizations to crush these latter-day Black Hundreds in the egg. When, in August 1990, Gorbachev endorsed a plan for full-fledged capitalist restoration drawn up by Yeltsin, our first Russian-language leaflet raised the call "Soviet Workers: Smash Yeltsin/Gorbachev 500-Day Plan!"

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## Workers State Strangled...

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(WV No. 510, 21 September 1990). That November, at the Revolution Day commemoration in Leningrad, the banner of the Fourth International was openly unfurled for the first time in the Soviet Union.

Despite our meager resources and limited Russian-language capacity, we sought to intervene directly in the turbulent situation which opened up after Gorbachev took over. Following the dramatic coal miners strikes in the summer of 1989, we sought to get our Trotskyist propaganda into the hands of these combative workers, whose struggle had electrified the Soviet working class and shaken the Stalinist bureaucracy. ICL representatives intervened in a miners conference in Donetsk in October 1990, where they succeeded in temporarily spiking a CIA-orchestrated effort to enlist Soviet workers in a redbaiting witchhunt against British miners leader Arthur Scargill.

During the 1989-90 upheaval in the DDR, as part of the ICL's struggle to effect a *proletarian* political revolution in East Germany, we issued Russian-language propaganda addressed to and widely disseminated among Soviet troops stationed there, and later spoke to assemblies of Soviet officers and soldiers. In 1991, on the anniversary of the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany, the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany and the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski held a joint forum for several hundred Soviet military personnel at an air base outside Berlin (WV No. 526, 10 May 1991). Then, a month before Yeltsin's countercoup, ICL representative Martha Phillips addressed the Moscow Workers Conference, calling for the formation of genuine soviets to stop capitalist counterrevolution, for opposition to all forms of chauvinist reaction, and for international socialist revolution.

Our August 1991 call, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", was the first statement widely distributed throughout the Soviet Union in opposition to Yeltsin's restorationist drive. We advanced a program for independent working-class struggle against capitalist restoration and for genuine

soviets as organs of a new proletarian political power:

*"Independent workers committees must be formed in factories, mines, railroad yards and other enterprises to prevent layoffs and privatization by taking over the plants and controlling production.... Committees of soldiers and officers must be formed to oppose the purges and prevent the army from being used to attack the workers' interests.... Workers militias must be formed...to defend against and crush the lynch mobs and pogromists.... In this hour of dire need more than ever, the key to successful defense of the Soviet proletariat is the forging of a new, authentically communist vanguard party of the working class. Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!"*

We sharply opposed resurgent anti-Semitism and Great Russian chauvinism and warned that women have the most to lose under capitalist restoration.

Following Yeltsin's unleashing of the OMON and Moscow militia (police) against protesters in February 1992, we issued an urgent statement: "White Tsar' Boris Wants a New Bloody Sunday." With the threat of widespread hunger posed by draconian price increases on food and other necessities, we raised a fighting program:

*"Through their own independent committees, composed of delegates elected by the enterprises, the working people must take control of food supplies and oversee distribution. What is needed once again is to form authentic soviets, not talk shops like the fake soviets and impotent parliaments of today, but organs of struggle composed of deputies elected by and recallable to the workplace and barracks. Formed into powerful soviets—internationalist, egalitarian, revolutionary—the working people will be able to sweep away the shaky regimes of the capitalist-restorationists with a flick of the finger. No new tsars—away with Yeltsin—for a republic of the working people!"*

These demands retain their full force today, though the consolidation of a bourgeois state poses the struggle not for political revolution but for *socialist* revolution to sweep away the nascent capitalist class.

Who is guilty for the catastrophe? First and foremost it is the Stalinists who bear responsibility. Beginning with the political counterrevolution led by Stalin in 1923-24, the state apparatus



Spartacist photos

Our comrade Martha Phillips fought to defend the October Revolution. Protesting against closing of the Lenin Museum (left) and addressing delegates at July 1991 Moscow Workers Conference (right).

was, as Trotsky wrote, “transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class, and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country’s economy” (Transitional Program). By the later Brezhnev years, bureaucratic mismanagement of the planned, centralized economy had resulted in a sharp decline in Soviet economic growth, while rampant corruption fueled the appetites of the pampered children of the bureaucracy to live like Western capitalists. Given its mortal dread of workers democracy which would abolish their privileged positions, the only option the bureaucracy saw for intensive economic growth was to experiment with a neo-Bukharinite program of market-oriented “reforms”—Gorbachev’s perestroika.

While the August 1991 “Emergency Committee” offered nothing but “perestroika without glasnost,” today Stalinist leftovers like Viktor Anpilov’s RKR, Kryuchkov’s RPK, Prigarin’s SK and Nina Andreyeva’s VKPB et al., who today posture as an opposition to Yeltsin, offer nothing but a “red” cover for capitalist counterrevolution. They have made no attempt to mobilize *class struggle*, not only because their chauvinist politics make them incapable of appealing to the still multinational proletariat, but because they are *opposed* to any struggle which would disrupt capitalist class “peace.” This was explicitly stated in the March 1992 “Declaration on the Founding of the United Opposition,” signed by all the Stalinist leftovers as well as Medvedev and Denisov’s SPT—formalizing the repulsive “red-brown” coalition with Great Russian chauvinists, monarchists and outright fascists—which called for “salvation of the Fatherland...on the basis of civil peace and national trust.” Thus all these groups *opposed* the recent air traffic controllers strike.

With their call for privatization through the “work collectives,” the Stalinist has-beens seek to be the “left” flank of the counterrevolution’s corporatist wing, whose most powerful representative is the Volsky-Rutskoi Civic Union bloc. Aligned with them is the former official trade-union bureaucracy, now calling itself the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR). Where Yeltsin’s prime minister Gaidar grovels to the West for infusions of capital and promotes a fantastical scheme for privatization through distribution of shareholding vouchers to the entire population, the Volsky/Rutskoi faction hopes to maintain a strong military-industrial sector by placing ownership directly in the hands of the former managers.

In the name of building the *derzhava*, the tsarist watchword for a Russian strong state, the RKR & Co. have willingly submerged themselves in every reactionary lash-up, from the fascistic Russian National Sobor of the anti-Communist, anti-Semite Sterligov (who is now pushing restoration of the tsarist throne) to the newly founded “left-right” National Salvation Front. Indeed, every grouping which issued out of the former CPSU—from the RKR to the SPT—accepts the “inevitability” of the “market economy” (restoration of capitalism). They’re simply squabbling over the terms—who gets to feed at the trough (see “Stalinist Has-Beens: Left Wing of Nationalist Counterrevolution,” *WW* No. 561, 16 October). Meanwhile, the explicitly social-democratic Labor Party (PT) of Boris Kagartitsky is in bed with a section of the FNPR bureaucracy, and participates in the All-Russian Toiling Assembly, which is heavily populated by Volsky’s people and whose chairman Konstantinov is vice president of the Sobor.

Every one of the numerous Stalinist and social-democratic outfits has fallen into step behind the corporatist option, appealing for privatization through the “work collectives” (i.e.,



L.Y. Leonidov

**V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, leaders of the October Revolution of 1917, on its second anniversary in Moscow’s Red Square.**

factory managers). With their backs against the wall, many workers may look to their factory managers taking ownership of industry as a last-ditch defense against unemployment and immiseration.

Soviet workers should entertain no illusions that their livelihoods will be secure under a corporatist regime. Capitalism, whether under Volsky/Rutskoi or Yeltsin/Gaidar or some variant in between, necessarily means the whip of brutal exploitation and widespread unemployment.

### “State Capitalism”: Anti-Communist Myth

If the destruction of the Soviet Union has placed a final epitaph on the sordid history of Stalinism, it has also demolished the numerous false “theories” behind which various renegades from Trotskyism sought to mask their refusal to defend the gains of the October Revolution. The “theory” that the Soviet Union was a “state capitalist” society stands the Marxist analysis of capitalism on its head. It posits a truly bizarre form of “capitalism”—one in which capitalist competition and the law of value are external to the system, one marked not by cyclical crises of overproduction but by distortions and bottlenecks due to administrative fiat, one characterized not by chronic mass unemployment but by labor shortages. The purpose of the terminological sleight of hand, whether from the pen of Tony Cliff or his predecessors, was to deny any basis for defense of the Soviet Union.

While claiming to occupy a “third camp” (“neither Washington nor Moscow”), today the “state capitalists” join the imperialists in rejoicing over the “death of Communism.” In August 1991, the Cliffites cheered that “Communism Has Collapsed” and hailed the Yeltsinite ascendancy as “The Beginning, Not the End” (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991). The identification with imperialist anti-Communism is evident, but the “state capitalist” logic is absurd. Here we have supposedly just witnessed the remarkable spectacle of an entire “capitalist class” which simply committed suicide rather than seeking to defend its property. And the millions upon millions of working people

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## Workers State Strangled...

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in East Europe and the ex-USSR who are now being dragged down by immiseration, unemployment and fratricide aren't about to buy the notion that they are just going from one brand of capitalism to another, much less hail it.

"Third campists" of the second mobilization, like the political bandits of David North's "International Committee" and others, argue that Stalinism is "counterrevolutionary through and through." This flatly denies Trotsky's understanding of the "dual position" of the bureaucracy. More to the point, like Cliff's theory, the purpose is to wash their hands of defense of the Soviet Union. North claimed that from the beginning Gorbachev was bent on "the political, economic and social liquidation of all that remains of the conquests of the October Revolution" (*Perestroika Versus Socialism* [1989]). North then rushed to proclaim that it is "impossible to define...any of the republics" of the ex-USSR "as workers states" the moment Yeltsin decreed its juridical dissolution ("The End of the USSR," *Bulletin*, 10 January 1992).

The various theories defining the Stalinist bureaucracy as a "new class" or "counterrevolutionary through and through" unite in appealing to knee-jerk moralism. In contrast, Trotsky's dialectical and materialist analysis of the Soviet degenerated workers state, elaborated in *The Revolution Betrayed* and other writings, has stood the test of time and provides a program for action for the proletariat. Basing ourselves on this Marxist understanding, we pointed to the contradictory character of the initial Gorbachev reforms: "Gorbachev's *perestroika* not only goes against the immediate material interests of most workers but also affronts their deep reservoir of collective feeling. At the same time, the regime's call for *glasnost* permits a degree of organized dissent against official policies" (Spartacist League/U.S. conference document, "Toward Revolutionary Conjuncture," June 1987).

For the first couple of years, Gorbachev's neo-Bukharinite reforms had some effect in reviving the Soviet economy. Harvard economist Marshall Goldman, in his book *What Went Wrong with Perestroika* (1991), notes of Gorbachev's 1985-86 program of "intensification" and "acceleration" that "initially these reforms seemed to be working" and "industrial growth seemed to rebound." He even achieved the largest grain harvest in Soviet history (240 million tons in 1990). But the subsequent introduction of enterprise self-management on New Year's 1988 proved to be the decisive step finally leading to collapse. The abandonment of planning in a planned economy led to a breakdown in economic administration and widespread shortages and looting. The result, Goldman writes, was "the

undermining of the planning system and the collapse of the economy." As *perestroika* reforms failed, in August 1990, Gorbachev openly declared his support to capitalist restoration by endorsing the "500-Day Plan," only to back away from it later in his constant zigzagging.

Gorbachev's evolution from "market socialism" reforms to a program of outright capitalist restoration proved yet again the impossibility of "reforming" the Stalinist regime, a conception advanced by the likes of Ernest Mandel in his book *Beyond Perestroika* (1989). Whatever their quibbling differences, support for Yeltsin counterrevolution brought together all of these revisionists, from Cliff to North to Mandel—as well as the Militant group in Britain (formerly led by Ted Grant), associated with Sergei Beits' *Rabochiya Demokratiya* (Workers Democracy) in Russia. The bottom line for all of these outfits has been capitulation to social-democratic anti-Sovietism, just as a decade ago they were all united in their cheering for counter-revolutionary *Solidarność* in Poland and their denunciations of the Red Army intervention into Afghanistan.

In contrast, the Spartacist tendency proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and declared "Stop *Solidarność* Counterrevolution!" in Poland. In response to Gorbachev's 1989 pullout from Afghanistan in order to appease Washington, we warned it is far better to fight imperialism there than within the borders of the Soviet Union. But the Gorbachev regime didn't want to fight imperialism anywhere. "The decision to leave Afghanistan was the first and most difficult step," remarked Gorbachev's foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze recently, "Everything else flowed from that." A year after the Afghanistan withdrawal, Gorbachev gave the green light to capitalist reunification of Germany.

The ICL was unique in its unambiguous and forthright opposition to imperialist annexation of the DDR: the power of the Trotskyist program to show the way out of the collapse of Stalinism found a massive expression in the 250,000-strong anti-fascist, pro-Soviet demonstration on 3 January 1990 at Berlin's Treptow Park, which was initiated by the German Spartacists. The Stalinists, for their part, thought they could have counterrevolution in one country. But the sellout of the DDR directly prepared the destruction of the Soviet Union.

### Reforge the Fourth International!

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing sharpening of interimperialist rivalries have made the world a far more dangerous place. The "New World Disorder"—proclaimed during the U.S.-led imperialist slaughter in the Persian Gulf, to which Gorbachev gave his approval—has the hallmarks of the old world order which led to the slaughterhouse of World War I, but this time posing the threat of a nuclear conflagration. Imperialist unity, maintained for decades by the "Communist menace," has broken down as the contending powers fall upon each other, and vie to carve up the former Soviet bloc into neocolonies.

At the same time, there is opening up a new period of intensified class struggle. The semicolonial peoples of the world, now that the imperialist powers do not feel constrained by a Soviet counterweight, are being subjected to outright starvation. In the imperialist West, growing trade war and exploitation have already led to major class battles in Germany, Italy and Greece. The multiracial upheaval in Los Angeles following the verdict freeing the racist cops in the Rodney King beating testifies to the social instability in the United States. In East Europe and the ex-USSR, the working class will soon recover from the

### Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste

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numbing experience of counterrevolution and begin to fight against the ravages of capitalist exploitation. Poland already has been swept by one major strike after another over the past year.

The workers of Russia, the Ukraine and the other former Soviet republics still have time to regroup and strike back before anything approaching a viable system of capitalist exploitation is congealed. Hatred and bitterness toward Yeltsin and his ilk are seething. Unlike in the ex-DDR, where masses of working people bought the lie that D-mark *Anschluss* (annexation) would bring prosperity, in the former USSR there are few such positive illusions. There is, however, a widespread view that there is no alternative to the "market," for which the bankrupt Stalinists bear the main responsibility.

The road to recreating a full-fledged capitalism is not as smooth as the Nevsky Prospekt. To free itself of its would-be exploiters and oppressors, the working class must also assert itself as a "tribune of the people," opposing every manifestation of anti-Semitism and anti-woman and anti-homosexual bigotry, rising to the defense of all those—including African and Asian students, and the Central Asian peoples in Russia—who are increasingly exposed to violent racist terror. What is required above all is a revolutionary leadership capable of overcoming the divisions inspired by chauvinism and nationalism, clearing away the decades of false consciousness fostered by Stalinism, and linking the struggles in the ex-USSR to that of the world proletariat.

While social democrats squeal that "Soviet Communism" discredited socialism in the eyes of the masses, an even greater crime of Stalinism was the way it warped the consciousness of *pro-socialist* workers, filling their heads with anti-Marxist illusions such as "building socialism in one country," the "popular front" and the utopia of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. "Socialism in one country" meant not only the suppression of revolutionary struggle abroad, but the isolation of the Soviet working class from any connection with the international class struggle. For more than 60 years, Soviet workers were submerged in a cocoon walling them off from political developments around the world. In the course of fighting to reverse the counterrevolution which has plunged it into poverty and misery, the Soviet working class will necessarily have to reappropriate the revolutionary heritage which has been taken from it.

The proletariat which made the October Revolution learned from Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks that it was part of an international struggle. It understood that its only prospect for survival lay in the extension of the revolution to more advanced industrial powers, chiefly Germany. The opportunities were manifold, but the revolutionary parties outside Soviet Russia were too weak and politically immature to pursue them. The German Spartakist uprising of 1918-19 and the 1919 Hungarian Commune went down to bloody defeat. The possibility of the Red Army marching to the aid of the German workers in 1920



January, 1992: Spartacists protest outside Federal Reserve Bank in New York where Yeltsin was fêted by his Wall Street paymasters.

by unleashing proletarian revolution in Pilsudski's Poland was foiled. Finally, with the defeat of the German October in 1923, the Soviet proletariat succumbed to the demoralizing prospect of a lengthy period of isolation, which allowed the bureaucratic layer headed by Stalin to usurp political power. Thus was the revolution betrayed.

But this betrayal did not go unchallenged. The Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky continued the struggle for the authentic program of Leninism. In its struggle to defend and extend Soviet power, the Left Opposition urged a policy of planned industrialization to revive the enervated proletariat and enable the isolated workers state to hold out against imperialist encirclement. The Trotskyists fought uncompromisingly against the nascent bureaucracy's Great Russian chauvinism. They fought against the treacherous policies emanating from "socialism in one country," in the first instance the subversion of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 and the Anglo-Russian trade-union bloc which led to the knifing of the 1926 British General Strike. This led to the subordination of the German working class to Hitler's jackboot, to the outright suppression of the Spanish revolution in the late 1930s. By selling out revolutionary opportunities at the end of World War II, particularly in Italy, France and Greece, Stalinism enabled capitalism to survive, and thus prepared the way for its own ultimate demise.

With the utter liquidation of the Communist International as an instrument for world revolution, Trotsky organized the founding of the Fourth International in 1938. Today the International Communist League fights for the rebirth of the Fourth International, whose cadre were decimated by Stalinist and Hitlerite terror and which finally succumbed in the early 1950s to an internal revisionist challenge which denied the need for an independent revolutionary leadership. Only as part of the struggle to reforge an authentic world party of socialist revolution can the workers of the former Soviet Union cohere the leadership they need to sweep away the grotesque horrors they now confront.

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 564, 27 November

## Yellowknife Miners...

(continued from page 2)

declared its support for CASAW while the CUPW local pledged a donation.

In a July letter to the PDC expressing "deep appreciation for the support you have shown us," Bill Schram, then-president of CASAW Local 4, appealed for further assistance: "The battle we fight here could be repeated in your own area, if other employers follow the example of 'our' scabbing company. Help us defeat this corporate assault!"

Clearly many unionists want to do exactly that. At the B.C. Federation of Labour convention held in Vancouver in late November, delegate after delegate rose to tell how much their union locals had sent to Yellowknife. A class-struggle leadership of the workers movement surely wouldn't find it too difficult to bring Royal Oak to heel. But instead of flexing labor's muscle in support of the CASAW strikers, the Fed bureaucrats sang the praises of "anti-scab" legislation like that recently introduced by the B.C. NDP government. Similar legislation was recently enacted by Bob Rae's Ontario NDP, with fulsome support from leaders of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

This is a conscious attempt by the pro-capitalist union tops and social democrats to prevent workers' anger and militancy from developing into hard class struggle. It's a dangerous lie to say that the bosses' state—the governments, cops and courts—can be "pressured" to defend the interests of working people. Just look at Yellowknife! So one day the cops are the "Royal Oak Mounted Police" who beat strikers trying to stop the scabs, and the next they're going to act like the CASAW strike support committee? That's about as likely as Royal Oak owner Margaret Witte joining CLASS.

The weapons of labor are the mass picket, the secondary picket, refusing to handle "hot" cargo—the class struggle. These are precisely the weapons that the social democrats' "anti-scab" legislation seeks to outlaw. The B.C. NDP's Bill 84, for example, essentially outlaws secondary picketing—as did the labor-hating Socreds' infamous Bill 19. And like the Socreds, the NDP wants to declare strikes in "essential services" illegal.

Furthermore, the federal NDP and the leadership of the



no credit

### RCMP riot cops assault striking Giant gold miners.

Canadian Auto Workers (to which CASAW is affiliated) have successfully pushed Local 4 to agree to "arbitration" under the auspices of the Tories' federal Labour Ministry. So now, after six months of courageous struggle, the strikers' fate is in the hands of the very government that has backed Royal Oak and its scabs to the hilt!

The question really is, as the miners song says, "Which side are you on?" As the battle of Royal Oak clearly illuminates, the bosses' state is the conscious enemy of working people. To take on that state and win, the working class must also become conscious, of its enemies and of its allies. The NDP and the trade union brass are defenders of the capitalist order. Various fake-leftists (like the badly misnamed *Militant*) tail the NDP and are horrified when strike supporters (who they call "goons") try and teach scabs (who they politely term "replacement workers") that picket lines mean don't cross. But organized into a revolutionary workers party, courageous and determined militants can triumph not only against the likes of Royal Oak but against the whole capitalist system whose "bottom line" is written in the blood and sweat of the working class. Victory to the CASAW strike! ■

## Tories, NDP...

(continued from page 3)

who ranted about the need to defend "Canadian jobs" from cheap foreign competition.

This is all poison to the workers movement, dividing it along national and racial lines and diverting just anger away from the real enemy—our "own" capitalist class. Those who, like the New Democrats, wrap themselves in the Maple Leaf flag of Canadian imperialism can offer no way out of the disaster faced by working people. When it comes to war, like the imperialist massacre of Iraq two years ago or the neo-colonialist assault on Somalia today, the NDP are front and center, lining up working people for Ottawa and Washington. Throughout the imperialists' decades-long Cold War crusade to destroy the gains of the Russian Revolution, the NDP were the most fervent champions of anti-communism within the workers movement, including helping to witchhunt Communist militants out of the unions.

When the NDP first came to power in Ontario two years ago,

various pretend socialists hailed their victory as a big step forward for workers and the oppressed. The *Tribune* (17 September 1990) greeted Rae's win with "giddy elation"; *Socialist Worker* (October 1990) said the "first instinct of every genuine socialist" should be to "celebrate" the NDP victory; *Socialist Challenge* (October/November 1990) claimed it signaled an "opening for the left."

In contrast, we warned from the start that the NDP had pledged to rule for the Bay Street bosses, writing that: "Any serious fight against growing unemployment, homelessness and poverty in Canada's industrial heartland will necessarily require a fight *against* the pro-capitalist NDP government" (SC No. 82, January/February 1991). That means a fight for a revolutionary workers party, built through breaking working people away from the thoroughly pro-capitalist New Democrats in the course of hard class struggle. Capitalism in Canada, and throughout North America, is self-evidently bankrupt. The only answer lies in the fight for socialist revolution and a workers government, which alone can begin to put the vast resources of this society at the service of all humanity. ■



# Charlottetown Discord

The capitalist rulers in Ottawa and the provinces suffered a stinging rebuke with the defeat of their Charlottetown constitutional accord in the October 26 referendum. Hatred for the federal Mulroney government and a wave of populism against the entire political "establishment"—from the Tories and Liberals and their Chambers of Commerce to the NDP and the union bureaucracy in English Canada—brought defeat for the accord in Quebec and five other provinces.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste called on working people to vote "No" in this referendum, whose central aim was to rally the population to endorse a stabilized, unitary bourgeois Canada. In sharp opposition to the anti-Quebec reactionaries of the Reform Party and also the Quebec bourgeois nationalists, we put forward a program for united working-class struggle coast to coast against all wings of the capitalists. We print below the statement issued by the TL/LT.

## Vote "No" to Mulroney/Bourassa's Constitution Con Game!

### Charlottetown Accord Aims to Strengthen Bosses' State Against Workers, Minorities

The capitalist rulers in Ottawa and the provinces want to use the October 26 constitutional referendum to rally the population to "save Canada." They are seeking a vote of confidence in order to "resolve" the question of Quebec independence and shore up the reactionary status quo of a "united" imperialist state in the face of looming global trade war. Behind their endeavor stands a grotesque popular-front alliance embracing the Maple Leaf social democrats of the NDP and Bob White's Canadian Labour Congress. We call on the working people coast to coast to reject this bosses' accord with a resounding No vote!

Capitalist Canada—with its mass unemployment, its crumbling industries, its racist scapegoating of minorities—is bankrupt. With domestic political instability a barrier to capital investment, decisive sections of the bourgeoisie in both English Canada and Quebec want to stop the endless constitutional bickering and quell the centrifugal disintegration of the country that was exacerbated by the failure of Meech Lake. The Charlottetown accord offers vague, meaningless sops which will do nothing to redress the special oppression of the Québécois, Native people and other minorities. Its purpose is to strengthen the power of the Canadian state to prepare for stepped-up attacks on the unions, social programs and the rights of women and minorities in the name of capitalist "competitiveness."

From the far right, the yahoos of the Reform Party screech that the accord gives the store away to Quebec. In fact, the "distinct society" clause covers for a denial of Quebec's right to self-determination and its continued forcible retention in the Canadian state. The repeated dire warnings by Joe Clark and others about the possibility of civil war if the accord fails are not just rhetorical overkill designed to scare up Yes votes. Recall how in 1970 Ottawa sent troops into Quebec under the War Measures Act, abolishing civil rights and arresting hundreds of left-wing activists.

Meanwhile the Quebec union tops call for opposition...in the name of solidarity with the anti-labor bourgeois nationalists of the Parti and Bloc Québécois. The Québécois bosses, federalists and sovereignists alike, wrap themselves in the *fleurdelisé* only in order to become more fully "*maîtres chez eux*" (masters in their own house) against the workers, while pushing xenophobic racism against Native people and immigrants. Jacques Parizeau

was among the loudest of the *racaille* baying for Native blood during the police/army assault on the Mohawks at Oka last year.

Four years ago, the NDP and labor misleaders channeled opposition to free trade into a crusade for trade protectionism, demanding "Canadian jobs for Canadian workers." They helped foster the very Canadian nationalist climate which Mulroney today exploits in an attempt to bolster his flagging rule. Now the NDP and labor tops have forged an open alliance with the Tories in the patriotic Canada Committee. Meanwhile NDP governments in Ontario, B.C. and elsewhere continue their own austerity attacks on the workers. Preaching support for their "own" capitalist bosses, the NDP/CLC on the one hand and the Quebec union bureaucrats on the other are setting workers at each others' throats along national lines.

Feminist organizations like the National Action Committee (NAC) have come out against the accord, pointing out correctly that its devolution of powers to the provinces threatens social programs like medicare and that it actually reduces legal rights for aboriginal women, among others. But NAC can argue only on the terrain of constitutional tinkering. Its main campaign is for equal representation for women in the revamped Senate—as if more Barbara McDougalls, Sheila Coppins and Audrey McLaughlins (or Margaret Thatchers) would do anything whatsoever for women's rights. Unlike these bourgeois feminists, we call for *abolition* of the anti-democratic Senate, along with the monarchy and the English queen's representative, the governor-general.

Incredibly, one "left" organization, the International Socialists (I.S.), has actually joined the campaign for Mulroney's deal. Their paper *Socialist Worker* (September 1992) praises the accord for granting fictitious "rights" to Quebec and Native people, adding "That's why the deal should be approved, ratified and signed." For years the I.S. has howled with the imperialist wolves for the dismemberment and destruction of the Soviet Union and deformed workers states of East Europe. Now they take a short break from celebrating the "death of communism" to...cheer for the consolidation and strengthening of the Canadian imperialist state!

In Montreal, the small Action Socialiste group is calling for abstention ("ballot spoiling"), counterposing their own bourgeois constitution which would "change Canada" through gimmicks like an elected "Chamber of Nationalities." Utterly incapable of presenting a programmatic alternative to Quebec nationalism, Action Socialiste calls to patch up the existing federal capitalist state, thus capitulating to anglo chauvinism just like their unlamented Maoist forebears of the late 1970s.

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## Charlottetown Discord...

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Whether in Quebec or English Canada, refusal to call for opposition to Mulroney and Bourassa's deal amounts to backhanded support for the "pro-Canada" popular front.

### A Fighting, Internationalist Alternative

Our perspective is the *fighting unity of the working class*—English Canadian, Québécois, immigrant—against Mulroney, Bourassa, all the provincial premiers and the entire gang of capitalist rulers who have looted this country in the name of private profit. We defend Quebec's *unconditional right to self-determination*, i.e. the right to form a separate state. This is an integral part of our fight against chauvinism in English Canada, with the goal of removing barriers to common class struggle against the bosses.

At the same time, we call on the workers of Quebec to *reject the chimera of sovereignty* and oppose their "own" bourgeois nationalists. The Quebec union bureaucrats who embrace anti-labor demagogues like Parizeau—even as thousands of jobs are slashed by *pure laine* Québécois capitalists—are leading workers like lambs to the slaughter. The thousands of PSAC unionists, English Canadian, Québécois and immigrant alike, who stood shoulder-to-shoulder on mass pickets in Ottawa/Hull during last year's government workers strike showed the way toward common struggle against a common enemy.

Against the chauvinists in both English Canada and Quebec we call for *equal language rights for all*. We defend the rights of immigrants, denouncing reactionary legislation like the new federal Bill C-86 which aims to bar the doors to desperate refugees, and demand *full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families*. We defend Native land claims while fighting for a profound socialist revolution which alone can provide for the all-sided, voluntary integration of the aboriginal peoples into an egalitarian society.

### Against the Imperialist New World Order— For a Socialist Future!

With the collapse of Stalinist rule in East Europe and the Soviet Union we are witnessing today a sharp new rise of interimperialist tensions and trade wars, as the most powerful capitalist states (the U.S., Japan and Germany) compete for world domination. This has spawned new waves of national

chauvinism, targeting immigrants and other minorities. And beyond this lies the deadly specter of an interimperialist World War III—this time with nuclear weapons.

At bottom, the Charlottetown accord is about strengthening the Canadian capitalist state as a junior ally of the U.S. for the coming interimperialist conflicts. Four years ago we called for internationalist opposition to the free trade deal which aims at shoring up a U.S.-centered "Fortress North America" against imperialist rivals in West Europe and Japan. The extension of free trade south to Mexico will mean the economic rape of that poor country by North American imperialists. Denouncing the chauvinist protectionism of the labor tops, we fight for workers' solidarity from Montreal and Toronto to Los Angeles and Mexico City.

Similarly, we oppose in principle the capitalist European Community—a bosses' alliance directed against the workers, against imperialist rivals and, in its origins, against the Soviet Union—despite the fact that chauvinists and even fascists like the French National Front also oppose it for their own reasons. One of the reasons the capitalists like to use plebiscites and referenda is precisely because at the ballot box you can't differentiate your No vote from those who are in opposition for very different reasons.

Our call for militant opposition to Mulroney's Charlottetown accord comes from the perspective of *proletarian internationalism*. For the same reason, if defeat for the accord produces the much-predicted disintegrative effects on the federation, we would oppose the break-up of English Canada which at present could only strengthen the power of U.S. imperialism against the working people of North America and the world.

No constitutional or parliamentary-reformist tinkering will solve the massive problems facing workers and the oppressed under this crisis-wracked system. With our co-thinkers in the U.S., Mexico and throughout the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), we fight to build *revolutionary workers parties* which can overthrow decrepit capitalism everywhere and win a future for us all. Here, that means a party which defends Quebec's national rights and takes up the cause of immigrants, Native people, women and all oppressed; a party built by breaking working people from the anglo-chauvinist NDP in English Canada and the anti-labor nationalists in Quebec; a party committed to the fight for *North American socialist revolution*. Join us!

—Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste  
30 September 1992

## Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste Forums

### Class Struggles Erupt Against New World Disorder

## Workers of Europe: Crush the Fascists, Fight for Power!

Toronto

Saturday, January 16

7:30 p.m.

St. Paul's Centre  
427 Bloor St. West

(one block west of Spadina)

For more information: (416) 593-4138

Vancouver

Friday, January 22

7:30 p.m.

Britannia Comm. Ctr., Rm. L3  
1661 Napier Street  
(off Commercial Drive)

For more information: (604) 687-0353

Montreal

Saturday, January 30

7:30 p.m.

Centre St.-Pierre  
1212, rue Panet  
(Métro Beaudry)

For more information: (514) 849-6540

# Action Socialiste in the Camp of "Canadian Unity"

When the Mulroney government came up with its "unity" referendum, appealing to the population to endorse its efforts to shore up a stable unitary state, we Trotskyists said an emphatic "No!" In opposition to the Anglo-chauvinists of the Reform Party on the one hand and the Quebec nationalists on the other, we sought to intersect the evident hatred of the powers-that-be among the working class and oppressed with a program for united proletarian struggle against the capitalist rulers. In response, the small Montreal Maoist group Action Socialiste (AS) has published an article in its newspaper *Socialisme Maintenant* (November-December 1992) titled "The Trotskyist NO: A Submission to the Bourgeoisie." By AS's lights, the only "proletarian" position that could conceivably be taken in response to the call for a "Yes" or "No" vote on the preservation and reinforcement of the Canadian bourgeois state was to...abstain!

During the referendum campaign, Action Socialiste (which sees "Shining Path" in Peru as its role model for "revolutionary" struggle) got together with "Mobilisation" (an AS split-off) and the professional anti-Spartacists of the "Bolshevik Tendency" to form a "Progressive Coalition for Annulment." This Coalition issued a leaflet which argued that the Charlottetown accord "will only promote further confrontations, national intolerance and xenophobia, sowing disunity within and between the working class and other oppressed groups. Despite superficial camouflage, the deal negates national and democratic rights for the oppressed." Fair enough. But what conclusion did the "Progressive Coalition" draw from this? "There is only one choice in this referendum," they said: "Spoil your ballot!"

Why? Because the "major political organizations opposed to this deal (Parti québécois, Bloc québécois, Reform Party, Confederation of Regions Party, Social Credit), who dominate the NO forces, are waging their struggle under the reactionary banners of chauvinism and narrow nationalism." So they declared that only by abstaining could one "promote the political independence of the working class." How about the independent mobilization of the working class under its own banners in opposition to the bourgeois accord and the reactionary chauvinist forces? Such an idea is obviously inconceivable to Action Socialiste & Co.

For these latter-day Maoists, who harken back to the days when Chairman Mao preached the "bloc of four classes," it's never really a question of the "independence of the working class." In fact, AS's call for abstention was a backdoor way into the "Canadian unity" camp. While denouncing our opposition to the referendum as a "submission to the bourgeoisie," in another *Socialisme Maintenant* article (October 1992), AS praises the International Socialists, who called for support to Mulroney's deal:

"*Socialist Worker*, their monthly newspaper, explained that it is necessary to support this deal because we can find in it the beginning of a favorable response to the historical demands of Quebec and the Natives (which is accurate). Showing a much stronger political sense than all the organizations which lined up for the No, the International Socialists have well understood that it is the most reactionary and

chauvinist forces who would line up in the No camp."

In short, Action Socialiste's call to "spoil your ballot" was a coward's "Yes." Unlike the I.S. in English Canada, who could find "proletarian" cover behind the NDP social democrats and the English Canadian labor bureaucracy, for AS in Quebec an uncamouflaged Yes would have meant openly embracing Mulroney and Bourassa. So they hid behind an abstention to avoid losing all credibility.

## Just Who Is "Submitting to the Bourgeoisie"?

In its polemic against us, Action Socialiste sneers: "The Trotskyists' NO has not permitted us to advance toward the construction of the party which will lead the revolutionary war



## Action Socialiste newspaper denounces Trotskyism, abstains on bourgeois rule.

against the bourgeoisie (this probably wasn't their goal anyway)." It certainly isn't the goal of AS, who wait that any kind of independent communist intervention in the referendum campaign was precluded. They opine defeatedly:

"if there is an emergence and deepening of the political crisis, what guarantee do we have that the solution coming out of this will really be proletarian? We do not have the party to profit from such a crisis and transform it to our advantage. The crisis will necessarily have a bourgeois solution.... Historical experience shows that when the bourgeoisie is not able to maintain cohesion and unity in its camp, it comes to adopt sharper solutions, which can go...as far as fascism."

AS raises the specter of a far-right "bourgeois solution" in order to offer their own...bourgeois solution. These "socialists" consider the working class so abysmally impotent that, barring an (impossible) "guarantee" of proletarian revolution, capitalist "cohesion and unity" must be maintained against threats from the right! So they offer a few "left" embellishments for bourgeois rule, couched as "a program of democratic demands on the national question" under the watchword "Change Canada."

But there is one genuine, indeed fundamental, democratic demand which AS never does manage to raise: the unconditional defense of Quebec's right to self-determination! Indeed, its "Progressive Coalition" leaflet not only "omits" this demand, it tries to write the English Conquest and the subjugation of the

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## Action Socialiste...

(continued from page 19)

Québécois people out of history altogether, presenting Canada as a country where "since its inception...the Quebec and English Canadian ruling classes have been engaged in unequal struggle over the division of powers." AS's refusal to call for defense of Quebec's right to self-determination necessarily means support to the Anglo-chauvinist status quo. Thus all its "democratic demands" amount to nothing more than attempts to prettify the existing, oppressive Canadian capitalist state!

For further proof, look at the cover of the same issue of *Socialisme Maintenant* which polemicizes against the Trotskyists' "No." Here we have a large photo with a placard reading "Brown, black, red, yellow or white, all Canadians must be united." But "Canadians unite" is Mulroney's line. (Whatever happened to Marx's "Workers of the world unite"?) The racist rulers in Ottawa tried to paint their referendum as "progressive" for Native people and other minorities—and AS bought this lie, denouncing our opposition to the accord as a "capitulation to anti-Native chauvinism." Yet Native people voted No, by an overwhelming 62 percent! Were they, too, "capitulating to chauvinism"?

### Exhuming Quebec Maoism...

The group of Montreal students who formed Action Socialiste seven years ago began by being rightly critical of the rise of right-wing nationalism in Quebec. Repelled by the *péquist* camp followers of Gauche Socialiste (Quebec adherents of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat) who were their main left competitors, for a time AS moved leftward in an empirical, inconsistent fashion. But, unwilling to generalize their anti-nationalist impulses into a consistent revolutionary internationalist (i.e., Trotskyist) program, AS ended up locking onto a latter-day version of Maoism. Now its press features fond remembrances of defunct Quebec Maoist groups like the Workers Communist Party and "In Struggle," while ridiculous headlines proclaim that "The Maoist Revolution Is Shaking the World Again."

But AS can only replay Maoism as farce. Back in the 1960s hundreds of thousands of North American youth were radicalized by the struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants against U.S. imperialism. For a time, big parts of the "New Left" supported Maoism, mistakenly seeing in the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy some kind of "progressive" alternative to Brezhnev's USSR. But when Mao embraced U.S. president Nixon in the early 1970s this ushered in a new and deeply reactionary U.S.-China alliance against the Soviet Union. The Maoists entered into deep crisis; their best elements were won away to Trotskyism and the politics of the rest soon descended from the grotesque to the criminal.

Quebec's Maoists were a case study in this degeneration. Coming out against Quebec nationalism, they called for...a stronger Canadian bourgeois state. Anti-Sovietism provided the bridge to Great Canadian chauvinism: when the Chinese bureaucracy called to reinforce the anti-Soviet NATO military alliance, the Maoist *Forge* (3 June 1976) wrote that strengthening the Canadian armed forces would be "positive," "if they are used for territorial defense against the voracious appetites of the superpowers." The Maoists went on to defend crime after crime of the Chinese bureaucracy, from supporting Chilean dictator Pinochet to hailing the South African invasion of

Angola as a blow against Soviet and Cuban "imperialism." The heroic Vietnamese too were denounced as "imperialists" for overthrowing the Chinese-backed genocidal butcher Pol Pot in Cambodia. By 1981-82, the cynical and demoralized remnants of Quebec Maoism vanished like a puff of smoke.

### ...and Scabbing on Defense of the Soviet Union

In the end, for AS as for its forebears, it all comes back to the Russian question. "The Spartacists," complains *Socialisme Maintenant*, "have made it a point of honor to call for absolute defense of the assaults led by the revisionist ex-USSR against the dominated nations." Some AS members have even verbally claimed that the crushing of Nazi Germany by the Soviet Red Army was a case of "Russian imperialist appetites"! Over Afghanistan, like the rest of the anti-Soviet "left" AS sided with the CIA-financed, woman-hating mujahedin cutthroats, demanding the USSR end its supposed "war of occupation." In contrast we hailed the Red Army and called to extend the gains of October to the Afghan peoples. Well, AS won: Soviet troops are out, the mullahs are in, women are back in veils and blood is flowing in the streets.

Gorbachev's treacherous pullout from Afghanistan was the signal for the subsequent counterrevolution from East Germany to the ex-USSR. This unprecedented defeat for the world working class has unleashed waves of fratricidal nationalism and fascist terror everywhere. But for AS this is of no account: they were "neutral," you see, in what they ludicrously termed a fight between different "factions" of the "bourgeoisies" in East Europe and the Soviet Union. These countries used to be capitalist, claims AS, now they have undergone counterrevolution to become...capitalist.

Like all reformists, AS has zero confidence in the ability of the proletariat to destroy capitalism through internationalist socialist revolution. So they cheer for the atavistic, anti-working class Shining Path in Peru (but we don't see them heading up into the Laurentians arms in hand). They enlisted in the imperialists' Cold War crusade against the USSR. And they stand with Mulroney, the Liberals and the chauvinist social democrats and union tops, concocting "democratic" programs for a united capitalist Canada.

Action Socialiste can call itself whatever it wants, but militants looking for action in the struggle for socialism need to look to the Trotskyists of the International Communist League. Reheating the mess of Maoist pottage doesn't make it any more palatable. ■

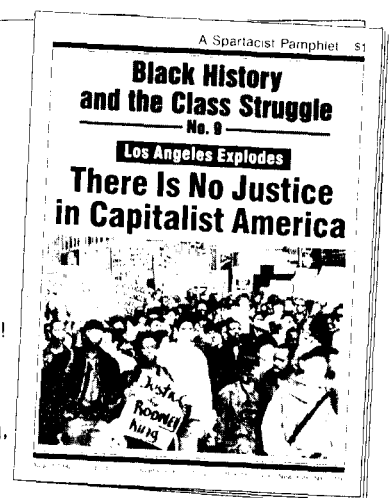
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## Germany...

(continued from page 24)

constitutional right to asylum, thus handing the Nazis a victory in their "foreigners out" drive. And federal interior minister Seiters is calling for limitations on the right to demonstrate.

Some Social Democratic (SPD) spokesmen and the ex-Stalinist Party of Democratic Socialism are calling for banning right-wing "extremist" organizations. But as the Marxist analysis of the state explains, and historical experience shows, such measures will inevitably be used mainly against the left.

The situation cries out for mass united-front working-class mobilization, to bring out the social power of workers and immigrants against the Nazis and to defend refugees. This is the program Leon Trotsky repeatedly called for in the early 1930s, as the Social Democrats and Stalinists let Hitler march to power unhindered.

As the murder of Silvio Meier became known, there was a spontaneous march of several hundred protesters on Saturday evening. On Sunday, some 5,000 marched, mostly semi-anarchist *Autonome* and squatters, to denounce the Nazi murder. The SpAD marched under a red banner calling to "Stop the Nazis with Workers United-Front Action! Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrant Workers and Their Families!"

During the demonstration, *Autonome* repeatedly physically attacked the Spartakist contingent and attempted to destroy SpAD signs and banners, because they consider workers to be just as reactionary as the fascists. However, the Spartakists stood their ground, and a number of immigrants and groups helped in the successful defense of the SpAD contingent. The Spartakists also defended a small group of TKP-ML Turkish Maoists who were attacked. "Down with anti-communist censorship!" the SpAD chanted.

The blind anti-working-class sectoralism of the *Autonome* is downright suicidal. The Nazis are the reserve troops of the Fourth Reich, who have flourished on the nationalist breeding

ground of capitalist reunification. They cannot be fought with impotent declarations of "rage" any more than with popular-front demonstrations headed by racist politicians concerned about "the image of Germany abroad." The fascist scum won't be defeated by random brawls, and certainly not by anti-communist assaults.

In recent weeks, tens of thousands of youth have gone into the streets to protest not only against Nazi attacks but also against the parliamentary debate over gutting the right to asylum, including the vile role of the SPD in the racist anti-immigrant popular front. These youth must be won to fight for the independent mobilization of the working class, including the key component of immigrant workers, who are increasingly the target of fascist attacks. This is the program of the SpAD.

In fact, the unions are feeling intense pressure to act. A 5,000-strong demonstration yesterday in Berlin was called by the DGB (German union federation), as well as the Alternative Slate/Greens and immigrant groups. There were union contingents with shop stewards and factory council members, notably from the teachers union, and a delegation of metal workers.

Teachers union representatives said that after the Rostock pogroms, the phones at DGB headquarters were ringing off the hook with requests from the plants for buses to take protesters to demonstrate at the Baltic port, but the DGB tops refused. The heavily immigrant metal workers union together with the ÖTV public employees union could defend the refugee hostels and make the subways secure with workers defense guards.

The Spartakist Workers Party and the International Communist League uniquely fought against capitalist reunification of Germany, and we have continued to fight against its consequences, including mass unemployment, attacks on women's rights, anti-Semitism and racist terror. At the Berlin protests, the Spartakists shouted out: "The working class will avenge Silvio Meier!" We are fighting for socialist revolution, which will sweep away the fascist plague once and for all.

—Adapted from Workers Vanguard No. 564, 27 November

## Trotskyists Say: "Freedom for Erich Honecker!"



Le Bolchévik



CNN

The anti-Communist show trial of Erich Honecker and other leaders of the former DDR (East Germany) opened in Berlin on November 12. Sections of the International Communist League protested this witchhunt, in Paris (left) on November 7, anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, and outside the courtroom in Berlin (right). The Trotskyists declared: "Defending the DDR Was Not a Crime, Selling It Out Was," and "Stalinism Is Dead, Communism Lives."

# Labor Must Crush the Fascists!

The sharp rise in Nazi outrages in Europe, fueled by the victory of capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the former Soviet Union, has found its echo in a new wave of terror attacks and provocations by fascists in Canada. On November 29 six skinhead thugs brutally murdered 51-year-old Montreal engineer Yves Lalonde. Lalonde was out jogging in Angrignon Park, a regular meeting place for gay men, when the Nazis savagely smashed his skull with wooden planks and baseball bats. Just the night before in Toronto racist terrorists targeted the Native Canadian Centre and the leftist Pathfinder bookstore, while earlier in the month there was an arson attack on the Kitchener home of an anti-fascist who had picketed a store where Hitler-lover David Irving was to speak.

Decent people across the country have mobilized on anti-Nazi protests, looking for a program to sweep the fascists from the streets for good. But they're not going to get it from the liberals, NDPers and their fake-left tails who are presently running most of the protests. Take for example one recently formed organization calling itself "Klanbusters." Its inaugural public meeting in Toronto last September attracted dozens of young people with the promise of fighting the upsurge in fascist provocations. Yet those attending found themselves being lectured by one speaker after another on "networking with the FBI and local police" and "training cops and skinheads to promote multicultural sensitivity"!

The cops gave a straightforward example of their idea of "networking" when they staged a 5,000-strong armed rally at the Ontario Legislature in late October protesting some mild new regulations calling for reports when they draw their weapons. Toronto police have gunned down nine blacks in the last four years, and when a lone protester arrived at the park with a sign reading "No more open season on black youth!" he was attacked by a mob of crazed cops screaming "Go back to Trinidad, where you belong!" As to bringing "sensitivity" to the degenerate skinhead scum, history has shown beyond the shadow of a doubt that "multicultural awareness" is best provided when detachments of the labor movement give them a closer acquaintance with the pavement.

But during the Klanbusters "discussion period," when a Trotskyist League spokesman called for labor/minority mobilizations to smash the Klan and explained how the cops' role is to "serve and protect" the racist status quo, the panelists erupted in a vicious anti-red frenzy, equating communists with the Nazis! The racist American rulers made the same murderous equation when Nazi/KKK gunmen (headed up by a government agent) shot down and murdered five anti-racist protesters in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979.

Fascism was a movement born and nurtured by crisis-racked capitalism after the victorious Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks. During the 1920s and 30s, the brownshirted thugs plied their trade as capitalist shock troops, smashing trade unions and other workers organizations and preparing their genocidal horrors against Jews, Gypsies and other minorities. In Hitler's Nazis, bourgeois governments from Churchill to Mackenzie King saw an ally against the specter of international workers revolution. In a March 1933 editorial, for example, the *Toronto Evening Telegram* openly endorsed Hitler, singling out for special praise "his desire to keep the germ of communism from growing to full bloom." It was the Red Army which crushed Hitlerite fascism in 1945. Nothing better



SC photo

TL on anti-fascist protest, Vancouver, December 1991.

illustrates the defeat suffered by working people the world over in the destruction of the Soviet Union than the rampant spread of reactionary nationalism and the genocidal fascist movements which have issued from this victory of "free enterprise."

Outfits like Klanbusters seek to corral people who hate the fascists—particularly youth who see in the rise of racist terror what imperialism's "New World Order" has in store for them—into placing their faith in the capitalist state. But it is precisely this capitalist state which fills the sails of the race terrorists. Presiding over the worst economic collapse since the 1930s, Canada's rulers, like their European and U.S. counterparts, have taken more and more direct aim at workers and minorities. The federal government's virulently racist Bill C-86 targets all refugees and immigrants as potential terrorists and "criminals," and the Tories have also announced new restrictions slashing by thousands the number of refugees who will be accepted into the country in 1993. As it is, thousands of dark-skinned refugees are already being hunted down for deportation to blood-soaked reactionary tyrannies. Full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!

Contrast the government's brutal attacks on refugees to its kid-glove treatment of infamous British Hitlerite David Irving on his recent tour of Canada. At first immigration officials declared that Irving was "unwelcome" and would be prevented from entering the country. Then federal officials worked out a deal with this Nazi, allowing him to proceed with his hate rallies while he "appealed" his deportation. The bosses' flagship newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, took up Irving's cause in an editorial, calling this fascist a poor "writer in handcuffs" and obscenely comparing him to persecuted author Salman Rushdie! Irving, for his part, praised the RCMP and immigration cops and proclaimed that Canada is "a country I adore."

Indeed, racists and anti-Semites the world over have good reason to "adore Canada": after barring the path of European Jews fleeing fascist genocide in World War II under the slogan

"none is too many," since the war Canadian governments from Mackenzie King to Brian Mulroney have provided safe haven for thousands of Nazi collaborators and war criminals, the anti-communist refuse of Hitler's Third Reich.

The fascists are the capitalists' dogs of war, to be unleashed when bourgeois rule is threatened by an insurgent working class. When they are relatively small and weak, as now, they can and must be smashed in the egg by the power of integrated labor. But from the outset it's necessary to understand that the fight against fascism requires a fight against the capitalist system that breeds it.

This elementary truth doesn't stand in the way of various self-proclaimed socialists whose "strategy" isn't much different than the Klanbuster variety. Take for example the International Socialists, a group which at every step cheered on the rising nationalism and capitalist counterrevolutions which have overrun East Europe and the Soviet Union. The I.S. underlined their virulent anti-communism last summer with a vicious physical assault on comrades of the Trotskyist League (see SC No. 89, Fall 1992). Last March, when a group of swastika-bearing Nazi thugs strutted through an anti-racist demonstration in Vancouver, the I.S. leader at the microphone reacted by assuring demonstrators that they were "protected" from the would-be killers—by plainclothes police in the crowd! And back in 1978 the I.S.' British parent group, the Socialist Workers Party, organized an "Anti Nazi League," a class-collaborationist outfit which consciously let the fascist National Front march through a working class and immigrant district in London while it held an "anti-Nazi carnival" on the other side of town! No wonder I.S. supporters sat on their hands at the Klanbusters meeting.

Even worse, another "left" group recently ran an article in its paper in praise of skinheads! This obscene piece, published

in *La Gauche* (October 1992), newspaper of Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge, begins with the words "Oi! comrade," goes on to talk about protecting the "culture" of "real skins," and features a graphic with the slogan "Skinheads arise!" For its part, the misnamed Communist League peddles *The Militant*, which proudly reports on how many copies were sold outside rallies for Hitler-loving Klansman David Duke. "*Militant* supporters sought to engage rally-goers in discussion," explains their bubble-brained reporter. These groups are on a fishing expedition for recruits from the fascists' swamp! This is downright disgusting...and deadly dangerous.

In stark contrast, we Trotskyists stand for organizing the social power of labor and minorities to *stop* the fascists. And it can be done: in Philadelphia in 1988, for example, our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. and the Partisan Defense Committee organized a 1,000-strong protest that spiked a KKK "white pride" rally. At the appointed time and place, there assembled not a mob of hooded nightriders and racist punks, but an integrated demonstration of trade unionists, anti-racist youth, blacks, gays, Jews and communists defended from any provocation by a defense guard composed overwhelmingly of unionized workers.

This successful action, like those previously in Washington, D.C., Detroit and elsewhere, was built in the face of determined opposition from the liberals and social democrats who above all fear the power of the proletariat. Mobilizing the social power of the labor movement and minorities in their own defense requires the leadership of a multiracial revolutionary vanguard party armed with a program to lead the working class in eradicating the weed of racist terror all the way down to its root: capitalism and the bourgeois state. We of the Trotskyist League are committed to forging such a party—join us! ■

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## Leftists, Unions Protest

# Nazi Murder Attacks in Germany

BERLIN, November 23—The continuing wave of terror by bands of fascist killers, kindled by the capitalist reunification of Germany, reached a frenzy last weekend with the brutal murder of five people. In response there have been counterattacks by militant leftists and spontaneous anti-fascist demonstrations, including the hesitant beginnings of action by the union movement. The Spartakist Workers Party (SpAD) is fighting for worker/immigrant mobilizations to crush the fascist terrorists.

On November 20, 27-year-old squatter Silvio Meier was knifed to death by Nazis in Berlin. He and some friends were going to a disco when they came across the fascists at an East Berlin subway stop. When the squatters went after the Nazi punks, they were stabbed amid shouts of "leftist pigs!" Silvio died from wounds to the lungs, while his two friends were hospitalized with severe injuries.

One of the attackers wore a patch proclaiming "I'm Proud to Be a German." As Silvio's friends wrote of this fascist slogan the next day in a leaflet titled "Rage and Mourning": "This stands for the pogroms in Rostock, Mannheim and elsewhere, for the murders of Nguyen Van Tu in Marzahn, of Antonio Amadeu in Eberswalde, of Thorsten Lamprecht in Magdeburg, of Mete Ekşi in Charlottenburg, of almost 30 people since 1990."

Then, Nazis in the west German town of Mölln, in the state of Schleswig-Holstein near Hamburg, staged an arson attack on two houses, murdering a family of Turkish immigrants: 51-year-old Bahiyye Arslan, her 10-year-old grandchild Yeliz and her 14-year-old niece Atze Yilmaz. Minutes after firebombs were thrown, fascists called the police, claiming credit and crying, "Heil Hitler!" The Turkish family had been living and working in Germany for six years. Nine others were wounded in this murderous attack on the immigrants' houses.

It also became known last weekend that a 53-year-old worker, who had called some skinheads in a pub "Nazi swine," was kicked to a pulp by the fascists with their military boots, drenched with schnapps and then lit afire. The innkeeper whipped up the attack, saying the man was a Jew, then helped to hide the body, which was later dumped in the Netherlands.

Also this weekend, a former official of the Italian Communist Party who has been working in Germany for 27 years was attacked in his apartment by Nazis. In the space of two days, rightists fired guns into a squatters community in Rathenow, firebombed a refugee home in Schöningen, and threw a hand



Berlin, November 4—Spartakist Workers Party contingent at leftist demonstration against fascism and racist state terror.

grenade into a home for refugee children in Hamburg. In Rostock, scene of the anti-Roma (Gypsy) pogrom last August, a dozen skinhead toughs roamed through the city smashing cars and terrorizing passers-by.

At the same time, in various towns of the ex-DDR (East Germany), left-wing youth have responded by going after the fascist killers. In Brandenburg, there was a street fight between skinheads and leftists, leaving one injured on each side. In Rudolstadt, leftists took a bat to one of the rightist scum. In Erfurt, two dozen leftist radicals broke up a neo-Nazi bar.

The bourgeois press is comparing these clashes between leftists and rightist thugs with the latter days of the Weimar Republic. The comparison is greatly overstated, and its purpose is to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. Thus after months of pointedly ignoring rightist attacks, the *Verfassungsschutz* (Office for the Protection of the Constitution) suddenly intervened in the investigation of the Mölln attack.

Meanwhile, federal chancellor Kohl has threatened to declare a "state emergency" in order to "modify" (eliminate) the  
*(continued on page 21)*