



Facing "free market" starvation

Moscow: mass protest against Yeltsin counterrevolution

MOSCOW—The imperialist media and the now anti-Communist Soviet television sought to portray Revolution Day, 7 November, as the wake after the "death of Communism". They even brought back the Romanov pretender to the tsarist throne. The new "rulers" tried to ban all celebration of the anniversary of the Bolsheviks taking power. The *New York Times* admitted that "more than 10,000 Communist loyalists" marched, but in fact as many as 90,000 came out in Moscow in an angry protest against the counterrevolution headed by Yeltsin and Gorbachev. In Leningrad, Kiev and elsewhere thousands more took to the streets.

Gathering before the Lenin statue in October Square, there were hundreds of red flags snapping in the stiff winter wind. In contrast to the regimented formal parades of previous years, this was an outpouring, heavily proletarian in composition, of people who wanted to take a stand for socialism. They chanted "Lenin! Lenin!" and "Down with the bourgeois dictatorship!" They carried hand-painted signs with such slogans as "Privatisation: A Dream for Millionaires, for the Workers a Graveyard", "Yeltsin: Russians Will Never Be Slaves—Your

continued on page 5



Spartacist photos

Rally defending Moscow's Lenin Museum, 14 September. Sign says, "Gorbachev betrayed Lenin, but I have not!" Banner at right reads, "Hands off Lenin and Socialism!"



For a Leninist-Trotskyist party!

Hate capitalism – hate Yeltsin, Kinnock!

Looking beyond the mind-numbing bourgeois politicking which comprises the run-up to the general election, the following general observation can be made: the Tory Party has softened up, the Labour Party has moved and consolidated markedly to the right and the bulk of the British left has followed suit.

With the British economy apparently in the most dire recessionary slump of any major capitalist country, the policies of Conservative and Labour parties are virtually indistinguishable in their anti-working-class reaction at home and imperialism abroad. From the one-sided Anglo-American led imperialist slaughter in the Gulf War to the backing of the Bush/Yeltsin drive for capitalist counterrevolution in the homeland of the October Revolution,

the Labour Party has functioned as bloodthirsty defender of the "New World Order", often outdoing the Tories. The domestic corollary has been Labour support to the gamut of Tory anti-trade union legislation; its implementation of the hated poll tax and victimisation of anti-poll tax protesters; its tepid non-opposition to the recent moves by Home Secretary Baker to tighten restrictions on immigration and asylum; its "law and order" rhetoric, *ad nauseam*.

Many advanced workers may well vote with their feet in the upcoming general election. But Neil Kinnock can count on the loyal support of the British fake left. And their pledge to the British social democracy goes hand in hand with treacherous support to the counterrevolutionary forces driving to-

wards capitalist restoration within the Soviet Union. The fake-Trotskyist left lauded Yeltsinite counterrevolution, joining the imperialist chorus cheering the "death of Communism". We Trotskyists have always insisted that those who cannot defend the existing gains of the workers movement are incapable of making new conquests. And over a period of years, beginning with Cold War II, Afghanistan and Poland, it has been capitulation to the imperialist drive to smash the Soviet workers state that has driven the fake left deep into the camp of Kinnockite social democracy.

A veteran miners leader who has been a regular reader of our press caught this point at a Spartacist public meeting in Brixton on 22 October when he said that the spectacle of self-pro-

claimed leftists lining up on the side of Yeltsin's counterrevolution had finally disabused him of his long-held wish that the "left would get together". Many miners have a very concrete idea of what the "magic of the market" has in store for the proletariat of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The direct link between union-busting at home and anti-Sovietism abroad was never clearer than during the bitter 1984-85 miners strike. On the eve of the strike, following Gerry Healy/Cliff Slaughter's WRP's witch hunting "exposé" of Scargill's opposition to counterrevolutionary Solidarność, the miners leader was relentlessly red-baited at the TUC and throughout the strike the TUC Cold Warriors were among the most vicious scabherders.

continued on page 8

Smash Extradition Act and the PTA!

Dessie Ellis frame-up collapses

The first case of trial under the 1987 Extradition Act backfired on the British and Irish governments as Dessie Ellis was freed by unanimous verdict of the jury after less than three hours deliberation. Immediately the vindictive British state had him rearrested and held overnight at Paddington Green police station while they rushed through a deportation order under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)! As Father Paddy Smith of the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas said: "They spend all this effort trying to get him into the country and now they can't wait to get him out of it" (*Guardian* 31 October). We say: down with extradition! Smash the PTA!

Obscenely this case is being used by the bourgeois press in Ireland to argue that the new Extradition Act is sound because Ellis got a "fair trial"! As the *Irish Times* (1 November) put it: "The outcome of the trial of Mr Dessie Ellis in

Britain has been welcomed in legal circles here as having positive implications for extradition in showing that the process of law worked and that British juries will acquit an Irishman on terrorist charges." Tell that to the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Maguire Seven, Winchester Three, Tottenham Three and many others! The point about Ellis' acquittal is that the jury was in no mood to buy yet more of the government's lies. The criminal judicial frame-ups resulting in the tragedy of years totalling many decades stolen from the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Maguire Seven is fresh in many people's memory. This time the frame-up was thrown out by the jury on the first go: an indictment of British "justice".

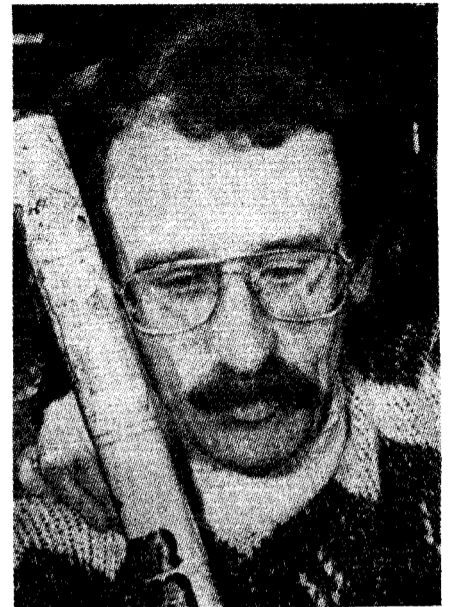
The Irish bourgeoisie's complicity with the British imperialists in setting up Republicans—implementing the extradition treaty, the Anglo-Irish Accord and its

own draconian state ban on broadcasting Sinn Fein—is underlined by the Dessie Ellis case. Now, even with the manifest failure of their designs in this case, Haughey & Co are trying to prepare public opinion for more extraditions; the *Times* (31 October) reports that while at the moment there are no cases to an English court pending, Scotland Yard has a list of "about a dozen major suspects that it would like to extradite". As Ellis put it in an interview with *An Phoblacht* (7 November): "Charles Haughey and Fianna Fáil are more interested in keeping the British happy than in protecting the rights of Irish citizens."

As we noted in our article "Haughey does Thatcher's dirty work/ Free Dessie Ellis!" (*Workers Hammer* no 118, November/December 1990), Ellis was charged with possession of explosives with intent to endanger life between 1981 and 1983. According to the account of his case from the Irish Anti-Extradition Committee in Dublin: "In fact it is physically impossible for Dessie Ellis to have had control of explosives in Britain, or to have conspired to cause explosions in Britain, because he was in custody, or otherwise under garda surveillance throughout the entire period covered by the extradition warrants." Dessie Ellis was arrested in May 1981 on domestic charges in Ireland and received bail some months later. In February 1982, he left for the United States. A month later he was re-arrested and deported back to Ireland in March 1983, where he was tried and sentenced to eight years in Portlaoise Prison. It was only at the time of his release date in April 1989 that extradition warrants were issued; the British judiciary consciously decided only to seek extradition at this late date in order to deny Ellis the chance to have a solicitor make a careful investigation in his defence.

The magistrate refused to prosecute Ellis on the original charges—they were too blatantly flimsy—and substituted two new charges alleging conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm by use of explosive substances and conspiracy to cause criminal damage. But in their eagerness to imprison Dessie Ellis the courts blundered, as the *Times* (31 October) reported:

"The magistrate's action 'unwittingly stirred up an international hornet's nest', Mr Robertson said. Under international law, no one who had



Dessie Ellis

An Phoblacht

been extradited could be tried for offences other than those on which they had been extradited.

"In May this year, the Director of Public Prosecutions applied to the High Court to quash the magistrate's directive, apparently to give it carte blanche to bring back the original charges. The application was refused."

The court's phony "evidence" against Ellis didn't wash and the British state saw yet another of its frame-up cases—in this instance against an avowed supporter of the IRA—collapse.

Dessie Ellis had some telling observations about his time spent in the British prisons: "Brixton was a hellhole. It was really deplorable, the conditions, everything, food, facilities, you name it. There's people hanging themselves there every second week. It's hard for everyone there, not just for me because I was Irish. It's every bit as bad for ordinary British prisoners, constant searches, etc. It's hard to describe, you'd have to be there" (*An Phoblacht* 7 November).

As Patrick Hill of the Birmingham Six stated outside the Old Bailey upon his release after years in prison for a crime he did not commit: "Justice! I don't think the people in there have got the intelligence nor the honesty to spell the word, never mind dispense it. They're rotten!"

continued on page 8



TROTSKY

James P Cannon on the Russian Question

In the 74th year since the great 1917 October Revolution the Soviet Union, undermined by decades of Stalinist sabotage, is in the grip of a capitalist-restorationist drive. It is the duty of revolutionary Trotskyists to fight tooth and nail against Yeltsinite counterrevolution. In October 1939 the founder of American Trotskyism, James P Cannon gave a speech on the Russian question at the time of his fight together with Leon Trotsky against those who sought to ditch defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

tion at the time of his fight together with Leon Trotsky against those who sought to ditch defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

The guiding lines of the revolutionary Marxist approach to the question have been: See the reality and see it whole at every stage; never surrender any position before it is lost; the worst of all capitulators is the one who capitulates before the decisive battle.

The International Left Opposition which originated in 1923 as an opposition in the Russian party (the original nucleus of the Fourth International) has always taken a precise attitude on the Russian question. In the first stages of the degeneration of which the Stalinist bureaucracy was the banner bearer the opposition considered it possible to rectify matters by methods of reform through the change of regime in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Later, when it became clearer that the Communist Party of Lenin had been irremediably destroyed, and after it became manifest that the reactionary bureaucracy could be removed only by civil war, the Fourth International, standing as before on its analysis of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, came out for a political revolution.

All the time throughout this entire period of 16 years the Bolshevik-Leninists have stoutly maintained, in the face of all slander and persecution, that they were the firmest defenders of the workers' state and that in the hour of danger they would be in the front ranks of its defence. We always said the moment of danger will find the Fourth Internationalists at their posts defending the conquests of the great revolution without ceasing for a moment our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Now that the hour of danger is at hand—now that the long-awaited war is actually knocking at the door—it would be very strange if the Fourth International should renege on its oft-repeated pledge.

—"Speech on the Russian Question" (15 October 1939)



LENIN

WORKERS HAMMER



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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

Newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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PRODUCTION MANAGER: Michael Riaz

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Published by Spartacist Publications, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU
Subscriptions: £3.00 for 1 year, overseas airmail £6.00.

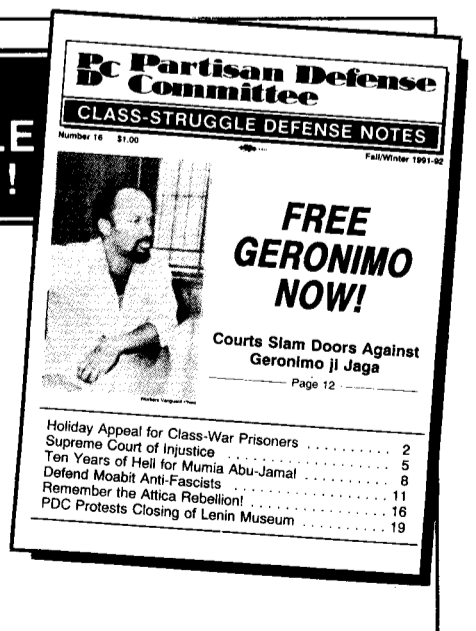
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Printed by Slough Newspapers Ltd (TU). ISSN 0267-8721

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For a Leninist-Trotskyist party!

Polish elections: protest against Walesa "shock treatment"



Szulecki/NY Times

On eve of Polish elections, miners protest in Warsaw against Solidarność government's attacks on workers.

WARSAW—The 27 October parliamentary elections registered a sharp protest against the capitalist "shock treatment" being meted out by the government of president Lech Walesa and his economics czar Leszek Balcerowicz.

Balcerowicz's Liberal-Democratic Congress and Walesa's Centre Alliance got a bare seven per cent each. They were both swamped by the Democratic Left Alliance dominated by the ex-Stalinist Social Democrats (SdRP), which came in a close second to the Democratic Union of former Solidarność prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was forced out by Walesa, with some twelve per cent each. The official peasant party under the former Stalinist regime also beat the government parties. The degree of popular cynicism with the current regime was shown by the near 60 per cent abstention rate and was punctuated by the strong showing for the Beer Lovers Party (PPPP), founded a couple of months ago by some actors, more as a joke than a political group.

But the election campaign was no joke. Frustration and despair over widespread immiseration was also channelled into significant votes for openly clericalist and anti-Semitic parties to the right of the Solidarność mainstream, like Catholic Electoral Action and the "Christian nationalist" Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN).

What was touted as Poland's "first free parliamentary election" in the post-war era was marked by an ominous wave of anti-Semitism and anti-Communism. "Phantoms of last year's presidential election campaign revived," wrote the ex-Stalinist newspaper *Trybuna*, describing how Stars of David with gallows and the word "Jew" had been sprayed over election posters. The anti-Semitic National Party ran TV broadcasts screaming that the "Judeo-Kommuna [Communism] and

Judeo-Solidarność control all political life." A day after one televised tirade by these right-wingers, anti-Semitic thugs carried out an unsuccessful attack at the entrance to Warsaw's only synagogue.

Meanwhile Walesa, who pushed "Who are the Jews?" racist demagoguery in his successful presidential bid last year, issued statements accusing "the people of the Communist system" of being respon-

sible for the bad economic situation and for anti-government demonstrations. Walesa's threats to "lead the streets" against "Communism" were accompanied by former Carter adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who proclaimed in a national television broadcast that the former "people's republic" had been run by "traitors, criminals and thieves". Though electioneering was officially forbidden the day before the vote, state television carried an inflammatory hour-long programme on

"Communist crimes", demanding that former Stalinists be arraigned as "gangsters" and "offenders". The Catholic hierarchy, stung by its failure last spring to push a blanket ban on abortion through the Sejm (parliament), took back its earlier promise not to endorse candidates and issued a public appeal from the pulpits to vote only for "Christian" lists in order to combat the



Gamma

Solidarność leader Lech Walesa and his friends: anti-Communist, anti-Semitic, anti-working-class.

"disciplined electorate of the former Communist party". *Trybuna* reported that in some churches campaign leaflets were being distributed on election day. One bishop stated outright that Catholics should vote for Catholics, Jews for Jews, and Communists for Communists. These pogromist appeals come in a country where only several thousand Jews remain.

In the aftermath of the elections, with various parties scrambling to form some sort of tenuous coalition government, Walesa seized the opportunity to put forward his bid to play the role of bonaparte, "offering" to take over as prime minister as well as president. Walesa has long wanted to follow in the footsteps of his idol, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, the fascist dictator of inter-war Poland. But his increasingly despised capitalist regime has neither Pilsudski's authority nor his power, and his "offer" was instantly rebuffed.

The ex-Stalinists, whose OPZZ trade-union federation is several times larger than the Solidarność "union", are seen as the only ones organising mass protest against the "Balcerowicz plan" of IMF-dictated austerity. But their opposition remains carefully within the bounds of transition to a full-fledged capitalist economy. Demonstrations, like the recent "silent marches" by the teachers union, are tightly controlled, with workers from the factories discouraged from attending. As a result, a demonstration by old-age pensioners in September was taken over

by vocal anti-Semites. In the days before the vote, SdRP leader Cimoszewicz condemned any demonstrations at all, for fear of upsetting their electoral prospects. Yet a thousand OPZZ miners, their number deliberately kept low by the bureaucrats, staged a protest against the attacks on their pensions on the eve of the election.

In the election campaign, the SdRP-led left alliance did not so much as mention the word socialism, calling only for a social safety net, defence of free education and higher wages under the capitalist state. With unemployment around ten per cent and millions more barely surviving on poverty wages, the Social Democrats do not demand jobs for all but offer only mealy-mouthed opposition to "mass, structural" unemployment. Instead of attacking rising anti-Semitism and anti-Roma (Gypsy) pogroms head-on, they preach "tolerance". Instead of forthrightly fighting clerical attacks on abortion, they call for a "referendum" on the question. In the face of redbaiting attacks following the August coup in the Soviet Union, the SdRP broadcast its opposition to the coup and support to the "democratic" forces behind Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary countercoup.

What passed for Trotskyists in Poland until recently were in fact social-democratic denizens of the Solidarność swamp. *Dalej*, the newspaper of self-styled "Trotskyist" supporters of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, called for a vote to candidates representing "workers' interests", like a Nowa Huta steelworks leader of Solidarność '80, run by the virulently anti-Communist and anti-Semitic Marian Jurczyk. And Mandel favourite Jozef Pinior's supporters not only ran on the platform of Labour Solidarity, but organised its campaign out of their office.

In contrast, the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski refused to call for a vote to any candidate in the current elections, and sought instead to intervene with a Trotskyist programme in workers' protests against capitalist attacks. At the Warsaw teachers demonstration, we were the only ones distributing literature. The SGP is the only organisation in Poland which forthrightly opposes the counterrevolutionary tide sweeping Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, fighting to revive the revolutionary unity of the Soviet, Polish and German workers. Against the clericalist onslaught, we struggle openly against all manifestations of anti-Semitism and fight to defend and restore the full right to free abortion on demand.

In our paper *Platforma Spartakusowców* and in demonstrations we called to "Extend workers resistance to capitalist attacks!" and "Build a Leninist-Trotskyist party" capable of leading to victory the struggle against Solidarność counterrevolution. We used our very limited forces to establish a Leninist pole of attraction and we continue in this vital task.

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 538, 8 November 1991.

Platforma SPARTAKUSOWCÓW

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No 2, Autumn 1991 (30p)

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- Extend workers resistance against capitalist attacks!
- Internationalist Polish Trotskyists fought against Hitler's invasion—From the Warsaw Ghetto: Defend the Soviet Union!
- 1981—Spartacists said: Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!
- The Poland of Luxemburg v the Poland of Piłsudski—Memoirs of a revolutionary Jewish worker

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Dublin

Smash racist attacks against Travellers!



Dublin, 18 October: sixty demonstrators picket Palace Bar protesting racist anti-Traveller ban. DSYG photos

Workers Hammer prints below the leaflet produced by the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group (DSYG) on 15 October following the arrest of six protesters demanding an end to the ban on Travellers at Dublin's Palace Bar.

Travellers in Ireland are a nomadic people similar to the Gypsy peoples throughout Europe. In 19th century Ireland, for example, they occupied a niche as itinerant craftsmen and horse traders. Today, this role has largely disappeared and many Travellers have to rely on remittances from relatives in England, perhaps along with minimal part-time building work in Dublin. As the DSYG leaflet pointed out, Travellers fill Irish jails in disproportionate numbers, are subject to brutally enforced official discrimination, and are the butt of derision and contempt. Their oppression mirrors that of the Irish in Britain.

The DSYG leaflet uses the term "gombeenocracy". In the last century the "gombeen man" was a usurious middleman whose exactions weighed down on the rural poor. The pronounced social backwardness of Ireland's ruling Fianna Fail Party is rooted in its historical base among analogous small-time, small-town capitalists and exploiting farmers, bulwark of the overweening Catholic Church. Another reference which may not be familiar to our readers is "beyond the Pale"—a term coined in the fifteenth century referring to the area of Ireland inhabited by Gaelic clans and not under English control. Not only in the rural heartland of this rotten gombeenocracy, but in the seat of "enlightened Robinsonism" in South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire, anti-Traveller oppression is rife. In the case of the latter, there are virtually no authorised halting sites for Travellers and it is here that some of the most egregious racist injunctions, police provocation and evictions have taken place.

Last December a young Traveller woman, Anne Maughan, froze to death in a ditch in Blanchardstown, Co Dublin (*Irish Times*, 11 December 1990). Her death is not uncommon among Travellers, forced to live through the damp, cold Irish

winter without heat and sanitation. The Irish state is responsible for such deaths as it continues to force the Travelling people to live in degradation and on starvation incomes. As the DSYG statement concludes: For workers action to smash the anti-Traveller attacks! Workers to Power in Ireland!

On 11 October, over 50 demonstrators picketed and occupied Dublin's Palace Bar in protest over its exclusion of Travellers. The Gardai soon arrived to quash the protest, pushing the demonstrators out of the pub and onto the street, arresting six. Among those arrested was Michael Collins, a Traveller and actor on the popular TV programme "Glenroe" who had also been refused service at the Bowes pub, picketed by anti-racist protesters a week earlier. *Drop all charges against the six now!*

As the Gardai struck, we in the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group (DSYG) chanted: "From South Africa to Dublin, smash apartheid!" which was soon picked up by the entire picket. And it was no accident that on the same day the *Evening Press* reported that the Dublin County Council had voted to "physically remove" Travellers living on "unauthorised" sites in the Dublin area and take them to the county border "where they will be ordered to return to the counties where they have been normally resident". Designed to "combat" an "influx" of Travellers into the capital, this grotesque measure certainly smacks of apartheid.

As Martin Collins of the Dublin Travellers Education Development Group put it: "It's outrageous and travellers will react against this decision. What you're talking about here is eviction and putting a quota on the number of people who can come to Dublin. It's completely racist...." Travellers are to be driven onto any piece of waste ground, preferably next to a vermin-infested dump and preferably well "beyond the Pale". As official Dublin struts around as the "1991 European City of Culture" replete with the supposed "progressive" face of President Mary Robinson, the gombeenocracy have shown themselves prepared to brutally enforce a bantustan

policy against Travellers. It's high time for the workers movement and all decent people to mobilise to put an end to these attacks against the Travellers!

There are over 30,000 Travellers living in the Irish Republic, one-third of them in horrific roadside "halting sites", most of which lack elementary sanitation or other facilities. The toll of such oppression is taken in premature death: infant mortality due largely to respiratory diseases and gastroenteritis is three times higher among Travellers than the rest of the population; only 1.7 per cent of Travellers live to be 65 years old. Discrimination is pervasive, from not being served in pubs or hotels to being forced to pick up the dole at separate times from everyone else. Paltry official attempts to "settle" individual Traveller families in council housing or to erect official halting sites often lead to attacks by racist thugs.

Travellers fill Irish jails in disproportionate numbers, and are the butt of derision and contempt, displayed often

without even a figleaf of liberal public hypocrisy. Limerick University, for example, has spent the better part of a year in court trying to evict a few families whose caravans were parked near the front gate of the college. The reality is that there is a racist consensus in this country extending all the way from the Fianna Fail gangsters to the despicable Labour and Workers Parties.

Karl Marx observed over a century ago that for the English working class to free itself from the chains of exploitation, it would have to actively take the side of the Irish workers and peasants struggling against the British Empire. In much the same way, the defence of the Travellers' community is an acid test for Irish revolutionaries; their treatment in Ireland echoes the vile chauvinism directed against the Irish in Britain.

The plight of the Travellers must be championed by the workers movement, which has the social power to beat back the attacks on Travellers. Today, with a crisis-racked government, with unemployment at 19 per cent and a third of the population under the government's own poverty line, the wretched, pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy is working overtime to keep the lid on class struggle. We fight to forge a genuine Leninist-Trotskyist party which can act as a tribune of the people, fighting for the liberation of women and the defence of all the oppressed including Travellers and homosexuals. While initiating the protests against the pub bans on Travellers in Dublin, the state-capitalist Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) has enthusiastically embraced those counter-revolutionary forces throughout Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union whose shock troops are fascistic, anti-Semitic, racist scum responsible as well for unleashing attacks against the Gypsies (Roma and Cinti peoples). For their part, the cheerleaders for Yeltsin's counterrevolution in the Irish Workers Group (IWG) have simply abstained from the protests in defence of the Travellers.

We do not forget that in the Nazi Holocaust as many as half a million Gypsies were exterminated in the death camps. The Bolsheviks who led the Russian October Revolution of 1917 smashed the anti-Semitic Black Hundreds fascists. And, despite bureaucratic Stalinist misrule, it was the Soviet Red Army that smashed the Nazi scourge in Europe! As a communist youth organisation in the tradition of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky we in the DSYG recognise that only successful socialist revolution can clear away all the reactionary crap produced by this clericalist state. For workers action to smash the anti-Traveller attacks! Workers to Power in Ireland!

15 October 1991

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Free the Tottenham Three now!



Winston Silcott

Times

More than five years on, Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip continue to languish in prison, victims of a vicious and vindictive frame-up by the racist British capitalist

state. In October 1985, the cops came up one short after staging a violent and racist rampage through Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham in London following community protests over the cold-blooded police murder of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett. Out for revenge, in 1987 the state secured the convictions of these three young men for the death of one PC Keith Blakelock. What passed for "evidence" in this frame-up trial were two later retracted "admissions" extracted from two teenagers who were denied access to solicitors and held incommunicado for several days clad only in underpants and blankets. One of them, Engin Raghip, had a mental age of seven. Winston Silcott never "confessed" to anything.

Over the past several months, further evidence has emerged of the depths of the state's frame-up of these men. Jason Hill, the other youth who was forced to name Silcott as the one who "organised" the death of Blakelock is now suing the police for his incarceration and maltreatment in 1985. Hill revealed to the *Observer* (21 July) that his police interrogators kept feeding him Silcott's name, a man he didn't

even know. As Hill stressed, finally: "I agreed, to keep them off my back. They could have told me to name Prince Charles and I would have said it was him, I was in such a state." During the trial, Jason Hill's "confession" was dismissed by the judge as "fantastical, strange and make-believe", but conveniently this was done in a private part of the hearing with the *jury absent*.

Now with the aid of Electrostatic Deposition Analysis (the ESDA test), forensic experts have demonstrated that the cops' "records" of Winston Silcott's remarks during his interrogations were faked: original notes were replaced and additional statements concocted. Two months ago, Home Secretary Kenneth Baker announced an investigation into the "convictions" of Silcott and Braithwaite. Within hours of receiving the report of the investigation, the two cases were referred to the Court of Appeal. Raghip had already been granted an appeal on separate grounds; his case is to be heard in November.

We say: *free them now!* Millions of pounds in compensation won't make up for their stolen years. The Guildford Four and Birmingham Six have been

released after those frame-ups collapsed and the Maguire family's convictions were held to be "unsafe" (although they have been subjected to an "inquiry" meant to smear them despite the fact that everyone knows they are innocent). Furthermore, the case of Judith Ward—jailed for life in 1974 for the IRA's bombing in Yorkshire of an army coach—has been referred to the Court of Appeal; she has now retracted her confession and the forensic "evidence" against her has been discredited. As frame-up after frame-up case collapses, the Tottenham Three are the most prominent such victims of capitalist injustice to remain behind bars.

The Labour Party leaders have aided and abetted the persecution of the Tottenham Three—Kinnock even going so far as to place a wreath at the memorial of the cop Blakelock. And Labour was in power when the Birmingham Six were jailed in an orgy of anti-Irish hysteria. Against the bosses, against the Labour traitors, the organised workers movement must mobilise to demand the immediate freedom of the Tottenham Three!

Moscow...

(Continued from page 1)

Rapacious Reforms Will Not Work", and "Down with the CIA's Perestroika!" They repeatedly sang the *Internationale* and other revolutionary songs from the early days of the Soviet Republic under Lenin and Trotsky.

As tens of thousands marched to Red Square, they voiced a deep working-class hatred towards the agents of Wall Street and Frankfurt who have come to the fore following the botched Kremlin coup in August. The older generation of CPers intermingled with the youth. The mood was angry and sharply contrasted with last year's November 7th parade, presided over by Gorbachev, where the main slogan was "The Success of Perestroika Lies in Civil Concord". Among the signs this year was one showing the double-headed tsarist eagle with one head being Yeltsin and the other Gorbachev. Another wrote under Gorbachev's portrait, "You ruined the country, hell waits for you".

Initially, Moscow mayor Gavriil Popov—a leading figure in the capitalist counterrevolution—announced a ban on any Revolution Day demonstration within the city's ring road, which includes Red Square. But when it became clear that the protests would take place in defiance of his authority, Popov rescinded the ban the night before. This is symptomatic of how politically weak are the forces pushing for capitalist restoration. In our first statement after the August coup and counter-coup, we noted: "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" (*Workers Hammer* no 125, September/October 1991). We added that the Soviet proletariat "has not been heard from". But on 7 November, it began to raise its voice.

The numbers pouring into the streets far exceeded the organisers' expectations. Revolution Day tapped into the economic desperation of Moscow's working people. The week before, Yeltsin announced that all price controls would soon be ended, setting off a new wave of panic buying, hoarding and speculation. For the first time bread began to disappear from the

shops. *Moskovskoe Komsomolets* carried a heart-rending story of a worker who was crushed by a train when he jumped onto the subway tracks to retrieve a sausage he had struggled all day to get for his family.

The older generation who came out remember what a horrible thing hunger is—they remember bread rationing during the heroic struggle of the Soviet people against the Nazi invaders. One recalled, "My mother on 16 October 1941 stood on the longest bread line of that year, and even so it was not half as long as today's!" (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 9 November).

Yet the Revolution Day demonstration was not narrowly economic in character, nor, given the occasion, could it be. Above all, it expressed visceral working-class hostility to capitalist restoration and the destruction of the Soviet Union by Western imperialism and its Russian agents. One sign said: "What Adolf did not do, Michael has done". When a British journalist asked, why call Gorbachev "Michael", the bearer of the slogan replied: "We call him Michael because he's a westerner now" (*Financial Times*, 8 November).

Gorbachev is not a Westerniser in the sense of seeking to modernise Soviet society and the economy, as Peter the Great attempted to do for Russia in the age of absolutism. Gorbachev, Yeltsin & Co want to *sell out* the Soviet Union to Western banks and multinationals—at fire-sale prices. If they succeed, Russia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, etc will be degraded to the economic level of Latin American neocolonies while all the old reactionary crap from the pre-1917 tsarist autocracy will return.

Indeed, the answer of the pro-Western "democrats" to working-class protest is lying promises of prosperity under capitalism, accompanied by appeals to mediaeval obscurantism. On the eve of Revolution Day, the mayor of Leningrad organised a fête to celebrate restoring the city's old name of St Petersburg. Featured in this ceremony were Patriarch Aleksy II, Primate of the Russian Orthodox church, and Grand Duke Vladimir Kirillovich Romanov, son of the cousin of Tsar Nicolas II. Grand Duke Romanov, who had never before set foot in the Soviet Union, said he hoped to become the new Russian tsar!

Trotskyists march on Moscow's Revolution Day

Despite a few pictures of Stalin sprinkled among the signs, there were many more of Lenin and there was also the red banner of the International Communist League emblazoned with the insignia of Trotsky's Fourth International. Moreover, the demonstration was extremely receptive to Trotskyist literature. In Moscow, supporters of the ICL sold 4750 copies of our Russian-language supplement, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", and 600 copies of our Russian-language Spartacist bulletin, "Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky!"

Unfortunately, the Revolution Day protests were not entirely free of reactionary attitudes, especially anti-Semitism. Pamyat salesmen were peddling their filth. The Stalinist organisers of the rally appealed to Great Russian chauvinism. Our comrades were baited alternately as "Trotskyites" and "Jews". We shot back that the filth they spewed was the White Guard politics of Yeltsin which are at war with the revolutionary politics of Lenin and Red October. The cutting edge of the

struggle to combat Russian chauvinism is to mobilise the workers movement against every manifestation of anti-Semitism. At one point about 20 Stalinists attempted to physically exclude our contingent, shouting "Trotskyists out of the demonstration", "Get out of our country", etc. But we were able to effectively rally the crowd to defend us. One worker came out of the crowd to stand with us against this rabble, and stayed to sell with us all day. A student from Moscow State University came to our contingent and said that he's been looking for Trotskyism all his life. As the crowd paraded towards Red Square, a comrade reported:

"While we marched we chanted, 'Long Live the October Revolution!' 'Long Live the Soviet Union!' 'Down with Yeltsin/Gorbachev/Bush's Russian Nationalist Counterrevolution! For Proletarian Internationalism!' One of our contacts chanted 'Long Live the World Communist Movement—Workers of the World Unite!' These were all met by loud 'Hurrah! Hurrah!'"

Along the march, a supporter of the ICL was interviewed by *Pravda*. In its next issue it reported on its front page

continued on page 10

Defeat Yeltsin-Gorbachev-Bush counterrevolution!

Lenin-Trotsky Fund needs your money!

The resources of the International Communist League are sparse, our current tasks mammoth. We have just printed 70,000 copies of the Russian translation of "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" (picture at right). We are now reprinting the first Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin*, "What Is Trotskyism", of which 25,000 have already been sold throughout the Soviet Union. Pro-socialist Soviet workers are thirsting for Trotskyist literature, but economic realities dictate that we must heavily subsidise our publications to keep them affordable. Printing costs, travel and other expenses mean that an internationalist intervention in the Soviet Union costs money. Help forge the Trotskyist nucleus needed to lead the



Soviet working people in struggle against counterrevolution.

Make donations payable/send to: Spartacist, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU. Mark back of cheque: "Lenin-Trotsky Fund" (or simply "L-T Fund").



Thousand-strong mass pickets shut down key Renault-Cléon car plant, leading to shut-downs of the entire chain.

Trovel/Humanité

Strikes rock Mitterrand's France

UPDATE

Workers Hammer has received the following report from France:

NOVEMBER 13—At 3.30 on the morning of 5 November, almost 500 CRS (riot police) took over the Cléon plant and opened up the gates. No violence. The CGT union tops made sure there was no resistance. The decision was taken by the prime minister. On that day, only hardened scabs and management personnel went in through a passage formed by the strikers on one side and cops on the other.

In the next two days, repeated proposals by the bureaucrats to go back to work in exchange for a paltry "productivity bonus" were passionately rejected by the general assemblies. In a secret ballot on the afternoon of the 7th, a majority of voting strikers voted to continue; nevertheless, the CGT-CFDT local leadership marched in tight ranks to the podium and announced that the strike was over, impervious to the explosions of disbelief and anger. The strikers were not defeated, they were stabbed in the back!

In animated discussions inside and outside the plant, our comrades point to the programmatic roots of this barefaced betrayal. Renault-Le Mans is still on strike and today the dockers launched a nation-wide port shut-down.

NOVEMBER 4—After a decade of cruel austerity imposed by the "socialist" president François Mitterrand, the anger of French workers has begun to explode. Over the past month, a wave of strikes by Renault car-workers almost brought the company to a standstill. Striking nurses demonstrating in the streets of Paris stood up to water cannons, tear-gas and police charges. Peasants made their anger felt as they repeatedly sacked tax collectors' offices as well as meetings and banquets by government ministers (who were

then ordered not to venture into the provinces). On 24 October a one-day general strike shut down the ports, heavily disrupted public transportation in some cities and reduced the production of electrical power, as tens of thousands of striking workers marched through the streets of Paris and numerous other cities.

Mitterrand tried to head off the upsurge of class struggle by mixing threats, false promises and police attacks. Yet the strikes continued in the hospitals, and walkouts swept Renault car plants in Cléon, Le Mans, Sandouville and Flins. The bastion of the strikes has been at the Renault plant in Cléon (Normandy), where hundreds of militant pickets have kept the plant shut down since 17 October. Despite management attempts to mobilise scabs, the strike has grown increasingly solid and outside support has grown (more than 90,000 francs collected in solidarity donations). Giving an idea of the size of the pickets, every 24 hours 750 litres of coffee are consumed, 2200 snacks distributed and 1200 hot meals served. This morning Renault-Le Mans went on strike as well, locking up the plant manager for several hours and now barricading the entrance to the factory "just like at Cléon".

The Cléon strikers are demanding a 1500-franc (£150) monthly wage boost—hardly enough to compensate for the severe erosion of purchasing power. In reality the struggle goes well beyond the question of wages, as our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF) pointed out in a special strike supplement of *Le Bolchévik*:

"To break the resistance of this government ready to do anything to defend capitalist profits (and all the more brutal since they know they're near the end of their rope and are vulnerable), much more than 'ordinary' wage struggles are necessary.... Today the ingredients for the necessary generalised counter-offensive by the workers are accumulating. The Mitterrand gov-

ernment is largely discredited and has been in agonising crisis for several months. We must all take advantage of this opening to make them cry uncle."

With the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the bourgeoisie thinks it can celebrate the "death of Communism" and bury the class struggle. Indeed, the Kremlin bureaucrats have always pretended that class struggle and socialist revolution in the West are a utopian dream. However, the wave of strikes by French workers against the social-democratic government of French capitalism recalls what was graphically demonstrated by the general strike of May 1968—the proletariat in the advanced capitalist countries has the

power to bring down bourgeois rule and open the road to socialism.

Popular front against the workers

Since being elected to power in 1981, Mitterrand's Union of the Left has underlined the grievous consequences of the popular front for the working class. By compromising the independence of the working class, this alliance between the reformist workers parties—the Socialists and (in an informal "corridor coalition") the French Communist Party (PCF)—and part of the bourgeoisie was able to impose on the working class the wage-gouging plans demanded by the bosses. The working-class leaderships, bound by



Helena Hermes

May 1968 French general strike: PCF/CGT Stalinist misleaders saved bourgeoisie by liquidating strike rather than fight for power.

the strait-jacket of class collaboration to the Mitterrand government, repeatedly led strikes to defeat, demoralising the workers. After a decade of popular-front government, the number of strikes fell last year to the lowest level since 1946.

Far from being a "step forward" for the working class as its "leftist" supporters imagined, Mitterrand's popular front has, in the words of Socialist ex-prime minister Fabius, done the bourgeoisie's "dirty work". After a decade of "socialist" austerity, the wages of French workers are the ninth-lowest in the Common Market, just above Greece, Portugal and Spain. Unemployment has leaped to a record three million. And a special target of Mitterrand's popular front has been "immigrants", who have been subject to massive expulsions and racist police terror in the ghettos. This term is grotesquely applied even to people born in France, children of foreign-born workers who have lived in France for decades!

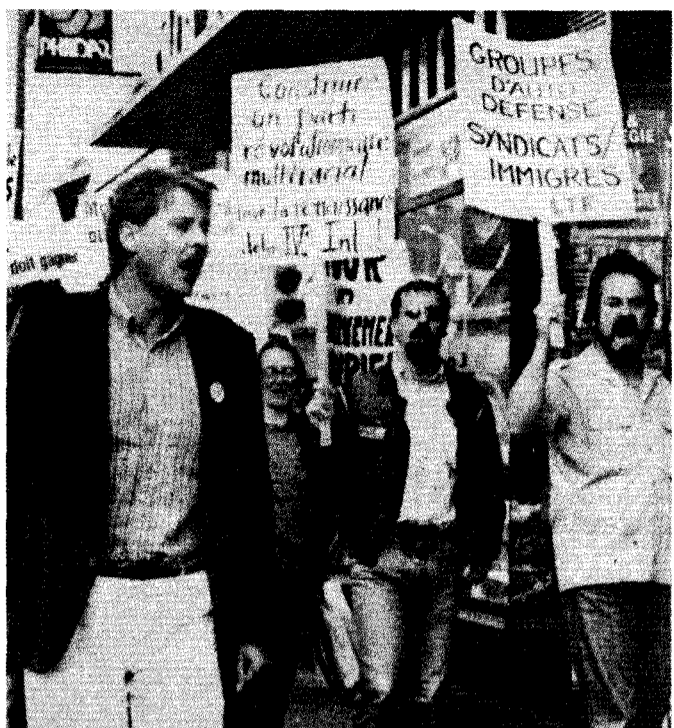
Yet despite lay-offs and expulsions, "immigrant" workers are heavily integrated in French industry, especially in the car factories. Largely North African workers at the Renault plant in Flins were among the first to strike against the Mitterrand popular front in the early '80s. (The government responded by launching a racist campaign, accusing them of being manipulated by "ayatollahs".) During the Gulf War, while Mitterrand sent French troops to participate in Bush's neo-colonial aggression against Iraq, "immigrant" workers at Flins, united in struggle with their French co-workers, led several dozen work stoppages against repressive measures and intolerable working conditions.

After a decade of anti-working-class attacks, Mitterrand's popular front is deeply discredited. Edith Cresson is the most despised prime minister since de Gaulle's "constitutional" coup d'état established the Fifth Republic in 1958. The popular front in office has meant that any serious labour struggle quickly posed a challenge to the reformist misleaders and their bourgeois allies in the government. Yet virtually the entire French "far left" (including the LCR [United Secretariat], LO [Lutte Ouvrière] and PCI [Lambertistes], as well as various smaller groups who also falsely claim to be Trotskyist) has supported Mitterrand, however "critically", and their tailist politics render them *incapable* of leading sharp class battles. The Ligue Trotskyiste, which uniquely called for working-class opposition to the popular front, is fighting to build a Bolshevik leadership in the struggle to sweep away the bureaucratic labour lieutenants of capital.

The strike at Renault-Cléon

The stronghold of the strikes in Renault has been the plant in Cléon, which produces motors and gearboxes for the entire state-owned company. The bosses have taken over from the Japanese the "just in time" production scheme, which keeps stocks to a minimum in order to cut costs. However, this only works in the absence of strikes, and to the consternation of the bosses it has given this plant a pivotal role. Because of the determined strike at Cléon, other plants have been forced to shut down for lack of parts, at times bringing the entire Renault chain to a grinding halt.

The Cléon strikers have been highly combative, reflecting the wellspring of discontent which goes far beyond the strikers' wage demands. Renault president, the hated Raymond Lévy, denounced them as "terrorists". The strikers quickly set up barricades at the plant gates, blocking all trucks so that not a single motor or gearbox could leave the plant. Tents have been set up with TVs and their own electrical supply, a union



Renault worker Gilles Cazin leads protest against fascist attack on North Africans near Rouen during 1988 campaign as Ligue Trotskyiste candidate for French parliament.

safety team has been set up and fires are kept going round the clock. Defying a court injunction, the workers maintained their pickets—at times numbering over a thousand and still going strong. The determined strikers even turned back a bulldozer sent to break through the barricades. When the plant manager showed up at the head of 300 scabs (mainly management personnel) he was sent packing under a barrage of rotten eggs.

Initially, although the pickets blocked the movement of trucks, they allowed scabs to slither in and out of the plant. This "tactic" of leaky pickets was pushed by the union tops to show the bourgeoisie that they respect the "right to work"—a "right" which the bosses "respect" with mass lay-offs. (Lévy has announced his

So each worker affected would show up accompanied by as many as 200-300 concerned co-workers! "An injury to one is an injury to all" is a well-known maxim for united labour struggle, and this impulse has been reflected at Cléon. One union official said that everyone knows that in the CGT there are members of the PCF, LCR, LTF, but we're all united for the strike. In Renault, as is typical in French industry, there are several unions, the largest being the CGT and CFTD. Over the last decade, union membership has fallen as the result of the do-nothing attitude of the union bureaucracies in the face of employer and government attacks. However, the Cléon strike has been marked by repeated general assemblies of the striking workers, including those in



Strikers at Renault-Cléon throw up barricades at plant entrances to stop trucks.

intention to slash 28,000 of Renault's 68,000 jobs.) By last week the strikers were throwing up solid picket lines, facing down the squads of scabs mobilised by the bosses to break through the lines. Delegations (some 500-strong) were showing up in buses and cars from other Renault plants, the peasant federation has been bringing food supplies and set up a farmers market at cost. On weekends the struck plant has been the site of a popular fête as families gather on the picket line.

From the first days of the strike, Renault management sought to break it by repression. Dozens of union officials and individual strike militants were sanctioned with 5-10 days off work without pay and threatened with firing. But according to law, the company must first inform the individual affected in a formal interview.

the different unions as well as the unorganised. This unity in struggle must be organised in an elected committee responsible for the running of the strike and negotiations.

To win this strike it is key first of all to make it solid and spread it. Gilles Cazin, an LTF militant who has worked at Renault-Cléon for almost 20 years, has fought for real picket lines to keep out the scabs, for an elected strike committee and for workers' delegations to *extend the strike* throughout the car industry. In 1988, Cazin was the candidate of the Ligue Trotskyiste for parliamentary deputy, running against former premier Fabius. The LTF has a decade-long history of communist work at the Cléon plant and in nearby Rouen where it has fought to smash racist terror and defend North African "immigrants". As *Le Bol-*

chévik has been sold to strike pickets and the supplement distributed, this has produced animated debates on Mitterrand, the PCF's role in the popular front, and the need for a workers government.

Appeals for class-struggle action have found resonance among the strikers. A leaflet voted by the strikers on the picket lines and subsequently signed by the local CGT cited the "victims of the austerity policy of the Mitterrand government" in calling on the workers of the region to strike on 24 October "and to converge on Renault-Cléon to join the pickets". On the 24th over a dozen delegations from factories on strike were in front of Renault-Cléon. Among the speakers was an LTF militant who concluded her remarks to much applause by calling on the wives of the strikers to participate actively in support of the strike. A women's committee has since been set up.

A delegation from Renault-Flins was also present and declared their support to the idea of extending the strike to Flins. The link with Flins (where 40 per cent of the workforce is "immigrants") is important for the success of the strike in the motor industry. This underlines the importance for French workers to take up the demand of "Full citizenship rights for 'immigrants'!"

With the Cléon plant shut down, Renault has only been able to keep other plants sporadically operating by importing parts from plants in Mexico, Spain and Chile. Renault workers must appeal for international solidarity from fellow workers in Renault branches in other countries. Yet the nationalist line of the PCF and the CGT is an obstacle to this. To their traditional "Produce French" chauvinism has now been added vile anti-Japanese racism. *L'Humanité* (2 November) called for French car companies "to jointly wage a battle on the European front against the Japanese", and criticised Renault's alliance with Volvo, "a veritable

Trojan horse for Japanese penetration in Europe!"

This echoes the anti-Japanese hysteria fanned by Cresson, who also responded to a racist campaign by the Gaullist mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, by calling for "charter" airliners to deport North Africans. Now at a meeting in Berlin, representatives of the Common Market countries joined with the German government in declaring war on immigration. Anti-foreigner racism has also raised its ugly head in this strike. A CGT representative at Cléon even declared: "We don't have slanted eyes.... It's not part of our culture." It is the duty of every class-conscious worker to stamp out this kind of racist filth: it plays into the hands of the company, undercuts the vital struggle for international solidarity and reinforces

continued on page 11

Capitalism...

(Continued from page 1)

Virtual civil war raged in the coal fields of Britain. Knifed by the Labour/TUC tops, right and "left", the miners fought alone against armies of Thatcher's cops.

From the failed witch hunt instigated by the late, unlamented swine Robert Maxwell's pro-Labour Party *Daily Mirror* against the miners leadership over "Russian gold" to the recent TUC conference where the NUM's simple statement in defence of the right to strike was defeated by those telling Scargill to "look East", the link between the class struggle at home and the Russian question has been manifest. (Maxwell's own "Soviet link" is now news; according to the *Times* of 14 November: "Claims that Pergamon Press, the company founded by the late Robert Maxwell, was funded by the Soviet Communist party are to be investigated by the Foreign Office." Documents circulated among members of the Russian parliament list Pergamon as one of the Soviet CP's "friendly firms" and owed 500,000 roubles. Typical Maxwellia: witch hunting Scargill while apparently being on the receiving end of "Moscow gold" himself.)

Socialist Organiser and Workers Power scandalously sponsored the tour to Britain of the fascist-connected Yuri Butchenko—key spokesman for the UDM/Maxwell witch hunt. In sharp contrast, the intervention of comrades from the ICL at last autumn's miners conference in Donetsk stymied the attempt by the



John Harris

Even a grovelling reformist like Dave Nellist (above) is witchhunted by the unspeakable Kinnock, ever loyal in his services to his capitalist masters.

"No, I don't agree with that...if workers are making a mistake in supporting a capitalist alternative policy, then I'd be the first to condemn it. I do not agree with pulling down statues of Lenin. I do not agree with attacks on the working class movement...."

Fake Trotskyists: Kinnock/Yeltsin camp followers

Thatcher's out, dumped by her own party because of her opposition to closer European integration and her support to the despised poll tax. And following the miners strike, a defeatist and compliant trade union bureaucracy made her union-busting services less essential. Meanwhile,

the British left as phoney as the day is long. We did not advocate even the most savagely critical support to Mahmood; a sufficient reason being that this Militant-supported Broad Left/Real Labour campaign made clear its support for a Labour Party victory in the general election: ie, its commitment to a Kinnock government. At the same time there were those, notably the staunch entrists of Socialist Organiser, who condemned the campaign from the right and worried that it would "only encourage silly people elsewhere to run independent candidates against Labour in a General Election in safe Labour seats". The CPB/*Morning Star* bunch likewise blathered that the Mahmood candidacy endangered the "labour movement as a whole".

Today Socialist Workers Party spokesman Paul Foot claims: "Everywhere among socialists, there is a frisson of excitement that at last it looks as if the Tories are on the way out, and that for the first time in many people's adult lives, the British people will elect a Labour government" (*Socialist Worker*, 9 November). This "frisson of excitement" at the prospect of a Labour government is repeated throughout the fake left, if nowhere else. Their differences are trivial—the entrists plump for Kinnock from within the Labour Party, while Cliff & Co will fight for a Kinnock victory in the general election from outside. The bottom line for the SWP is, just as for Militant, "socialists, quite rightly, vote Labour" (*Socialist Review*, November 1991). *Workers Power* explains: "Once the attention of the working class becomes focused on the election of a Labour government, simply urging people to ignore Labour will not win anyone to a revolutionary perspective. We have to focus the illusions and aspirations of millions of workers into activity and into clear demands on Labour that it act in the interest of the working class."

Workers Power is in fact a nearly perfect index of the rightward motion of the British left. Having lurched to the left



Chris Harris

and partially broken with Cliffite state capitalism at the time of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, it tried to straddle the fence between the Third Camp and genuine Trotskyism. Workers Power made a hard right turn over the German events which culminated in its full-bore support to Yeltsinite counterrevolution in the Soviet Union (see "Fake Trotskyists cheer on Yeltsin's counterrevolution", *Workers Hammer* no 125, September/October 1991). All the centrist fudging and gobbledegook that had characterised Workers Power's positions on the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan and Solidarność counterrevolution in Poland is gone—on this one their position is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core. Workers Power stand four-square on the side of Yeltsin's barricades and they're proud of it. In response to their American co-thinkers, who in the face of the ascendancy of the forces of capitalist reaction in the Soviet Union now feel somewhat ill at ease with peddling the line of a "united front" with the Yeltsinites against the coup, Workers Power argues: "...it was necessary to form a common front of resistance, a military and class struggle bloc with those forces and with their leaders.... A part of this united front call would have been to fight alongside the 'democrats' and the Yeltsinites to defend all the centres of resistance to the coup including the RSFSR parliament (the 'White House')."

Workers Power spelled out in the clearest possible terms that for them the defence of "general (bourgeois) democratic rights" was the order of the day. Backing capitalist "democracy" against the dictatorship of the proletariat, whether under Lenin and Trotsky or deformed by Stalinism, has been the calling card of the social democracy since Karl Kautsky's attacks on the Bolshevik regime. Workers Power is aiming in a straight line towards the social democratic camp.

The recent events in the Soviet Union showed that there's not much left in



Der Spiegel

Counter-revolutionary scum Yeltsin with US imperialist warmonger Bush. Both men long for the capitalist enslavement of the Soviet working masses.

AFL-CIA and UDM scum to get the Soviet miners to condemn Scargill.

Most recently, Kinnock vetoed the selection of NUM nominee Ken Capstick, vice-chairman of the Yorkshire NUM and Scargill supporter. Scargill himself, who still plumps for "unity" with arch-scab Kinnock, at least partially recognises the stakes in the Soviet Union. At a meeting he attended in Liverpool in September, the *Morning Star* industrial correspondent Isolda McNeill was asked from the floor whether they stood with miners in Siberia striking against the coup, ie, in response to Yeltsin's call. Her reply was yes. Scargill replied:

the working people, the millions of unemployed, the burgeoning thousands of homeless, the poverty-stricken students, the black, Asian, Irish and other minorities facing increased fascist terror and police harassment, the Scottish working people first singled out for the poll-tax treatment, the gays and lesbians under the gun of draconian legislation and vicious state persecution—to name only some—are getting offered more of the same by the Tories and Labour alike.

When a Militant supporter, Leslie Mahmood, ran in the 4 July Walton by-election against the official Labour candidate, it opened up a "tactical" debate on

Dessie Ellis...

(Continued from page 2)

True vengeance for the victims of British injustice will be exacted only when victorious workers revolution sweeps this rotten, racist capitalist system away, along with its Labour Party quislings who sent the British troops into Northern Ireland and rammed through the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Once back in Dublin Dessie Ellis said: "I would like to thank the people in Britain for their help. I hope the British people will take on board the message that Ireland is unfree." The Birmingham

Six at the time of their release also made a point of thanking the British people and have continued to champion the cause of the Tottenham Three. These links are important and the lesson must be taken to heart that British and Irish workers and oppressed, both South and North, Catholic and Protestant must forge bonds against the common enemies: the ruling classes of Britain and Ireland—South and North. Smash extradition and the PTA! For the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland! Not Orange against Green—but class against class! No forcible reunification! For an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles! ■

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Britain of centrism, those who are "revolutionary in word, but reformist in deed". The overwhelming majority of the fake Trotskyists were unashamedly on the Yeltsinite barricades for counterrevolution. It was left to the small Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL), seeking to occupy the niche Workers Power once did, to try to maintain a foot in both camps. While opposing a "united front" with Yeltsin, RIL called on Soviet workers to observe Yeltsin's strike call. While claiming it wanted to "fight" capitalist restoration, it attacked our call on Moscow workers to clean out the counterrevolutionary rabble outside the Russian parliament. Calling for workers to sweep away the barricades defending Yeltsin would have meant a military bloc with any of the coup forces that moved to crush the Yeltsinites. This is the sticking point with the RIL. As we noted in our last issue: "in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationists against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, defence of the collectivised economy would have been placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinists' intentions. Trotskyists would have entered a military bloc with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution", as Trotsky postulated in the 1938 Transitional Programme." The RIL's imbibing of social-democratic "anti-Stalinism" means it can't stomach being in a bloc with Stalinists even in defence of a workers state—just as the RIL's US cohorts supported Solidarność against Jaruzelski's counter-coup in 1981. When it comes to the Labour Party, RIL's call is to "give critical electoral support to Labour"—ie a vote to Kinnock.

We are the party of the Russian Revolution

Among the disintegration products of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the ex-CPGB and its one-time rival the Gorbachevite CPB combine slavish Labourism with capitulation to the forces of capitalist counterrevolution. The New Communist Party (NCP), while supporting the pathetic perestroika coup which refused to mobilise against the Yeltsinite centre at the Moscow "White House", at least had the gut impulse to recognise the Yeltsinites for the counterrevolutionaries they are. In the aftermath of Yeltsin's counter-coup the NCP calls for defence of Cuba and "the remaining countries of socialism" while apparently conceding victory to counterrevolution in the USSR.

But as we have stressed the outcome is not yet decided. Unlike the Stalinist NCP, we do not equate the pathetic last gasp of Soviet Stalinism with the destruction of the workers state. The multi-millioned state apparatus including the army has not been dismantled and a proletarian mobilisation against the Yeltsin/Gorbachev forces could throw back the counterrevolutionaries. And we are fighting to forge a genuinely Leninist vanguard party in the USSR with this perspective not least because the destruction of the Soviet Union and its return to capitalism would represent a world-historic defeat for the workers of the world, increasing the prospect of imperialist attack against the remaining deformed workers states as well as giving a massive impulse towards an inter-imperialist World War III.

As Leninists and Trotskyists we have stood for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union while asserting the necessity of extending the gains of October through international proletarian revolution. This is diametrically opposed to the Stalinist lie of "socialism in one country" and its corollary—popular-frontist class collaboration in the capitalist countries. While there are elements in the NCP and other CPs that subjectively want to defend the Soviet Union from capitalist restoration, they have been trained in a reformist school in which the

CPGB has functioned for decades as a third-rate Labour Party. And one would have to look long and hard for a more obsequious pro-Labour outfit than the NCP. Predictably *New Worker's* front-page article ("Campaign for a Labour victory", 27 September) pleaded: "The right-wing position of Neil Kinnock and the leadership should not deter anyone from campaigning for a Labour victory."

Unlike the bulk of the left, the Leninist (aka the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain) claims it is not supporting Labour. It is running four candidates, claiming to be "a genuine working class alternative to the true blue Tories of John Major and the pale pink 'Tories' under Neil Kinnock". However, Leninist's peculiar version of standing candidates against Labour is to offer "minimum demands" to Ken Livingstone—Labour candidate in Brent—and if he "publicly commits" himself to these "then we will stand down and work flat out for his victory". In fact, there is probably nothing in the Leninist's reformist electoral programme—centring on opposition to cuts, racial and sexual oppression, the right to a decent job, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland—that the slick left-Labourite Livingstone could not pay lip service to.

Leninist doesn't take Livingstone out for what he really is—a class traitor in his own right and one firmly committed to a Kinnock victory. This is not the first

time Leninist has shown its soft underbelly on the Labour Party question; it also supported the Mahmood "Real Labour" campaign in Liverpool. During the Gulf War it refused to take a side for the defeat of US/British imperialism. This dovetailed with the line of the "left" Labourites, who called for UN intervention and economic sanctions, thereby playing their role in whipping up social-patriotic sentiment against Iraq.

In their Brent election leaflet you won't find the word "internationalism"; indeed, with the exception of a passing, sneering reference to the collapse of "Soviet socialism" there is no mention of anywhere outside the British Isles. Nor did this grotesque parochialism and Leninist's conciliation with Labourite chauvinism fall from the skies. Although flirting at times with Trotskyist terminology, Leninist never broke fundamentally from socialism in one country which Trotsky characterised as follows: "To approach the prospects of a social revolution within national boundaries is to fall victim to the same national narrowness which constitutes the substance of social-patriotism" (*Third International After Lenin*, p53).

Oscillating between a search for a progressive wing of the bureaucracy and classless appeals for "democracy", the Leninist was particularly disdainful of revolutionary internationalist struggle to mobilise proletarian forces to defend the gains of October at key points. Thus they sneered at our proposal to the Afghan

government to launch an international brigade to fight the CIA-backed *mujahedin* when Gorbachev treacherously withdrew the Red Army—the opening shot in wholesale retreat in the face of imperialism. Claiming that counterrevolution was inevitable, they belittled our concentration of forces in Germany at the time of the beginnings of political revolution in the DDR, when the struggle against unification under capitalism was the front-line. Only 24 hours after Yeltsin's counter-coup they declared that "genuine communists should briefly mourn before getting on with the job of organising on the basis of the lessons our defeat in the USSR teaches". Its premature writing-off of the Soviet Union, and its abdication of proletarian internationalism, fuelled by defeatism about the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, define its trajectory not towards communism but the camp of social democracy.

The working people and oppressed of these isles do need a revolutionary working-class alternative to the Labour Party. Such a party will be based on a proletarian internationalist programme, built in combat against the social democracy and its camp followers whose hostility towards the October Revolution has been and is inextricably linked with defence of capitalism at home. We in the ICL are committed to the perspective of building this revolutionary party as part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

Workers Hammer welcomes our new subscribers

Congratulations to all comrades on the completion of the autumn 1991 *Workers Hammer* subscription drive undertaken jointly by the London and Glasgow branches of the Spartacist League/Britain and the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group. A total of 388 points were sold, representing 123 per cent of the quota of 315. This represents 74 joint subscriptions to *Workers Hammer/Workers Vanguard*, 60 single subs to *Workers Hammer*, 95 *Women and Revolution* subs as well as a number of subs to other ICL sectional periodicals. Individual winners this year were London comrades Debbie and Mike who tied with 48.5 points each; honourable mention goes to Pat (London) with 39 points and Ali in Glasgow with 38.

This year's sub drive took place in the aftermath of the botched coup and Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary counter-coup in the Soviet Union. Our headline "Bankrupt Stalinism opens floodgates to capitalist restoration/Soviet workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution" was sharply counterposed to the social democrats and pseudo-Trotskyists who comprise their "left" tail. We also were able to offer the first publication of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group "Ireland: workers to power!" during the course of the sub drive; some 64 were sold in Dublin. *Workers Hammer* warmly welcomes our new readers and subscribers to *Workers Vanguard* and *Women and Revolution*. ■



Workers Hammer

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	Quota	Pts	%
Dublin	75	75	100
Glasgow	70	88	126
London	170	225	132
Total	315	388	123

Moscow...

(Continued from page 5)

that "an Australian woman representative of the International Communist League", asked why she had come, responded: "The October Revolution was directed to the whole world. What is happening with you these days is a blow to communists in all countries."

In other Soviet cities similar, though smaller, Revolution Day demonstrations were held. In Leningrad, several thousand militants, including a number of sailors in uniform, gathered next to the historic battleship *Aurora*, which played a key role in the Bolsheviks' seizure in 1917 of the Winter Palace, site of Kerensky's provisional government. One speaker declared: "Our duty is to not allow the restoration of capitalism in our country! We will not be lackeys of American imperialism!" Over 300 pieces of Spartacist literature were sold to the Revolution Day demonstrators in Leningrad. A hundred copies of ICL literature were sold at the Kiev demonstration by members of the Union of Socialist Students of the Ukraine. An additional 800 pieces of Spartacist literature were sold to Revolution Day demonstrators in other provincial centres.

The most dramatic confrontation took place in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. Some 5000 demonstrators, organised by, among others, the Union of Toilers of the Ukraine, marched from an outlying cemetery to a statue of Lenin in the central city. En route they were blocked by a sizable number of Ukrainian nationalists and fascists in fighting uniforms. But the column broke through the blockade and continued on while the rightists harassed the march from the sides. As they reached the Lenin statue, the column again had to pierce a nationalist/fascist blockade in order to lay flowers commemorating the founder of the Soviet workers state. As the demonstration dispersed and thinned, they were attacked by the nationalists and several demonstrators suffered serious injuries.

The principal organisers of the 7 November demonstrations were drawn from a rump of the so-called "patriotic" wing of the Stalinist movement: the Moscow Workers Council, the United Front of Toilers (OFT) and a broader umbrella group, "Toiling Moscow". The Moscow Workers Council's Viktor Anpilov postures as a hard opponent of Yeltsin, but simply wants to turn the clock back before 1987, with a "perestroika" (restructuring) of the CPSU. These Stalinists played on working-class opposition to Gorbachev and Yeltsin's privatisation before the August coup, but when the decisive moment came, they uncritically subordinated themselves to the bankrupt and ineffectual "Gang of Eight" and failed to mobilise any of their working-class base to go after the Yeltsinite spearhead of counterrevolution.

Now in opposition, they are appealing to narrow economic concerns linked to Russian nationalism. Thus an early call for Revolution Day issued by the Moscow Workers Council concluded with the slogan: "No to the physical and spiritual genocide of the Russian peoples!" Yet in the city of Moscow itself, about half the industrial workforce is from non-Russian republics — Ukrainians, Caucasians, Turkic-speaking Central Asians. Trying to outbid the Yeltsinite counterrevolutionaries in appeals to Great Russian nationalism is poison and anathema to the struggle for a genuinely socialist union of soviet republics.

In their own way, many of the Russian Stalinist "patriots" accept the disintegration of the USSR along national lines. But the break-up of the Soviet Union would necessarily produce bloody



Der Spiegel

All the old crap returns: Russian Orthodox priest on barricades at Yeltsin's "White House".

nationalist strife — border wars, inter-communalist pogroms — such as are now ravaging Yugoslavia. We Leninist-Trotskyists stand for proletarian political revolution to reforge the Soviet Union on the socialist basis of genuine national equality.

Would-be Tsar Boris decrees "free market" starvation

"People will suffer but we have to go through this," declared Boris Yeltsin as he announced his new economic shock treatment. All price controls are to be

override previous legislation.

In an attempted show of strength, would-be Tsar Boris decreed a state of emergency in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Region — a traditionally Muslim enclave in the northern Caucasus which had declared its independence from the Russian Republic — and threatened to send in Soviet troops. This move was so flagrantly dictatorial and inflammatory that even Yeltsin's supporters in the Russian parliament came out against it and he backed off.

In a small way Yeltsin's retreat over

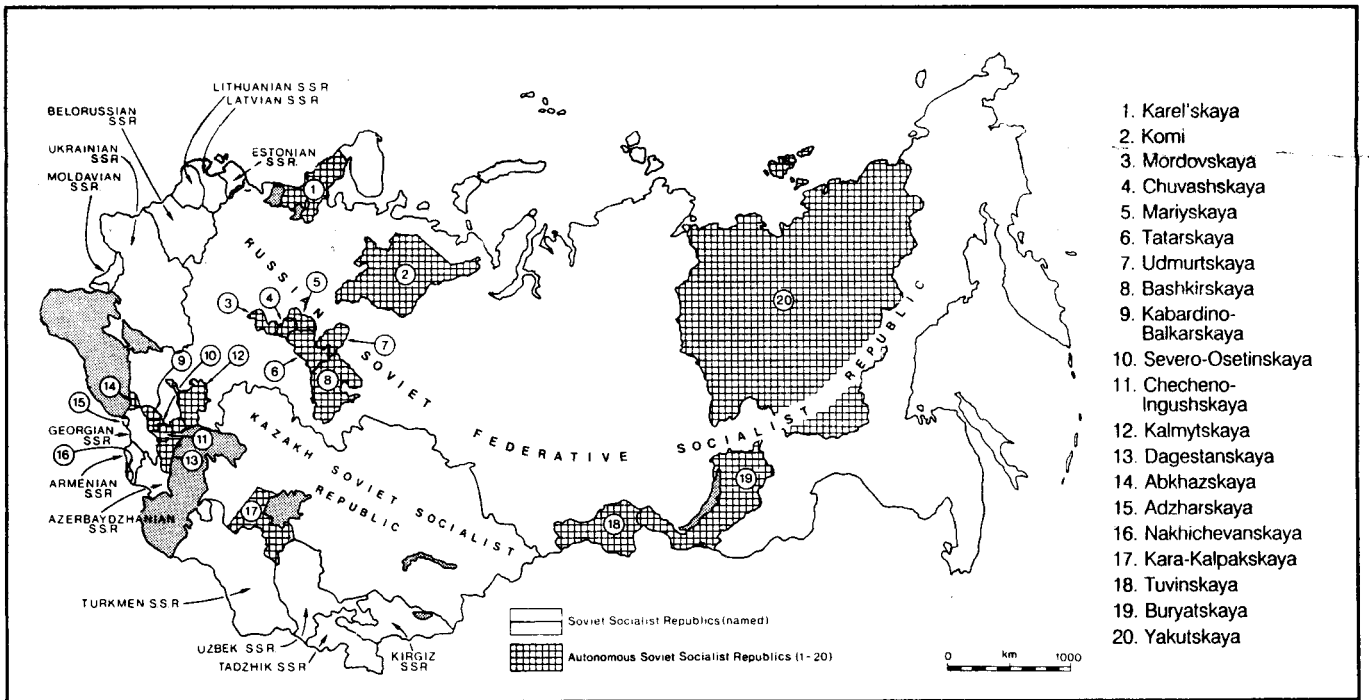
read: "Unity! Solidarity! For the Rights of Working People!" However, a placard saying "Free Prices Mean Death for the People!" caught the angry and desperate mood of the Soviet working class.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist party!

Last year the Soviet Union had a near-record grain harvest of almost 220 million tons. Yet there were still severe food shortages as the distribution system collapsed due to massive hoarding, speculation and black marketeering. This year the grain harvest has fallen to 165 million tons, the lowest level in ten years. Everyone is expecting food riots, which have already begun to spread, this winter. "A revolt would be most likely in December," predicts Major General Viktor Ivanenko, head of the KGB in the Russian Republic. *Moscow News* (13 October) even predicted "Putsch-2", a new coup coming off desperate blow-ups over hunger.

And everyone in Russia knows it was food riots by women workers in February 1917 which set off the revolution that toppled the tsarist autocracy. The Yeltsinite "democrats" rightly fear that food riots could spark their overthrow, too. The "black colonel" Viktor Alknis, a leading figure among the "patriots", foresees Soviet army officers and ranks supporting and joining popular protests against the new regime. However, Alknis is no enemy of a market economy. Far from it. He is an outspoken advocate of "the Chilean model" for a strong Soviet (capitalist) state.

The question of how to ensure food supplies was ever-present on Revolution



Soviet Union united over a hundred peoples. Drive for capitalist restoration has sparked orgy of nationalist strife. Return to the internationalist programme of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks!

lifted by the year's end. Unprofitable enterprises are to be shut down. Collective farms are to be privatised. And the central economic ministries will be dismantled. So Yeltsin decreed. But carrying out this programme of even greater immiseration of the Soviet working people is another matter.

In the two and a half months following the Kremlin coup attempt in August, jockeying between Yeltsin's Russian Republic, Gorbachev and the nationalist leaders of the non-Russian republics produced a power vacuum at the centre of the fractured Soviet Union. As the imperialists complained that the country was drifting, in late October Yeltsin moved to reassert himself as the strongman of the counterrevolution by announcing a "free market" shock treatment and demanding sweeping dictatorial powers. The Russian parliament duly voted him the right to ban all elections and referenda for more than a year, cancel all legislation passed by local and regional assemblies, and

Chechen-Ingush points up the fundamental *weakness* of his position. For the popular mood is turning markedly against the "democrats", ie open capitalist-restorationists, who are now held responsible for the hyperinflation, shortages of food and everything else, and the overall descent into economic chaos. A poll by the Moscow Sociological Agency in late October showed 65 per cent of Muscovites believe the political and economic situation is the same or worse than before the August coup attempt.

The imperialist godfathers of Yeltsin, Popov & Co are worried about working-class opposition to capitalist counterrevolution in Russia. One can already see the beginnings of this. In late October, the Moscow Federation of Labour Unions organised a march of up to 50,000 against the price increases. The Federation leaders did not challenge Yeltsin/Popov and their "free market" programme as such but rather adopted a defensive posture. Their main banner

Day. The Moscow Workers Council called for "Distribution of Goods Under Control of the Workers!" Another grouping, Toiling Moscow, called for putting "under WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' CONTROL prices and the wages of the 'democrats' and bandits, partycrats and speculators and FORCE THEM to work". Workers control is indeed, urgently, necessary. But popular resistance to "free market" starvation can preserve the Soviet Union on a socialist basis only by breaking from the policies of the parasitic, nationalist bureaucracy which led the Soviet Union to disaster. Workers resistance will immediately face the question of power, and to succeed it requires the leadership of a genuinely communist, ie Leninist-Trotskyist party.

The Stalinist "patriots" at bottom have no alternative to the market. The "maximum programme" of Anpilov's newspaper *Molniya* offers a lot of left verbiage, but in practice the "minimum programme" (the real programme) takes

over: as was the case in last summer's Russian presidential campaign, when *Molnija* supported the candidacy of the anti-Semite Makashev, who was for "equality of all property forms"!

Moscow mayor Popov has decreed that basic foodstuffs—bread, meat, butter and eggs—are to be rationed by coupons. Control over the means of life must be wrested from this lackey of Wall Street and Frankfurt. Workers committees must be set up to oversee the distribution of food, smashing the stranglehold of parasitic petty traders, black marketeers and pro-capitalist bureaucrats who would become Russia's new capitalist exploiters. The vast quantities of foodstuffs they are hoarding must be seized and defended, which requires the formation of workers defence committees, ie the nucleus of workers militias, in coordination with pro-socialist elements of the Soviet Army.

The attempts to victimise national minorities, to rip apart the multinational Soviet proletariat while giving free rein to monarchists and Pamyat thugs and pardoning Nazi war criminals, must be met by organised multinational workers defence guards.

These urgently necessary measures can be a step in creating organs of proletarian dual power to challenge and overthrow the Yeltsin/Gorbachev counterrevolutionary gang. Independent workers committees must be formed in factories, mines, railway yards and other enterprises to prevent lay-offs and privatisation by taking plants and controlling production. Such workers committees can be the basis for genuine soviets, drawing into their ranks collective farmers, oppressed minorities, working women, Red Army soldiers and officers, old-age pensioners—all those who will be victimised by the "new order". But authentic soviets must become organs for the struggle for power. Revolutionary leadership is the key.

In his well-known article, "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It", written in September 1917 on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin called



Novosti

Red soldiers demonstrate for communism in Moscow, 1917.

for a programme of all-sided workers control as the indispensable means to prevent famine. In this situation of dual power, in which the shaky capitalist government had ordered a rise in food prices, he emphasise: "For only the winning of power by the proletariat, headed by the Bolshevik Party, can put an end to the outrageous actions of Kerensky and Co. and restore the work of democratic food distribution, supply and other organisations, which Kerensky and his government are frustrating. The Bolsheviks are acting...as the representatives of the interests of the whole people...."

The historic catastrophe now facing Soviet working people cannot be prevented or even softened by defensive economic struggles. Trade-union activism cannot prevent mass unemployment and hyperinflation if the Wall Street/Yeltsin

programme is actually carried out. The authors of this programme must be overthrown by the revolutionary working

class. The disintegration of the USSR cannot be halted by Stalinist "patriotism", which increasingly has taken the form of narrow Russian nationalism. Only the programme of proletarian internationalism, carried out by a communist vanguard with a multinational cadre, can reforge the Soviet Union on the basis of national equality and socialist economic planning.

For decades, the oppressive, corrupt and parasitic Kremlin oligarchy falsely claimed the historic mantle of Lenin's Bolshevik Party. In reality, it was the Trotskyist Left Opposition which preserved and carried forward the revolutionary internationalist programme of Red October. Stalin, under the banner of "building socialism in one country", was the gravedigger of the revolution, whose surviving cadre he murdered in the Great Purge of the 1930s. It is urgently necessary to build a new Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union, uniting the most class-conscious workers with revolutionary Marxist intellectuals. Only under the leadership of such an authentic communist party, section of a reformed Fourth International, can the Soviet working class and its allies defeat the forces of bloody capitalist counterrevolution.

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 539, 22 November 1991.

France...

(Continued from page 6)

the racist climate which Le Pen's fascist movement feeds on as murderous attacks mount against "immigrant" workers and youth.

The crisis of revolutionary leadership

Since the combative strike of railway workers five years ago, strikes in France have often seen the formation of strike coordinating committees, as is the case in the present nurses strike. These have served to bridge the several unions, and have frequently escaped from the iron control of Stalinist CGT and social-democratic CFDT bureaucrats. French workers are justifiably distrustful of the reformist union leaderships which led them into support for Mitterrand. However, as Lenin explained in his classic work *What Is To Be Done?* the spontaneous organisation of workers cannot alone resolve the problem of leadership.

In the microcosm of this key strike, it is being shown with crystal clarity how Stalinism and social democracy sabotage the most elementary workers struggles. While Cléon strikers at a 1 November general assembly chanted "tenir, tenir, tenir!" (hold on) at every mention of going back, *L'Humanité* claimed the workers were "ready to take down the picket lines if Renault management would guarantee that negotiations would begin on proposals for a minimal specified wage increase and no reprisals"! Meanwhile, the regional CFDT called for "all 5000 Cléon workers" (ie, including the scabs) to meet in front of the factory to "vote" on the strike.

With the strikers holding firm, the hardline Renault management and many in the media, including *Le Monde*, are

pushing the Mitterrand/Cresson government to send in the police. But in the present climate of social tension, particularly after the police charge against striking nurses, this could easily backfire. Above all: Cléon must not stand alone!

Many Renault-Cléon strikers recall with pride that their plant was among the first to mobilise during the general strike of May 1968. But they must also draw the lessons of May '68, which was stabbed in the back by the national leadership of the PCF and the union tops who hoped to bring in a "left" government of the capitalist state. What that powerful general strike lacked was a leadership with the programme and determination to lead the mobilisation forward to workers revolution. And now ten years of "left" government has demonstrated the bankruptcy of the popular front as it relentlessly drives down the living standards of the working people and persecutes North African "immigrants".

The Ligue Trotskyiste banner at the Paris demonstration during the one-day general strike of 24 October declared: "Break with Mitterrand! For a May '68 that goes all the way!" As its 19 October supplement to *Le Bolchévique* declared:

"The Mitterrand government is in desperate straits but defends the interests of capitalism with hammer and tongs. Every thoroughgoing workers struggle becomes a political struggle which calls out for a class-struggle leadership. To win, working-class militants must therefore get rid of the bureaucrats who have been completely corrupted through class collaboration, in order to construct a revolutionary workers party. Such a party will fight for a workers government to expropriate capitalism and put an end once and for all to this social system which transforms into misery the enormous riches produced by the workers."

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 538, 8 November 1991.

Spartacist Bulletin No. 1 (In Russian)

Contents:

New, lengthy Introduction presents a Trotskyist perspective on the developments in the Soviet Union.

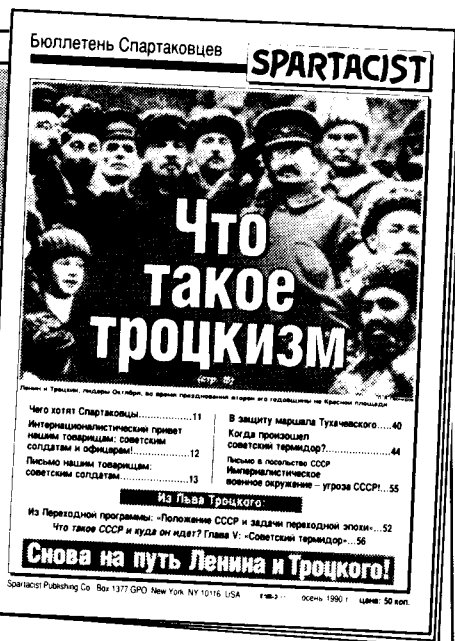
Trotskyism: What It Is
Published in English as "Trotskyism: What It Isn't and What It Is!"
February 1990. An in-depth analysis of the real positions of revolutionary Trotskyism against the revisionist currents, particularly in light of the events in Germany.

Three pieces from the intervention of the ICL into the upheavals in the DDR during the last year including **What the Spartacists Want** and letters to soldier comrades distributed to Soviet troops stationed in the DDR.

Also contains:

In Defense of Marshal Tukhachevsky
Translated from *Workers Vanguard* No. 321, 14 January 1983. Refutation of slanders against one of the Red Army's most brilliant leaders.

When Was the Soviet Thermidor?
From *Spartacist*, English edition, No. 43-44, Summer 1989.



Reprints from Leon Trotsky's writings:
From the Transitional Program
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Glasgow: protesters foil first warrant sale

Labour council sheriff's men sent packing

GLASGOW — In Scotland some two and a half million summary warrants for the recovery of poll tax arrears—200 million pounds plus in Strathclyde where non-payment has been put at 84 per cent—testify to the depth of opposition to the hated poll tax, dead but yet unburied. When Margaret Thatcher, the chief architect and advocate of the poll tax, went down the tubes last November, the poll tax was politically killed off—but the victimisations continue against those who refused to pay. In Scotland, used as a guinea-pig for the tax and sharply hit by the devastation of industry, the Tory party is almost irrelevant, running a poor third behind Labour and the Liberal Democrats. We print below a slightly edited eye-witness account by a *Workers Hammer* supporter of the defeat of the first attempted warrant sale in Scotland. What our reporter demonstrated is that Labour, no less than the Tories, is committed to attacking the working class, to administering the same vicious, oppressive capitalist system.

“On the cold grey morning of October 1st, in a constant drizzle, just after 11.00 am, a spokesperson for LABOUR CONTROLLED Strathclyde Regional Council was forced to announce the cancellation of the first Scottish poll tax ‘warrant sale’ of the furniture of a working class Port Glasgow family.

“This ‘total victory’ by [about 400] anti-poll tax protesters followed a three plus hour siege of the LABOUR council’s former police station in Turnbull Street near Glasgow Cross.

“Strathclyde’s Labour Council Executive had planned well, seeking out the safe premises of a former police station and [sheriff officers] ABERNETHY, MCINTYRE & CO had aided and abetted by getting an interdict against Tommy Sheridan and the whole Inverclyde Anti-Poll Tax Union. No auctioneers would touch it, but the ‘socialists’ of the REGION ‘justified’ their loyalty to the capitalist state by whining that the worthy councillors might be ‘surcharged’ by Her Majesty’s Government if they did not proceed with the ‘sale’.

“The working class of Glasgow correctly identified every individual in civvies as ‘scabs’ when they appeared behind the thin blue line, whether they were ‘SHERIFFS MEN’, from the council or whatever. Between bursts of song, such as ‘NO WARRANT SALES IN SCOTLAND’, these ‘scabs’ were harangued mercilessly.

“When victory was announced, the 400 strong cheered themselves and jeered the opposition, breaking out into the warning chant of ‘EASY! EASY!’ and impromptu congas. They refused to clear the yard until the ‘SHERIFFS MEN’ set off back to Port Glasgow with their tails between their legs, to return the poor few goods

back to their rightful owners.

“‘NO ARRESTS WERE MADE’ disapproved the *Glasgow Evening Times*. Well, the working class are not organised to carry out arrests yet, but there are those who are pledged to stop these criminals, these animals called ‘SHERIFFS MEN’ from kicking in doors and stealing from the poor.

“This class victory ended on one sour



Jeff Smith

Glasgow, 1 October: angry anti-poll tax demonstrators confront cops as protest forces Labour Council sheriffs to turn tail and abandon warrant sale.

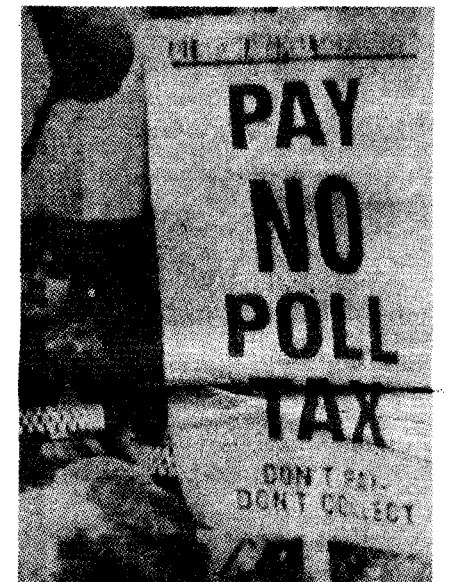
note! After the ritual hanging of an effigy of Maggie Thatcher, Tommy Sheridan, despite his earlier handling by the Glasgow polis, still needed to touch his forelock to them. He explained to the crowd that the ‘boys with the funny hats’ (Police) also had friends and family who did not pay the poll tax. As the Militant supporters upfront cheered their hero’s mention of the ‘Workers in Uniform’ those at the back moaned ‘what’s he saying that for?’ and sporadic shouts of ‘fxxx the Polis’ broke out.

“But the Battle continues! ‘MILITANT’ often quotes the 1916 Glasgow Rent Strike but it never mentions two conclusions of that period—One, the campaign was won by industrial strike action and, two, the leaders of that Campaign rejected the Labour Party (much more socialist in that time) as sell out reformists and went on to form the Communist Party.”

The Militant tendency, the leading political force in the Anti-Poll Tax Unions, shares every bit the pro-capitalist reformism of the Labour Party. Sheridan’s genuflection to the Glasgow police (Militant wants the cops to be in the unions!) is entirely of a piece with Militant’s Labourite and chauvinist loyalty to British imperialist “democracy”. From the use of bailiffs against Liverpool rates debtors in 1984-85 by Derek Hatton & Co who struck a deal with the Tory gov-

ernment in the middle of the great miners strike to increase rates rather than countenance strike action by Liverpool workers, to the public threat to shop anti-poll tax demonstrators after the police riot in Trafalgar Square—Militant’s spineless Labourite treachery is well known. Militant opposes the elementary demand for the immediate removal of British troops from Northern Ireland. It

prominent Glasgow supporter Bill Blackstock, we read that the SNP “with its attractive and radical social policies” has made the Young Scottish Nationalists (YSN) the “strongest youth branch of any Scottish political party” (*Militant*, 4 October). In a centre-page article in the 20 September issue, *Militant* worries that a fourth Tory term could see Scotland delivered into the arms of the SNP unless



Guardian

functioned as lackeys for the war-mongering Labourite/CND crowd during the Gulf War—calling for a general election to put Kinnock into No 10 and fingering to the cops those in the Spartacist League who called for the defeat of the bloody British/US imperialists in the War. Crowning Militant’s reformist “socialism” is its call for an Enabling Act in the “Mother of Parliaments” to nationalise the top 200 monopolies.

And where it has stood against official Kinnockites, as in the Liverpool by-election in July, Militant offers no political alternative to the Labour Party. On the contrary, it desperately tries to breathe life into what Rosa Luxemburg called the “stinking corpse” of social democracy, pledging itself to “Real Labour” policies and to a “majority Labour government elected at the earliest opportunity” (*Militant*, 7 June). It is precisely for this reason that we did not advocate even the most critical support to Lesley Mahmood, the Militant candidate in Liverpool (see “Labourites fall out in Liverpool”, *Workers Hammer* no 124, July/August 1991).

In Scotland the imposition of the poll tax is widely recognised as an aspect of national oppression. And the prolonged historical betrayals of the Labour Party—not least its enforcement of the Tory poll tax—have fuelled the growth of Scottish nationalism. This is reflected in the pages of *Militant*, where in a letter by

Labour campaigns on a “socialist” programme: ie, one that “will demand that a Scottish parliament begins to transform Scottish society in the interests of the working class”! For *Militant*, a “Scottish parliament” is to be achieved through the toothless “Scottish Constitutional Convention” intended to circumvent demands for independence. Militant’s “Scottish parliament”, the central orientation of its so-called “Scottish turn”, would be Liverpool City Council writ large. If you liked Derek Hatton, you’ll love Tommy Sheridan.

As for the gentlemen of the SNP, these aspiring rulers of a devolved capitalist Scotland fear and loathe the unleashing of the social power of the working class. The SNP is happy to be the lapdog of the imperialists—including English imperialists—so long as it gets its own piece of turf to oppress and exploit (an independent Scotland as part of the EC). And the NATO-loving SNP is an ardent supporter of the counter-revolutionary, fascist-infested Baltic nationalists such as the Lithuanian Sajudis. For all its “can pay, won’t pay” windbagery, where the SNP have controlled councils, they—like the Labour Party—implemented the poll tax.

What’s needed is the forging of an authentic communist alternative to the Labour traitors and Tartan Tories of the SNP in Scotland. Forward to a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■