

Stalinism—Gravedigger of the Revolution

How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled



Spartacist

For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Yeltsin Counterrevolution!

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

The ascendancy of Yeltsin and capitalist-restorationist forces backing him was a pivotal event in determining the fate of the Soviet Union, but it was not conclusive. In our August 1991 article, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolu-

tion!", which was immediately translated into Russian and distributed in over 100,000 copies throughout the Soviet Union, we wrote that workers mobilizations should have cleaned out the counterrevolutionary rabble on Yeltsin's haricades, thus opening the road to pro-

letarian political revolution. As a result of Yeltsin's victory:

"The first workers state in history, sapped and undermined by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, lies in tatters. The state power has been fractured, the Communist Party—its bureaucratic core—shattered and banned from the

KGB and armed forces, the multinational union is ripping apart as one republic after another proclaims secession.

"But while Yeltsin & Co. now see a clear field to push through a forced-draft reintroduction of capitalism, the outcome is not yet definitively decided. Opposition from the factories against the ravages of capitalist assault could... prevent the rapid consolidation of counterrevolution."

—W1 No. 533, 30 August 1991

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

But the situation cannot long continue as it is. For Yeltsin and other restorationists to nail down a solid capitalist

continued on page 6



Spartacist

ICL banner outside January Soviet officers conference in Moscow: "No to Capitalist Restoration! Yes to Gains of October!"



In Response to Crown Heights Verdict

Zionists Seek Race War in NYC

The Brooklyn neighborhood of Crown Heights has erupted again, after a jury of blacks, Hispanics and whites returned a verdict of "not guilty" on October 29 in the case of a black youth charged with the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum. Rosenbaum, a member of the ultra-orthodox Lubavitcher Hasidic sect, was stabbed by a gang of black youths in August 1991 during the explosion of rage after a seven-year-old black child, Gavin Cato, was struck down and killed by a reckless driver in the entourage of Lubavitcher head Rabbi Menachem Schneerson.

For three days that August, anger raged in this neighborhood of largely Caribbean blacks. Over 2,000 cops flooded into Crown Heights. After the stabbing of Rosenbaum, the cops picked up 17-year-old Lemrick Nelson Jr. and charged him with murder. The killing of Yankel Rosenbaum was a vicious racist crime. But the case that the prosecution took to a Brooklyn jury over a year later was based purely on the testimony of the

NYPD racist killers. Nelson's defense attorney was able to point to glaring inconsistencies in the cops' testimony, and the jury voted for acquittal. One juror summed up what every New Yorker knows—"The police were not honest." But the right-wing Zionists don't care—they wanted a guilty verdict, guilty or not.

After the verdict, a dean of the NYU Medical School pointed to the "outrageous medical neglect" that contributed to Rosenbaum's death that night at Kings County Hospital—neglect that the black and Hispanic poor of Brooklyn are also routinely subjected to. The 29-year-old scholar died two hours after he was admitted, because of what one doctor called peripheral lung injuries "that should not kill anyone in 1991."

Now Zionist leaders and right-wing politicians like Ed Koch and Brooklyn councilman Noach Dear have seized on the verdict to launch a provocative escalating campaign for race war in New York City. The day after the

verdict, a mob of 500 Satmar Hasidim set upon five black and Hispanic teenagers in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn. The same day, 400 members of the Lubavitcher sect gathered on Ocean Parkway, the dividing line between the Hasidic and black communities in Crown Heights. When a black veteran of World War II appealed to them that "We rescued you from the concentration camps!", Hasidic racists shouted taunts of "You go back to Africa."

There are more sinister, and more powerful, forces pushing for race war than the isolated Lubavitchers. Right-wing Zionists in NYC are still seething over the acquittal last year of an Egyptian in the death of Zionist Meir Kahane, founder of the fascist Jewish Defense League. In Israel, on the second anniversary of Kahane's death, his followers in "Kahane Chai" threw a grenade into a crowded marketplace in Arab East Jerusalem, killing one Palestinian and wounding a number of others. In Crown Heights they paraded with JDL slogans like "Every Jew a .22." Schoolchildren were given placards reading "Execute Nelson Now."

Certified racist pig and former mayor Ed Koch went to Crown Heights to whip up racist hatred, appearing at a November 1 rally of 4,500 with vigilante Guardian Angel punk Curtis Sliwa, Senator Al D'Amato, and former federal prosecutor and mayoral candidate Rudy Giuliani. "Wanted for Murder" posters of black mayor David Dinkins were handed out. Koch rails about the "physical fear because of black violence" and declares, "We are on the cusp of a white, which includes Jewish, exodus" (New York Times, 19 November).

The Zionists think they can treat blacks in New York like Palestinians on the West Bank. But this is a dangerous illusion. Moreover, with their racist provocations the Zionists are fueling powerful reactionary forces which are not exactly "friends of the Jewish people." When anti-Semites like Mississippi governor Kirk Fordice and the likes of David Duke proclaim the U.S. a "Christian nation," they have Jews as well as blacks in their sights.

But the Zionists poison the possibility of common Jewish/black struggle against the fascists, as they seek to whip

up race war. On November 9, Rabbi Avi Weiss led a march on Gracie Mansion, his followers shouting racist slurs and carrying a coffin "fitted to the contours of Mayor David N. Dinkins" (New York Times, 9 November). They took out a full-page ad in the Times ten days later to escalate their campaign of race-hate. On November 12, Noach Dear stormed into a City Council meeting demanding that it condemn the verdict, and then denounced black councilwoman Mary Pinkett as an "anti-Semite" when she refused to knuckle under. Pinkett said of Dear that he was trying to "out-JDL the JDL."

Who stands to benefit from the repeated bouts of race and ethnic hatred are the WASP Wall Street bankers who really do rule NYC, and their killers in blue. Just two months ago, 10,000 armed police besieged City Hall in an ominous display of racist cop bonapartism aimed at black mayor Dinkins. Now the media is full of accounts of a recent case of a black plainclothes transit cop who was shot at 21 times by his white colleagues who "thought he was a mugger." But they are silent about the long list of black and Hispanic victims of the NYPD.

After the killing of Gavin Cato, the anger of black Crown Heights, especially against the police, was criminally misdirected by nationalist demagogues like Sonny Carson and Al Sharpton into hideous anti-Semitic attacks on the Lubavitch community and individual Jews. Black youths marched on synagogues chanting "Heil Hitler!" It is only the racist oppressors who benefit from blacks and Jews going at each other's throats.

Even more grotesquely, in the wake of the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum, supposed leftists like the defunct "Fourth Internationalist Tendency" actually applauded such attacks (see "Crown Heights: FIT Panders to Pogromists," WV No. 538, 8 November 1991). In this they only aid the bourgeoisie in diverting the anger of black youth away from the cops and the racist rulers of this country.

As we wrote in "Death in Crown Heights" in August 1991: "It's going to take hard class struggle and a revolutionary workers party to defend the myriad communities which make up this country, and to win a future for an entire generation of youth." ■



TROTSKY

The Workers State and Proletarian Consciousness

Leon Trotsky emphasized time and again that Stalinism was leading the Soviet Union to ruin, opening the floodgates to capitalist restoration. In his definitive analysis of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state, *The Revolution Betrayed*, he posed the question: "Will the bureaucrats devour the workers' state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrats?" The subjective factor, the consciousness and organization of the work-



LENIN

ing masses, was key to defending the gains of October, just as the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks was key in leading the struggle for power in 1917. In the absence of a revolutionary party grounded in an internationalist perspective, the workers state would, sooner or later, succumb to capitalist counterrevolution.

The proletarian revolution not only frees the productive forces from the fetters of private ownership but also transfers them to the direct disposal of the state that it itself creates. While the bourgeois state, after the revolution, confines itself to a police role, leaving the market to its own laws, the workers' state assumes the direct role of economist and organizer. The replacement of one political regime by another exerts only an indirect and superficial influence upon market economy. On the contrary, the replacement of a workers' government by a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois government would inevitably lead to the liquidation of the planned beginnings and, subsequently, to the restoration of private property. *In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously.* Progress towards socialism is inseparable from that state power that is desirous of socialism or that is constrained to desire it. Socialism can acquire an immutable character only at a very high stage of its development, when its productive forces have far transcended those of capitalism, when the human wants of each and all can obtain bounteous satisfaction and when the state will have completely withered away, dissolving in society. But all this is still in the distant future. At the given stage of development, the socialist construction stands and falls with the workers' state.

The inevitable collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism would immediately call into question the character of the USSR as a workers' state. A socialist economy cannot be constructed without a socialist power. The fate of the USSR as a socialist state depends upon that political regime that will arise to replace Stalinist Bonapartism. Only the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat can regenerate the soviet system, if it is again able to mobilize around itself the toilers of the city and the village.

—Leon Trotsky, "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" (February 1935)

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS Liz Gordon

EDITOR Jan Norden

PRODUCTION MANAGER Joan Parker

CIRCULATION MANAGER Karen Valdez

EDITORIAL BOARD George Foster, Frank Hunter, Jane Kerrigan, Len Meyers, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alison Spencer, Marjorie Stenberg

The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Workers Vanguard (USPS 098-770) published biweekly, except 2nd issue August and with 3 week interval December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 41 Warren Street New York, NY 10007 Telephone (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business) Address all correspondence to Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116 Domestic subscriptions \$7.00/24 issues Second-class postage paid at New York, NY POSTMASTER Send address changes to Workers Vanguard Box 1377, GPO New York NY 10116

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint

No. 564

27 November 1992

Partisan Defense Committee Benefits

Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners

Come to a Fundraising Party!

Music • Dancing • Food

Saturday, Dec. 5, 10 p.m.

Please call for information
(404) 659-0251

ATLANTA

Sunday, Dec. 13, 1-4 p.m.

The Firehouse, Fort Mason Ctr
Marina at Laguna
For information (510) 839-0852

SAN FRANCISCO

Sunday, Dec. 6, 3-7 p.m.

UE Hall
37 S. Ashland Ave
For information (312) 663-0719

CHICAGO

Friday, Dec. 18, 5-9:30 p.m.

Wetlands
161 Hudson (at Laight)
For information (212) 406-4252

NEW YORK

Tickets: \$5 advance, \$8 at door, \$10 contributing

(A \$10 ticket includes a subscription to *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* for one year.)

Victory to the Cal TA Strike!

UC Berkeley, Santa Cruz

Picket lines went up at the University of California at Berkeley on November 19 as teaching assistants organized in the Association of Graduate Student Employees (AGSE) walked off the job to demand union recognition. Facing a \$225 million budget shortfall, the arrogant UC administration lavished a pay raise on Berkeley chancellor Tien on the eve of the strike while sneering that TAs—who carry 60 percent of the course load—are students, not employees. And a \$650 tuition hike was just announced!

United action by students, faculty and campus workers is needed to defeat the university's union-busting, fee-hiking frenzy. The Spartacus Youth Club is out on AGSE picket lines urging, "Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross!" and "On Strike Means Shut It Down!"

On Monday, November 23, teaching assistants at UC Santa Cruz also struck and a mass picket of 300 people (including many undergraduates) went up. Campus bus drivers honored the lines and other campus workers found their contractual "no strike" clauses made them too ill to report to work. Strike support meetings at Santa Cruz are held off campus, as they should be—not



UC Berkeley, November 20: Picket lines on second day of AGSE teaching assistants strike.

behind picket lines, like at Berkeley! A student sit-in against fee hikes earlier this month politicized the Santa Cruz campus and ended with a police attack on the protesters.

Unfortunately, at Berkeley few undergraduates walk the lines, and the other campus unions have told their members to go on working during the strike. The AGSE bureaucrats are responsible for

this widespread *scabbing*. They view the picket line merely as a pressure tactic on "friends" in the state legislature and administration. While appealing for a class boycott, they've yet to try to build pickets to *shut it down*!

Working overtime to undermine the picket lines at Berkeley are the scabby "socialists" in the misnamed Revolutionary Workers League. Active class treason

is a tradition and principle for the pernicious RWL. The very first issue of their newspaper carried a front-page defense of *scabbing* on the 1977 clerical workers strike in Ann Arbor, using the nauseating argument that to risk their own jobs by honoring picket lines would "deprive the clerical struggle of leadership."

At Berkeley, the RWL reincarnated itself as the "Ad Hoc Committee for a Campus-Wide Strike" and issued a leaflet calling for a strike support "strategy" meeting—to be held on the struck campus! RWLers hysterically harangued AGSE strikers, urging them to leave the picket lines to build support among scabbing students! The strikers stayed at their posts and the RWL blithely waltzed across the class line...again.

Meanwhile, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which always capitulates to whatever pressure they feel the most, intended to break the strike and have their national honcho, Ahmed Shawki, give a speech on Malcolm X on the struck campus. Whining that "the union leadership says it's OK," the ISO canceled the forum at the last minute after grueling confrontations with Spartacus Youth Club members on the picket line. Imagine what Malcolm X would have said about scab "socialists" who honor the battle lines of struggle only at their convenience!

We say: *Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross! Victory to the TA Strike!* ■

Efraín López: Latest Victim of the LAPD

LOS ANGELES—Six months after L.A. exploded in outrage over the acquittal of the cops who nearly beat Rodney King to death, racist cop terror is still raging unabated against the black and Latino population. At 1 a.m. on November 9, nine bullets were pumped into the chest of an 18-year-old Latino youth, Efraín López, who held nothing in his hands but a broomstick. The trigger-happy killer cop, Neil Goldberg, is from the notorious Foothill Division station, the same one the cops who beat Rodney King worked out of. López' mother had flagged down a patrol car in the hope of getting help to subdue her unruly son. But all she got was a tragic reminder of how the LAPD treats non-whites in this

city. To the ruling class of this country, blacks and Latinos are surplus population, and their hired henchmen treat them as such.

Students and community members erupted in a series of angry protests. On Wednesday, November 11, a contingent from the Cal State Northridge chapter of the Chicano student group MEChA joined a crowd of 150 people in front of the police station. Protesters faced a brick wall that was hurriedly built after the upheaval last spring to protect this infamous station from the just outrage of future demonstrators. On Monday, November 16, about 75 people, mostly family, friends and neighbors of the victim, returned to the station to protest

Family and friends of Efraín López protest LAPD killer cops.



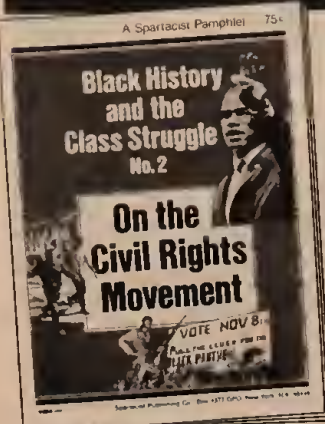
again, after an open casket wake which sharpened everyone's sense of loss and injustice.

The murder of Efraín López is only the latest in a string of atrocities presided over by Darrell Gates' replacement as

police chief, Willie L. Williams, black front man for the racist rulers. Los Angeles is near the edge again, as the feds plan to "retry" the four cops in the Rodney King case who were acquitted in the Simi Valley state court. That the federal "prosecutors" are on the same class side as the racist L.A. cops was shown by a "leak" of the prosecutors' "secret" strategy papers to the defense. While the racist cops may get off again, a verdict is expected shortly in the trial of three black youth charged in the despicable beating of white truck driver Reginald Denny during the riots.

And in Detroit, black people with signs calling to "Jail the Killer Cops!" and "Avenge Malice Green!" have been protesting the cop murder of a black motorist there on November 3. Green got the Rodney King treatment, and died after being dragged from his car and beaten by the cops. With mounting anger in the city, the authorities rushed to indict the cops in the hope of heading off a social explosion. From L.A. to Detroit, we need to forge a revolutionary party that will act as a tribune of all the oppressed in leading the working class to power and putting an end to racist ruling-class terror once and for all. ■

Spartacist Pamphlets—Black History and the Class Struggle

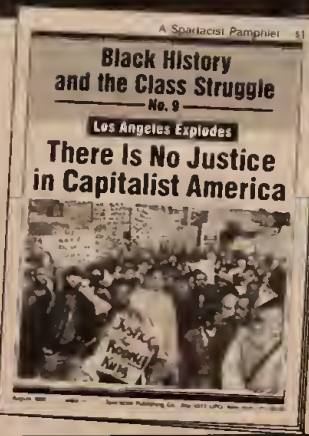


From Malcolm X to the Los Angeles Upheaval

Now Available—Issue No. 2: An appreciation of "Malcolm X: Courageous Fighter for Black Liberation," and "SNCC: Black Power and the Democrats." No. 2 in this Spartacist pamphlet series focuses on the civil rights movement. Must reading for all students of this crucial period and today's fighters for black liberation.

Just Out—Issue No. 9: The verdict in the Rodney King case threw a spotlight on the racial oppression at the root of this capitalist society. No. 9 in this series explores the significance of America's first "inter-racial riot," 25 years after the ghetto explosions that shook America.

Single copies of Issue No. 2, \$.75; Issue No. 9, \$1
Make checks payable to/mail to:
Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



Leftists, Unions Protest Nazi Murder Attacks in Germany

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

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

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

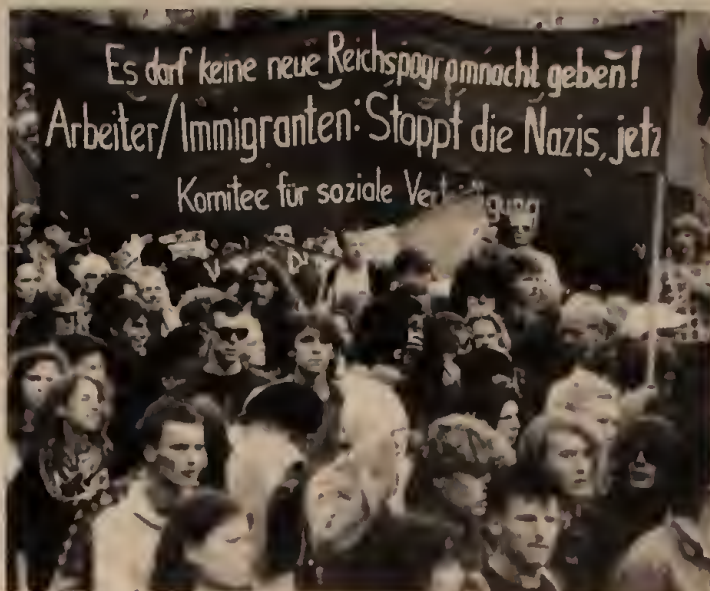
Then, on Sunday night, Nazis in the west German town of Mölln, in the state of Schleswig-Holstein near Hamburg, staged an arson attack on two houses, murdering a family of Turkish immigrants: 51-year-old Bahiyy Arslan, her 10-year-old grandchild Yeliz Arslan and her 14-year-old niece Atze Yilmaz. Minutes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

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

Also this weekend, a former official of the Italian Communist Party who has been working in Germany for 27 years was attacked in his apartment by Nazis. In the space of two days, rightists fired guns into a squatters community in Rathenow, firebombed a refugee home in Schöningen, and threw a hand grenade into a home for refugee children in Hamburg. In Rostock, scene of the anti-Roma (Gypsy) pogrom last August, a dozen skinhead toughs roamed through the city smashing cars and terrorizing passers-by. Today another Turk was reportedly knifed.

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

The bourgeois press is comparing these clashes between leftists and rightist thugs with the latter days of the Weimar Republic. The comparison is greatly overstated, and its purpose is to



Spartakist Workers Party contingent in protest against the racist pogrom in Rostock, August 29. Banner of the Committee for Social Defense says, "Workers/Immigrants: Stop the Nazis Now!"

strengthen the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. Thus after months of pointedly ignoring rightist attacks, the *Verfassungsschutz* (Office for the Protection of the Constitution) suddenly intervened in the investigation of the Mölln attack.

Meanwhile, federal chancellor Kohl has threatened to declare a "state emergency" in order to "modify" (eliminate) the constitutional right to asylum, thus handing the Nazis a victory in their "foreigners out" drive. And federal interior minister Seitzers is calling for limitations on the right to demonstrate.

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

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

and Stalinists let Hitler march to power unhindered.

As the murder of Silvio Meier became known, there was a spontaneous march of several hundred protesters on Saturday evening. On Sunday, some 5,000 marched, mostly semi-anarchist *Autonome* and squatters, to denounce the Nazi murder. The SpAD marched under a red banner calling to "Stop the Nazis with Workers United-Front Action! Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrant Workers and Their Families!" Spartakist signs recalled how the SPD former mayor of Berlin, Momper, had unleashed the federal border police against East Berlin squatters in November 1990.

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

The blind anti-working-class sectoralism of the *Autonome* is downright suicidal. The Nazis are the reserve troops of the Fourth Reich, who have flourished on the nationalist breeding ground of capitalist reunification. They cannot be fought with impotent declarations of "rage" any more than with popular-front demonstrations headed by racist politicians concerned about "the image of Germany abroad." The fascist scum won't be defeated by random brawls, and certainly not by anti-communist assaults.

In recent weeks, tens of thousands of youth have gone into the streets to protest not only against Nazi attacks but also against the parliamentary debate over gutting the right to asylum, including the vile role of the SPD in the racist anti-immigrant popular front (see "Germany: Mass Outrage Over Fascist Terror," WV No. 563, 13 November). These youth must be won to fight for the independent mobilization of the working class, including the key component of immigrant workers, who are increasingly the target of the fascist attacks. This is the program of the SpAD.

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

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

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

Trotskyists Say: "Freedom for Erich Honecker!"



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



150,000 March in Melbourne Strike Rally

MELBOURNE—On November 10, over 150,000 people marched through the streets here and rallied outside the parliament building (Melbourne is the capital of the state of Victoria). It was one of the biggest demonstrations seen in Australia since the Vietnam antiwar protests. This was the culmination of a day of statewide strike action by some 800,000 workers, including tens of thousands of teachers, nurses and public employees, as well as maritime and metal workers. Immigrant and women workers were a highly visible part of this massive show of anger directed at the declaration of war on the state's workers and poor by the newly elected Liberal Party government of Victoria premier Jeff Kennett.

After years of escalating unemployment and austerity under state and federal Labor Party governments, the Tory Kennett regime has announced the axing of tens of thousands of government jobs, along with savage cuts to public transport, education, health and social services. Kennett's battery of legislation aims to replace existing conditions under existing awards (court-sanctioned contracts between unions and bosses) with individual contracts, putting everything up for grabs—holiday and sick leave entitlements, length of the workweek, overtime rates, workers' accident compensation entitlements. Massive financial penalties are planned to virtually

outlaw all strikes and pickets.

At the base the working class wanted to respond to the anti-labour onslaught with all-out strike action to defeat Kennett's plans. But the union bureaucrats, with Victorian Trades Hall Council (THC) secretary John Halfpenny at the helm, sabotaged the mobilisation of the full power of labour on November 10. While maritime workers went out, many workers under federal awards were told to stay at work, including the strategically placed public transport workers. With only a third of the workforce on strike, much of private industry as well as the business and retail heart of Melbourne continued to operate.

After years of gruelling austerity, job slashing and union-busting, the widely hated federal government of Australian Labor Party (ALP) chief Paul Keating is facing electoral defeat. Halfpenny and Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) bureaucrats are trying to divert workers' anger into a campaign to get the union-busting Keating government re-elected. Thus the November 10 rally had a real popular-frontist character, ranging from Halfpenny and his reformist "left" tails, such as the International Socialists, to assorted church hierarchies and the major Melbourne bourgeois daily, the *Age*.

In the last two weeks, comrades of the Spartacist League/Australia (SL/A) have distributed 20,000 copies of a leaflet entitled "From Kennett to Keating. Bury the Union Busters!" which declared:

"It is going to take hard class struggle that stops Kennett and Keating in their tracks, and it has to be organised across (federal and state award) industries throughout the state and spread nationally. For a general strike that closes the state down tight! No to THCI/ACTU sell-out deals! Throw out the labour traitors! For a class-struggle leadership! For a working-class offensive that rolls back Kennett/Keating's union busting capitalist austerity and job slashing!"

The Australian ruling class is full of triumphalism over the imperialist lie of the "death of communism." But caught in the grip of the interimperialist rivalry between the U.S. and Japan, burdened with debt and squeezed by its international creditors, it is driven to enormously increase its rate of exploitation

of the working class. Long gone are the years when the mining-based Australian economy—which drew fabulous profits from the exports to the major imperialist powerhouses of Europe, North America and Japan—could generate sufficient wealth to give the working class a relatively high and comfortable standard of living. The international crisis which has hammered these countries has left the Australian economy a shambles.

Labour relations in Australia are governed by the Conciliation and Arbitration system—a corporatist structure which has evolved over the course of decades. The courts of the capitalist state regulate the unions in every sphere, from wages and conditions to the conduct of strikes to the election of union officials and the disbursement of union funds. For years, under the federal Labor Party governments of Robert Hawke and now Paul Keating, the Arbitration Court-sanctioned Accord has imposed give-backs and job slashing which have eroded workers' livelihoods and their organizations. This has paved the way for today's Tory government attacks. The labour fakers have turned Karl Marx's famous observation that "the working class has nothing to lose but its chains" on its head—they want the workers in Arbitration chains.

The Melbourne strike action came a year after the one-day general strike in New South Wales (NSW) against then Tory premier Greiner's proposed anti-union laws, laws which nevertheless sailed through Parliament and stand today. Now the ACTU tops are planning a 24-hour "day of protest" on November 30, designed to channel the spate of strikes and workers' actions across the country into the "safe" channels of ALP parliamentary maneuvers. As workers from the wharves to the mines to the metal trades are demanding and trying to organise a fight, as the state of Victoria is racked by "rolling" strikes of public transport, hospital, maritime, and other workers, NSW Trades and Labour Council secretary Michael Easson is urging that November 30 be a day of "lunchtime rallies, pamphlet drops and prayers for good industrial relations." Easson has declared that "a lot of people wanted people on their legs in the street. I wanted them on their knees" (*Australian*, 12 November).

Leon Trotsky, writing in the 1930s, accurately captured the nature of such maneuverings in fake general strikes called by reformist bureaucrats:

"...the leadership of the strike previously, i.e., without a struggle, arrives at an agreement with the class enemy as to the course and outcome of the strike. The parliamentarians and the trade unionists perceive at a given moment the need to provide an outlet for the accumulated ire of the masses, or they are simply compelled to jump in step with a movement that has flared over their heads. In such cases they come scurrying through the backstairs to the government and obtain permission to head the general strike, this with the obligation to conclude it as soon as possible, without any damage being done to the state crockery."

—"The ILP and the Fourth International" (September 1935)

The power of the Australian working class must be unleashed, both against capitalist attacks at home and to link up with workers' struggles internationally. Just as Australian waterfront workers once fought in solidarity with the Indonesian independence struggle in 1946-48, just as Australian workers struck against the dirty losing war of U.S. imperialism and its Australian junior partners in Indochina, so today the power of Australian mine and transport workers could be brought to bear in strike action against the mining barons, in solidarity with the struggles of British, South African and Fijian mine workers.

But this means centrally a fight to forge a revolutionary, internationalist leadership in struggle against the pro-capitalist social-democratic fakers of the ALP, and for independence from the racist Australian capitalist state. As the SL/A leaflet stated:

"Keating and Kennett are waging a hipartisan war on the working class and poor. It is desperately necessary to forge a revolutionary leadership of the working class to fight for a workers government that can provide jobs and a decent living wage and life for working people through smashing the profit system root and branch...."

"For revolutionary class struggle on the road to a racially integrated workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist Asia!" ■

Spartacist League Public Offices

—MARXIST LITERATURE—

Bay Area

Thurs. 5:30-9:00 p.m., Sat. 1:00-5:00 p.m.
1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor (near 17th Street)
Oakland, California Phone: (510) 839-0851

Chicago

Tues. 5:00-9:00 p.m., Sat. 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
161 W. Harrison St., 10th Floor
Chicago, Illinois Phone: (312) 663-0715

New York City

Tues. 6:30-9:00 p.m., Sat. 1:00-5:00 p.m.
41 Warren St. (one block below
Chambers St. near Church St.)
New York, NY Phone: (212) 267-1025

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

☐ \$7/24 issues of *Workers Vanguard*
(includes English-language Spartacist)

☐ New ☐ Renewal

international rates* \$25/24 issues—Airmail \$7/24 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/10 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard*

☐ \$3/3 issues of
Women and Revolution

☐ \$2/4 issues of
Espartaco (en español)
(includes Spanish-language
Spartacist)

Name _____

Address _____

Apt. # _____ Phone (____) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Workers State Strangled...

(continued from page 1)

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

The Soviet workers state—which once served as a beacon for the exploited and oppressed of this globe, which destroyed Hitler's Holocaust machine, which for decades kept U.S. imperialism from turning its nuclear arsenal on the world's semicolonial 'peoples'—is dead. But the class struggle is not. The nascent bour-



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

geois total collapse, the government has been pumping credits into industry: the state budget deficit is escalating to a trillion rubles, and debts of industrial enterprises are over 2 trillion. The result has been hyperinflation, variously estimated at an annual rate of 14,000 percent (*Moscow Times*) or 20,000 percent (*Commerzant*). In the month of October alone, the ruble fell by half its value. Since January the price of bread has climbed on the order of a hundredfold. As the economy decomposes, the bulk of the population teeters on the brink of outright starva-

air traffic controllers in the Russian federation was decisively broken by the Yeltsin government using the OMON and elements of the MVD and KGB. An African student at Patrice Lumumba University was shot down by the Moscow militia amidst a hysterical racist press campaign. Tons of volumes of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin are being destroyed in a pure ideological anti-communist frenzy."

—"For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky"

The conference drew a balance sheet on these events and unanimously endorsed a 26 September document which said: "The August 1991 events ('coup' and 'countercoup') appear to have been decisive in the direction of development in the SU, but only those who are under the sway of capitalist ideology or its material perquisites would have been hasty to draw this conclusion at that time." It resolved "to note and draw conclusions from the position that the beleaguered workers state of Stalin and his heirs has been destroyed."

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

Why Didn't the Workers Rise Up?

The working class of the ex-USSR and the world proletariat as a whole must digest the lessons of this bitter defeat. Since 1917, the social democracy has

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

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

The bourgeoisie and the Stalinists alike have long sought to identify Lenin's October with Stalin's conservative bureaucratic rule. But nationalist



Bloody ethnic conflicts fueled by advancing counterrevolution. Above: Burial of an Armenian worker massacred in Yerevan.

geos states in Russia, the Ukraine and elsewhere are fragile, isolated and internally splintered. They do not rest on the solid foundation of a coherent capitalist class. The new entrepreneurs consist of little more than petty speculators and mafia gangs, while sections of the old industrial hierarchy of factory managers are in the process of imposing their weight. The armed forces are bitter and demoralized.

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

Meanwhile, the working class of the ex-USSR is faced with one assault after another. Society is disintegrating, mass unemployment looms. Industrial production has dropped 18 percent since the beginning of 1992, while investment has plummeted by 50 percent. To prevent a

tion. Any spark could set off the tinderbox on which Yeltsin and his cohorts sit.

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

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

"Recent developments continue to point in a dire direction. Stories abound in the press of 'primitive capitalist accumulation,' i.e., theft: Managers and former bureaucrats are scrambling, using all manner of shady practices to get their hands on socialized property—encouraged, abetted and advised by international imperialism. The recent strike by



Faces of capitalist restoration: Boris Yeltsin (above) and sometime rivals Arkady Volsky (right), head of the industrialists' party, and Russian vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi (far right).



"Destruction of Workers' Consciousness Was Key"

We publish below a translation of the remarks at the Second International Conference of the International Communist League by comrade Volodya K.

I think the key reason for the destruction of the Soviet workers state has been the destruction of the consciousness of the proletariat, a process that began with Stalin's liquidation of Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition, which represented the consciousness of the working class. The tragedy is that the breakdown of Stalinist control was exploited not by the working class for its own end, but by the bourgeoisie for its own purposes, purposes for which they actually today have precious little support.

In August 1991 we saw some decisive events. The question was posed: whether the bourgeoisie, or perhaps more accurately, whether parts of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which received a death blow, would go forward to consolidate a bourgeois state, or whether the working class would step in for its own. In that moment the working class could have used the opportunity to take the power, but instead the "red-brown" coalition formed an obstacle to that; the "red-brown" co-

alition, which in no way is opposed to counterrevolution, but instead is against the liberalization of Stalinist rule.

In this situation, as Trotsky predicted, no section of the bureaucracy was capable of opposing the restoration of capitalism. Instead, they simply maneuvered to be able to occupy the best place within the restoration of capitalism. It's very important to acknowledge that a bourgeois state has been established in the Soviet Union. But it's also important to realize that this is far from stable, it's very weak. This represents a transitional moment, but a transition to what?

Today there is massive opposition to the post-countercoup period. The immiseration and the impoverishment of the population evokes the sharpest hatred toward Yeltsin, but there is no left opposition to guide this. The opposition that does exist today only stands for a strong state. They share the idea that communism is an impossible utopia. They are orienting for a strong state, a strong state based on capitalism.

But as the Yeltsin regime is incapable of introducing stable capitalism, the bourgeoisie is very weak. Weak, because

it's without capital backing. The only way that strong capitalism can be established is through nationalism and vicious anti-working-class repression, as we have just seen in connection with the air traffic controllers. The creation of this National Salvation Front that the comrades know about—should that Front come to power, that would represent another decisive blow against the working class.

All these Stalinists who think that it's they who are manipulating the nationalists, the so-called "patriots," in a temporary bloc, a bloc by which they can simply turn the clock back to before perestroika, are deluding themselves. In fact what they are doing is paving the way for the establishment of a corporate and fascist dictatorship. It's a very dangerous illusion to delude oneself into thinking that there are forces now in the territory of the former Soviet Union capable of fighting against this counterrevolution. In fact, all of these coalitions delude themselves with the fact that after the National Salvation Front comes to power, then they can resurrect their own power. It repeats the bragging of the Ger-

man CP in 1933, who said, "After Hitler, us." It's a suicidal policy.

What is the real perspective that we see before us? Concretely, we have a task—to coalesce the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party. This means a battle against the capitalists, the existing bourgeois government. This means a socialist revolution. Otherwise, if we fail in this, there will be consolidated a bourgeois corporatist state. The key thing is to explain to the working class that this policy of supporting the "national patriots" as a temporary tactic is suicidal. Once these "national patriots" come to power, the working class will get nothing, will get shit from these people. If we don't succeed in our propaganda in this, then this is what the working class will receive.

Now just a few words about timing. I believe that prior to the unification of Germany, in the Soviet Union there was a possibility for ICL intervention, at the time when the debates and discussions were about the true heroes of the Soviet Union and of the October Revolution, and not today's idiocy about how all is well in the West. ■

Stalinism is the antithesis of Leninist internationalism. The Soviet degenerated workers state (and the deformed workers states which later arose on the Stalinist model) was a historic anomaly, resulting from the isolation of economically backward Russia and the failure of proletarian revolution to spread to the advanced imperialist countries. Stalinism represented a roadblock to progress toward socialism. As Trotsky wrote in "Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?" (November 1937):

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

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

Why did the Soviet working class not rally to defend its gains? How did the counterrevolution triumph and destroy the workers state without a civil war? In his seminal 1933 work laying out the perspective of proletarian political revolution, Trotsky polemicized against social democrats and proponents of various "new class" theories who claimed that under Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union had imperceptibly changed from a workers to a bourgeois state without any qualitative transformation of either the state apparatus or the property forms:

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

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

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



May 1991: German and Polish comrades of the ICL address 300 Soviet officers and soldiers commemorating Red Army victory over Nazi Third Reich, at air base in East Germany.

and undo the deepgoing proletarian revolution.

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

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

"The socialist character of our state industry...is determined and secured in a decisive measure by the role of the

party, the voluntary internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, the conscious discipline of the administrators, trade union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc."

—The Third International After Lenin

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

When Trotsky wrote these articles, the memory of the October Revolution was still a part of the direct personal experience of the overwhelming mass of the Soviet proletariat, albeit already considerably warped by Stalinist falsification and revision. In the intervening decades, the nationalist bureaucracy did much to extirpate any real understanding of what came to be iconized as the "Great October Socialist Revolution." In Soviet mass consciousness, World War II, dubbed by the Stalinists the "Great Patriotic War" and suffused with the Russian-nationalist propaganda Stalin churned

out during the war, came to supplant the October Revolution as the epochal event in Soviet history. In the end, Stalin and his heirs succeeded in imprinting their nationalist outlook on the Soviet peoples; proletarian internationalism came to be sneered at as an obscure "Trotskyite heresy" of "export of revolution" or, at best, emptied of any content while paid cynical lip service.

With Gorbachev's "new thinking"—i.e., his cringing capitulation to each and every imperialist ultimatum—even lip service to the ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution went by the boards. The Soviet soldiers who had been told, and believed, that they were fulfilling their "internationalist duty" in fighting against the reactionary Afghan mujahedin on the USSR's border, were then maligned for perpetrating "Russia's Vietnam" against Afghanistan. Gorbachev's ignominious pullout from Afghanistan and his green light to the imperialist annexation of the DDR served only to further a sense of defeatism and demoralization among the Soviet masses, while the so-called Stalinist "patriots" who denounced Gorbachev's concessions did so only to beat the drums for Great Russian imperial ambitions, explicitly harking back to the time of the tsars.

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

These developments pointed to the possibility of authentic soviets, which—by drawing in collective farmers, women, pensioners, soldiers and officers—could have served as the basis for a new proletarian political power, ousting the bureaucracy through a political

continued on page 8

Workers State Strangled...

(continued from page 7)

revolution. But when the Gorbachev regime reneged on its promises to the miners, pro-imperialist agitators trained by the "AFL-CIA" moved into the vacuum of leadership and set up the Independent Miners Union, organizing an activist minority of the miners as a hattering ram for Yeltsin.

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

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



Atomized and bereft of any anti-capitalist leadership, lacking any coherent and consistent socialist class consciousness, skeptical about the possibility of class struggle in the capitalist countries, the Soviet working class did not rally in resistance against the encroaching capitalist counterrevolution. And, as Trotsky noted in *The Third International After Lenin*: "If an army capitulates to the enemy in a critical situation without a battle, then this capitulation completely takes the place of a 'decisive battle,' in politics as in war."

The Army and the Bureaucracy

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



Lenin at First Congress of the Communist International, March 1919.

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

flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade."

—"The Class Nature of the Soviet State"

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

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

Having seized the reins of power, the Yeltsin regime immediately moved to reorganize the top echelons of the military, putting in a layer of younger officers who were marked either by subservience to Yeltsin (e.g., Shaposhnikov) or by strident Russian nationalism, while



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

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

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

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

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

Gorbachev's treacherous withdrawal from Afghanistan emboldened U.S. imperialism and demoralized Soviet masses.



seeking to buy off broader layers of the officer corps with salary increases. At the same time, there was a self-purge, as numbers of pro-socialist officers left the army in disgust over the anti-Communist ban. In any case, as Trotsky remarked in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937): "a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people [from the state apparatus] than a revolutionary party."

The juridical dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 left the all-Union armed forces—nominally under the command of the stillborn "Commonwealth of Independent States"—suspended in midair, a "sixteenth republic," as some dubbed it. An officers conference in the Kremlin the following month registered overwhelming sentiment for maintaining the military as a multinational institution. But, as we warned at the time, "to preserve the multinational Soviet state and army requires salvaging the socialized property upon which it was created." Had the working class moved, sections of the military would undoubtedly have gone over to its side. Instead the centrifugal forces set into play by Yeltsin's counter-coup and formalized by the December 1991 decree moved to tear the military apart and eliminate what remained of the workers state. Nationalism, as in the chauvinist drum-beating over Moldova, has been a driving force in cohering an armed force loyal to the new capitalist order.

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

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

Navy Day, on July 26, was marked by the hoisting of the old tsarist naval emblem, the St. Andrew's Cross, throughout the fleets, while Navy chief Admiral Chernavin proclaimed: "The Russian fleet must retrieve its flag, not because Soviet sailors were ashamed of the old flag but because it no longer corresponds to the spirit of the Russian navy" (*Independent* [London], 27 July). The flying of the tsarist banner over the Kronstadt naval garrison, a bastion of Bolshevism in the October Revolution, and atop the cruiser *Aurora*, whose fusil-



Spartakists initiated January 1990 demonstration of 250,000 in Treptow Park, East Berlin protesting Nazi desecration of Red Army monument. Spartakist Workers Party poster in March 1990 East German elections: "No to Capitalist Reunification!"



lade against the Winter Palace signaled the victory of the Petrograd proletarian insurrection, aptly if grotesquely symbolized the dismantling of the Soviet workers state by the triumphant forces of counterrevolution.

Yeltsin and his counterparts in the other republics now have the beginnings of bourgeois armies. But the loyalty of these armed forces to capitalism has yet to be tested in blood. Noting that "the entire military could fragment along political or ethnic lines," one observer noted that "Russian leaders will be extremely wary of using the army to maintain domestic order" (Mark Kramer, "The Armies of the Post-Soviet States," *Current History*, October 1992).

Who Is Guilty for the Catastrophe?

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

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

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

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

Five years ago, when the first openly counterrevolutionary force—the anti-Semitic nativist fascists of Pamyat—reared its head in Moscow and Leningrad, we called for proletarian-centered mass mobilizations to crush these latter-day Black Hundreds in the egg. When, in August 1990, Gorbachev endorsed a plan for full-fledged capitalist restoration drawn up by Yeltsin, our first Russian-language leaflet raised the call "Soviet Workers: Smash Yeltsin/Gorbachev 500-Day Plan!" (WV No. 510, 21 September 1990). That November, at the Revolution Day commemoration in Leningrad, the banner of the Fourth International was openly unfurled for the first time in the Soviet Union.

Despite our meager resources and limited Russian-language capacity, we sought to intervene directly in the turbulent situation which opened up after Gorbachev took over. Following the dra-

matic coal miners strikes in the summer of 1989, we sought to get our Trotskyist propaganda into the hands of these combative workers, whose struggle had electrified the Soviet working class and shaken the Stalinist bureaucracy. ICL representatives intervened in a miners conference in Donetsk in October 1990, where they succeeded in temporarily spiking a CIA-orchestrated effort to enlist Soviet workers in a redbaiting witchhunt against British miners leader Arthur Scargill.

During the 1989-90 upheaval in the

lution!", was the first statement widely distributed throughout the Soviet Union in opposition to Yeltsin's restorationist drive. We advanced a program for independent working-class struggle against capitalist restoration and for genuine soviets as organs of a new proletarian political power:

"Independent workers committees must be formed in factories, mines, railroad yards and other enterprises to prevent layoffs and privatization by taking over the plants and controlling production.... Committees of soldiers and officers must be formed to oppose the purges and pre-



Bassu/Sigma

Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev signs treaty with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in November 1990, accepting capitalist reunification of Germany.

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

Our August 1991 call, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counter-revo-

lution!" was the first statement widely distributed throughout the Soviet Union in opposition to Yeltsin's restorationist drive. We advanced a program for independent working-class struggle against capitalist restoration and for genuine soviets as organs of a new proletarian political power:

vent the army from being used to attack the workers' interests.... Workers militias must be formed...to defend against and crush the lynch mobs and pogromists.... In this hour of dire need more than ever, the key to successful defense of the Soviet proletariat is the forging of a new, authentically communist vanguard party of the working class. Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!"

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

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

"Through their own independent committees, composed of delegates elected

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

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

Who is guilty for the catastrophe? First and foremost it is the Stalinists who bear responsibility. Beginning with the political counterrevolution led by Stalin in 1923-24, the state apparatus was, as Trotsky wrote, "transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class, and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy" (Transitional Program). By the later Brezhnev years, bureaucratic mismanagement of the planned, centralized economy had resulted in a sharp decline in Soviet economic growth, while rampant corruption fueled the appetites of the pampered children of the bureaucracy to live like Western capitalists. Given its mortal dread of workers democracy which would abolish their privileged positions, the only option the bureaucracy saw for intensive economic growth was to experiment with a neo-Bukharinite program of market-oriented "reforms"—Gorbachev's perestroika.

While the August 1991 "Emergency Committee" offered nothing but "perestroika without glasnost," today Stalinist leftovers like Viktor Anpilov's RKR, Kryuchkov's RPK, Prigarin's SK and Nina Andreyeva's VKPB et al., who today posture as an opposition to Yeltsin, offer nothing but a "red" cover for capitalist counterrevolution. They have made no attempt to mobilize class struggle, not only because their chauvinist politics make them incapable of appealing to the still multinational proletariat, but because they are opposed to any

continued on page 10



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

Spartakist photos

Workers State Strangled...

(continued from page 9)

struggle which would disrupt capitalist class "peace." This was explicitly stated in the March 1992 "Declaration on the Founding of the United Opposition," signed by all the Stalinist leftovers as well as Medvedev and Denisov's SPT—formalizing the repulsive "red-brown" coalition with Great Russian chauvinists, monarchists and outright fascists—which called for "salvation of the Fatherland...on the basis of civil peace and national trust." Thus all these groups opposed the recent air traffic controllers strike.

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

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

Every one of the numerous Stalinist and social-democratic outfits has fallen into step behind the corporatist option, appealing for privatization through the "work collectives" (i.e., factory managers). With their backs against the wall, many workers may look to their factory managers taking ownership of industry



Red Army's International Iron Battalion honors German Spartakists Luxemburg and Liebknecht after their murder in January 1919. Proletarian internationalism was the cornerstone of the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky.

as a last-ditch defense against unemployment and immiseration.

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

"State Capitalism": Anti-Communist Myth

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

While claiming to occupy a "third camp" ("neither Washington nor Moscow"), today the "state capitalists" join the imperialists in rejoicing over the "death of Communism." In August 1991, the Cliffites cheered that "Communism Has Collapsed" and hailed the Yeltsin ascendancy as "The Beginning, Not the End" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991). The identification with imperi-

alist anti-Communism is evident, but the "state capitalist" logic is absurd. Here we have supposedly just witnessed the remarkable spectacle of an entire "capitalist class" which simply committed suicide rather than seeking to defend its property. And the millions upon millions of working people in East Europe and the ex-USSR who are now being dragged down by immiseration, unemployment and fratricide aren't about to huy the notion that they are just going from one brand of capitalism to another, much less hail it.

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

The various theories defining the Stalinist bureaucracy as a "new class" or "counterrevolutionary through and through" unite in appealing to knee-jerk moralism. In contrast, Trotsky's dialectical and materialist analysis of the Soviet degenerated workers state, elaborated in *The Revolution Betrayed* and other writings, has stood the test of time and provides a program for action for

the proletariat. Basing ourselves on this Marxist understanding, we pointed to the contradictory character of the initial Gorbachev reforms: "Gorbachev's *perestroika* not only goes against the immediate material interests of most workers but also affronts their deep reservoir of collective feeling. At the same time, the regime's call for *glasnost* permits a degree of organized dissent against official policies" (Spartacist League/U.S. conference document, "Toward Revolutionary Conjunction," June 1987).

For the first couple of years, Gorbachev's neo-Bukharinite reforms had some effect in reviving the Soviet economy. Harvard economist Marshall Goldman, in his book *What Went Wrong with Perestroika* (1991), notes of Gorbachev's 1985-86 program of "intensification" and "acceleration" that "initially these reforms seemed to be working" and "industrial growth seemed to rebound." He even achieved the largest grain harvest in Soviet history (240 million tons in 1990). But the subsequent introduction of enterprise self-management on New Year's 1988 proved to be the decisive step finally leading to collapse. The abandonment of planning in a planned economy led to a breakdown in economic administration and widespread shortages and looting. The result, Goldman writes, was "the undermining of the planning system and the collapse of the economy." As perestroika reforms failed, in August 1990, Gorbachev openly declared his support to capitalist restoration by endorsing the "500-Day Plan," only to hack away from it later in his constant zigzagging.

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

In contrast, the Spartacist tendency proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and declared "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!" in Poland. In response to Gorbachev's 1989 pullout from Afghanistan in order to appease Washington, we warned it is far better to fight imperialism there than within the borders of the Soviet Union. But the Gorbachev regime didn't want to fight imperialism anywhere. "The decision to leave Afghanistan was the first and most

Бюллетень Спартаковцев

SPARTACIST

Долой правительство Ельцина!
«Большой царь» Борис хочет
нового «кровавого воскресенья»!

**Создавайте
рабочие и солдатские Советы,
чтобы остановить
реставрацию капитализма!**

Ваша задача — бороться за восстановление Советского Союза, за свержение буржуазного правительства Ельцина и за установление диктатуры пролетариата. Только так можно остановить реставрацию капитализма и вернуть стране социализм.

Создавайте рабочие и солдатские Советы во всех предприятиях и войсках. Они должны бороться за свержение правительства Ельцина и за установление диктатуры пролетариата. Только так можно остановить реставрацию капитализма и вернуть стране социализм.

Создавайте рабочие и солдатские Советы во всех предприятиях и войсках. Они должны бороться за свержение правительства Ельцина и за установление диктатуры пролетариата. Только так можно остановить реставрацию капитализма и вернуть стране социализм.

ICL leaflet, February 1992, calls for the formation of workers and soldiers soviets to stop capitalist restoration. Spartacists protested in New York against Yeltsin visit with his Wall Street masters in January.



ICL Spokesman on Russian TV

"Trotsky Continued Lenin's Cause"

On July 2, the Soviet television program *Mister/Comrade* carried a segment featuring an interview with Victor Granovsky, spokesman for the International Communist League. Titled "Trotskyism: Next Stop Moscow?", the segment was broadcast by the main all-Russian channel and was seen in other republics as well. It was rerun several times over the course of the summer.

For the first time, a mass audience in the former Soviet Union was presented with authentic Trotskyism embodying the program of defense of the gains of the October Revolution, the continuity of Lenin's internationalist cause in struggle against the nationalist and bureaucratic perversion of Stalinism. The interview thus pierced through the slanders purveyed for decades by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which grotesquely sought to paint Lenin's comrade-in-arms as a counterrevolutionary agent of Western imperialism. It also belied the image of Trotskyism as warmed-over social democracy, pushed by the likes of Ernest Mandel.

Appropriately, the interview was filmed at the first monument erected by the Bolshevik government, dedicated to historic leaders of the international revolutionary workers movement like Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, Blanqui and others.

We print below a translation of the TV interview.

Narrator: Has the world really been "turned upside down"? No, the sun still rises in the east and sets in the west. But



politics is not nearly so predictable. Could our fathers and grandfathers have foreseen that their contemporaries, the exporters of revolution, would find co-thinkers toward the end of the 20th century, and that they would return to the homeland of revolutionaries? That in the great West the cause of Lenin would

catch fire and return to Russia in order to save her? Our broadcast tonight turns our viewers' attention to the continuators of Ilyich and his comrades-in-arms. Of course we can't help but notice the arrival of American Trotskyists on Russian soil, and regard this as an extraordinary matter.

Out of international goodwill, we renounce in advance any ideological arguments, no matter wherever and whatever they concern. We will limit ourselves to philosophical and historical theses, and in this manner get acquainted with contemporary Trotskyists.

Victor: I came here above all because of my political interest in the situation here. All genuine communists, that is, Trotskyists, around the world have always felt a sense of duty toward the Soviet working class, toward the heroes of the October Revolution, of the Civil War and the war against German fascism. But to participate in political life here in the period of the Stalinist terror or during the time of the bureaucracy's political monopoly was simply impossible. Only when the situation here had opened up a little could we return to the homeland of the October Revolution because we consider it our duty.

Stalin managed to wipe out all of Lenin's political collaborators, and the genuine policies of the October Revolution within the borders of the Soviet Union. But abroad he wasn't quite as successful. Trotsky was the continuator of Lenin's cause, and he educated and trained a new movement to defend the gains of the October Revolution and the banner of internationalism. And it is on account of this, on account of our internationalism, that we have come back here; for us it is our duty to share the fate and the struggle of the Soviet

continued on page 12

difficult step," remarked Gorbachev's foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze recently, "Everything else flowed from that." A year after the Afghanistan withdrawal, Gorbachev gave the green light to capitalist reunification of Germany.

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

Reforge the Fourth International!

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

At the same time, there is opening up a new period of intensified class struggle. The semicolonial peoples of the world, now that the imperialist powers do not feel constrained by a Soviet counterweight, are being subjected to outright starvation. In the imperialist West, growing trade war and exploitation have

already led to major class battles in Germany, Italy and Greece. The multi-racial upheaval in Los Angeles following the verdict freeing the racist cops in the Rodney King beating testifies to the social instability in the United States. In East Europe and the ex-USSR, the working class will soon recover from the numbing experience of counterrevolution and begin to fight against the ravages of capitalist exploitation. Poland already has been swept by one major strike after another over the past year.

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

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

ex-USSR to that of the world proletariat.

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

The proletariat which made the October Revolution learned from Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks that it was part of an international struggle. It understood that its only prospect for survival lay in the extension of the revolution to more advanced industrial powers, chiefly Germany. The opportunities were manifold, but the revolutionary parties outside Soviet Russia were too weak and politically immature to pursue them. The German Spartakist uprising of 1918-19 and the 1919 Hungarian Commune went down to bloody defeat. The possibility of the Red Army marching to the aid of the German workers in 1920 by unleashing proletarian revolution in Pilsudski's Poland was foiled. Finally, with the defeat of the German October in 1923, the Soviet proletariat succumbed to the demoralizing prospect of a lengthy period of isolation, which allowed the bureaucratic layer headed by Stalin to

usurp political power. Thus was the revolution betrayed.

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

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

Lenin's Cause...

(continued from page 11)

working people. We know the horrific reality of capitalist chaos, and unfortunately we see exactly this threat before the Soviet Union. We must return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky. This is our slogan.

I am here not as an individual, but as part of an organization, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). We look to the politics of Lenin and Trotsky; this is the kind of communism we think is needed in the Soviet Union. What is needed in the world today is a *planned* economy, socialized forms of property, workers democracy—meaning real workers soviets, which can collectively work out economic policy in the interests of the toilers.

What we are seeing today is capitalism's real face. But our opposition is unique. We don't share the political course of the present-day Stalinists, who virtually without exception have entered the "red-brown" coalition. We think that this coalition between the Stalinists and the monarchists and fascists is simply shameful—it represents a mortal danger to the multinational Soviet workers movement. We're talking here about groups like the RKR & Co.

Neither do we share the politics of those groups who are oriented to social democracy. They welcome the restoration of capitalism—they just want to make sure that yesterday's nomenklatura elements get to participate in it. I mean groups like the Socialist Party of Labor, the Labor Party and the like.

Against these two tendencies, our International Communist League represents an alternative that is thoroughly unique: that of Bolshevism, Leninism, Trotskyism.

Narrator: Victor was born in China, where his family had to emigrate. Some 35 years ago, the Granovskys moved to America. Prior to the Vietnam War, Victor had no interest in politics, but it was America's military activity against an underdeveloped country that lit a spark which later grew into the flame of Leninism-Trotskyism. He came to the International Communist League having become interested in the classics of Marxism-Leninism and in the history of the land of the soviets. Victor is an artist by profession. In his soul he is a romantic.

He did not think twice before leaving his former job and home to come to Moscow to work as a designer the moment that the opportunity arose. It would be interesting to find out whether Granovsky recognizes any equivalence between the war in Vietnam, which so affected him, and the war in Afghanistan?

Victor: Having experienced a real imperialist slaughter in Vietnam, we know beyond a doubt that the Red Army in Afghanistan was not an army of occupiers; on the contrary, we hailed the Red Army in Afghanistan. And I'll explain why: it's because, in the first place, the war in Afghanistan was really a civil war. On one side was a progressive nationalist and liberal government of army officers. Now this was hardly a Trotskyist government, nor even a soviet government, but at least they did try to introduce certain reforms in the interests of women. They regarded women not as animals, slaves, but proposed that women should be educated. Afghanistan was never a real nation; it was a territory, within which various tribes, actually prefeudal tribes, were at war. The only possibility for progress in this desperate region was the extension of real Soviet power.

Narrator: I often meet communists and other people who support this position, and I find it really interesting. People now have the right to a free vote, but as soon as you ask them if they are for a



Leon Trotsky, elected chairman of Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in September 1917. Red Guards from the Putilov factory at Smolny, command center of the 1917 Revolution.



VAAP photos

multi-party system, they'll say, "Yes, we're in favor of it, but only for socialist parties." How do Trotskyists view a multi-party system?

Victor: We're in favor of soviet democracy. During Lenin and Trotsky's time all parties which supported soviet power—i.e., supported collective ownership of property, workers democracy—enjoyed full rights to publish their newspapers and set up their parties. But those who took the road of savage and bloody terror against the workers—strikebreakers, Black Hundreds, pogromists, real counterrevolutionaries who waged a civil war against the Soviet Republic—that was something different. We're for full workers democracy, for a multi-party system within the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Narrator: Here in your Spartacist publication you speak, for example, about "taking the great stores of products" into your own hands. Do you think that this too is democratic?

Victor: It's a measure of self-defense, so it's the most legal and "constitutional" of actions. Just as the October Revolution was the most lawful of measures. What it means is the defense of the working people from the thieves.

Those who are the most criminal—the most vile criminality that we see today—are the privatizers who are grabbing everything for themselves. It's not just the black market or the hidden economy, it's a whole section of the bureaucracy who are today simply bragging that they are about to privatize industry and take it over for themselves. They are absolutely destroying industry now; they're talking about a decline of something like 50 percent in production taking place. If the working people are to defend their workplaces, if industrial production is to continue, this can only be organized from below by the working people.

Narrator: Now, you make several calls for revolution, and you regard it as perfectly normal, something necessary. Doesn't that mean you are actually terrorists, since you are after all against the powers that be right now?

Victor: We are not terrorists. This is a term that is often used to outlaw people. No, what we are for is action of the working class. We have our political views, and we propagandize honestly and openly for them. When Black Hundreds, nationalist extremists and fascists attack the workers movement, the workers movement must defend itself.

In America, when the Ku Klux Klan threatened to march in front of the American White House, we organized the unions, American blacks, civil rights groups and students in a huge demonstration, and we simply drove the Ku Klux Klan out of there. This was a most basic act of self-defense against

the real terrorists.

I should also mention that in East Germany, the former DDR, on 3 January 1990, when a potential political revolution was beginning under the Honecker regime, it was our comrades, the Trotskyists in East Germany, who initiated the call for the most powerful anti-fascist demonstration in the history of Germany—250,000 people demonstrated in defense of a monument to the Soviet military forces. And it's no coincidence that immediately after this demonstration, Gorbachev gave the green light to the capitalist unification of Germany, the so-called *Anschluss* (annexation).

Narrator: And you were against this?

Victor: We were against the capitalist reunification of Germany.

Narrator: So you were for BRD (West Germany) going over to the DDR?

Victor: We were in favor of a socialist reunification of Germany, for political revolution in the East and a socialist revolution in the West.

Narrator: About how many of you Trotskyists are there around the world? How many are for your party?

Victor: Our numbers are not enough. Fewer than a thousand people, say, fewer than Lenin and Trotsky had in the First World War. When they assembled the conference of internationalists in Switzerland they had very few people. But they had something more important. They had the program of internationalism, expressing the interests of the workers. And with this program they won.

Narrator: In your *Spartacist Bulletin*, you talk about how women are oppressed by all regimes other than a soviet one, and that only under communism can women achieve equality, or words to that effect. It also says that in Vietnam, where a war took place which lasted for 20 years, women are allowed to participate in military activity. Is that your idea of women's equality?

Victor: Women must not be merely unpaid household slaves. They must be citizens in the real sense, and must have every right and privilege that men have. Today we can see how the Stalinist bureaucracy has propagated the notion that the natural place of women is in the kitchen, at home with the children. We think that genuine revolutionary internationalists have to be at the same time defenders of full equal rights for women.

Narrator: How do your friends, I mean your non-political friends in America, how do they relate to you? Do they think you're not quite OK, because you've taken up these ideas?

Victor: Of course, communists are a minority in America. But people in America do understand that there are class contradictions there, that we have real problems. And today the word "capitalism" has really become a term of abuse, especially since the upheaval in Los Angeles—and it wasn't limited to Los Angeles. Dissatisfaction has reached such a high point now in America that even friends of mine who don't share my political views still have a pretty good idea of what we're talking about. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. LOCAL DIRECTORY

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 • (212) 732-7860

Atlanta Box 4012 Atlanta, GA 30302	Detroit Box 441043 Detroit, MI 48244	Norfolk Box 1972, Main PO Norfolk, VA 23501
Boston Box 390840, Central Sta. Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 492-3928	Los Angeles Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta. Los Angeles, CA 90029 (213) 380-8239	Oakland Box 29497 Oakland, CA 94604 (510) 839-0851
Chicago Box 6441, Main PO Chicago, IL 60680 (312) 663-0715	Madison Box 1492 Madison, WI 53701	San Francisco Box 77494 San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 777-9367
Cleveland Box 91037 Cleveland, OH 44101 (216) 781-7500	New York Box 444, Canal St. Sta. New York, NY 10013 (212) 267-1025	Washington, D.C. Box 75073 Washington, D.C. 20013 (202) 872-8240

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto Box 7198, Station A Toronto, ON M5W 1X8 (416) 593-4138	Montréal C.P. Les Atriums, B.P. 32066 Montréal, QC H2L 4V5 (514) 849-6540	Vancouver Box 2717, Main P.O. Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2 (604) 687-0353
--	--	--

Young Spartacus

Malcolm X...

(continued from page 16)

foster homes. Malcolm grows up with whites who call him "nigger" so routinely he doesn't even know it's a fighting word. He excels in school and hopes to become a lawyer, but is dissuaded by a patronizing white schoolteacher who reproaches Malcolm for aspiring to a station in life beyond what white society has ordained as proper for the black man.

After a series of dead-end jobs, shining shoes and slinging sandwiches while working on the railroad, Malcolm (aka "Detroit Red") finds a more lucrative hustle as a sidekick to "West Indian Archie" running a small-time numbers racket and shacks up with a blonde in Harlem. A falling-out among thieves sends Malcolm running to Boston, where he sets up his own burglary ring. A young man who has suffered the mental lashes of the white man's whip, Malcolm has internalized racist oppression. He burns his scalp with lye to "conk" his hair, then smiles and says, "looks white, don't it?" Busted for burglary, a crime which normally carried a two-year sentence, Malcolm and his buddy "Shorty" are sentenced to *ten years*. Malcolm realizes that in the eyes of the racist judge (played, in one of the movie's many in-jokes, by radical lawyer William Kunstler) his real crime was sleeping with a white woman.

Malcolm was so angry and defiant that his nickname in prison was "Satan." To break him, the guards throw Malcolm into "the hole"—solitary confinement. Ernest Dickerson—the talented cinematographer of all Spike Lee's films—brilliantly captures what a racist hellhole America's prisons are. You *feel* the unrelenting terror of solitary, the fear of losing your mind as you're enveloped in darkness, filth and inchoate noise. When a broken Malcolm slumps into blinding light and mumbles his prison number for the guards, you feel *rage* for how he has been dehumanized. (This sequence ought to spur youth to check out the Partisan Defense Committee's fight on behalf of the many militants who still languish behind bars in this country for no crime other than running afoul of the racist American government—men like former Black Panthers Mumia Abu-Jamal and Geronimo Pratt, and West Virginia striker Bob Buck.)

In prison Malcolm becomes a convert to Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslims, a religious sect which appeals to some looking for a way out of the social pathology of America's ghettos by preaching self-respect, and forgoing drugs, crime and a host of other things from pork to sex. The Black Muslims' puritanical moral code is lathered thickly with rhetoric about "white devils" and "black empowerment"—a posture that *looks* defiant but in reality acquiesces to the racist status quo by endorsing complete and total segregation of the races. *Malcolm X* shows this in one scene: when Jackie Robinson smashed the color bar in the major leagues, black prisoners swung their bats with joy and trounced a white team in a prison yard ballgame. But Malcolm's Muslim prison mentor sneers at this; Malcolm says later, "There is only one thing I like integrated. My coffee." As to "empowerment," what the Black Muslims seek are black-owned businesses so that a layer of "upstanding" blacks can exploit the ghetto masses themselves. Black nationalism seeks a

reactionary utopian "never-never land" at a time the whole of American capitalism has been contracting and shriveling.

A Spokesman for Militant Self-Defense

After seven years in prison, Malcolm was released and quickly became the most devoted and able minister for Elijah Muhammad. To see Spike Lee tell it, you would think that Malcolm X attracted supporters to Harlem's Temple Seven and nationally by preaching the faith. *Not!* It was because he departed from Muslim mysticism and talked with razor-sharp clarity about present-day race relations and the black struggle that he attracted a personal following in Harlem and beyond. Malcolm X attacked the submissive Christian leadership of the civil rights movement and its sacred cows in a way no one else did before or since. Describing King's sellout of the 1963 March on Washington to

city Chief Inspector said, "No one man should have that much power") and saw to it that he remained vulnerable to attack. New York City's stringent gun control laws date directly from legislation rushed through the City Council against carrying rifles or shotguns in public—the bill was aimed at preventing Malcolm X from carrying his carbine in his car.

Still, as Malcolm himself acknowledged, the Muslims were perceived as people who "talk tough, but they never *do* anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims." It was true. While Malcolm preached against any kind of integration, the masses of blacks were fighting to smash Jim Crow and achieve social, political and economic integration into American society. Malcolm X was an outside critic of the movement for black equality. The young activists in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were growing weary of silently enduring racist crackers who smeared mus-



September 1960:
Cuban revolutionary leader
Fidel Castro stayed at
Harlem's Hotel Theresa in
solidarity with oppressed
American blacks. Here he
dines with hotel staff.

the Kennedy administration for a tame "farce on Washington," Malcolm X thundered:

"If you think I'm telling you wrong, you bring me Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph and James Farmer and those other three, and see if they'll deny it over a microphone. No, it was a takeover.... They controlled it so tight, they told those Negroes what time to hit town, how to come, where to stop, what signs to carry, what song to sing, what speech they could make, and what speech they couldn't make; and then told them to get out of town by sundown. And every one of those Toms was out of town by sundown.... It was a circus, a performance that beat anything Hollywood could ever do, the performance of the year. Reuther and those other three devils should get an Academy Award for the best actors because they acted like they really loved Negroes and fooled a whole lot of Negroes. And the six Negro leaders should get an award too, for the best supporting cast."

—"Message to the Grass Roots,"
Malcolm X Speaks

Lee's movie shows the respect and support Malcolm earned from non-Muslims in Harlem for organizing the dramatic protest outside the 28th Precinct, where a Muslim brother lay bleeding after being beaten by the police. As Malcolm tells it in his *Autobiography*, "Hundreds of Harlem Negroes had seen, and hundreds of thousands of them had later heard how we had shown that almost anything could be accomplished by black men who would face the white man without fear." The government feared Malcolm (the 28th Precinct's Dep-

tard into their hair at lunch counter sit-ins, or worse, fired shotgun blasts into their homes. They were fed up with King's pacifism and derisively referred to him as "De Lawd.")

This army of civil rights militants was Malcolm X's real audience. Lee simply has no comprehension of how convulsive and polarized was the period in which Malcolm came to prominence. The entire black community was politically mobilized, as well as a whole generation of white liberal/radical youth. In the film, these people do not exist for Malcolm X—but they were his real mass base, not the handful of blacks who joined the Nation of Islam. In fact, Malcolm's membership in the Nation, which abstained from social struggle, was a major *impediment* to increasing his influence—a fact which underlay his split.

As we wrote in our 1984 tribute, "Malcolm X: Courageous Fighter for Black Liberation":

"Malcolm personified to an extreme degree the fundamental contradiction of black nationalism. As a doctrine, nationalism can sometimes attract militant blacks deeply alienated from this racist society and who have no illusions that it can be reformed. But American blacks are *not* a nation. They are an *oppressed color-caste* integrated into American capitalist society while forcibly segregated at the bottom of it. Elijah Muhammad's call upon the United States government to grant several states for a separate black nation was more pie-in-the-sky than any

continued on page 14

Muhammad Speaks

4 December 1964

By Minister Louis X
(Boston, Mass.)

"TO FOLLOW MALCOLM IS TO BE DOOMED"

If any Muslim—whether he be an Imam or just a rich man—backed a fool like Malcolm in building a Mosque, he would be a fool himself. Only those who wish to be led to hell, or to their doom, will follow Malcolm. The die is set, and Malcolm shall not escape, especially after such evil, foolish talk about his benefactor (Elijah Muhammad) in trying to rob him of the divine glory which Allah has bestowed upon him. Such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death, and would have met with death if it had not been for Muhammad's confidence in Allah for victory over the enemies

Muhammad Speaks

10 April 1964

On My Own



Amsterdam News

Gil Noble urges Farrakhan

Tell us about your role in Malcolm X's murder



Inmates threaten jihad

Louis Farrakhan (far left) wanted Malcolm X dead. Muhammad Speaks portrayed Malcolm as "traitor" and called for his head to roll.

UPI





Right to self-defense was key issue for 1960s black radicals. Many opposed Vietnam War, solidizing with Vietnamese tollers fighting racist U.S. Imperialism.



Malcolm X...

(continued from page 13)

of King's dreams. Separatism is *not* a program for social struggle in racist America."

—Black History and the Class Struggle No. 2

While the Black Muslims remained aloof from struggle, young black radicals were attracted to the demand for "black power" precisely because of the inability of the liberal civil rights movement to address the systematic racist oppression inherent in this capitalist system. This came to a head in the North, where it was clear despite formal legal equality blacks were still forcibly segregated at the bottom of American society, through economic factors such as jobs, education, housing. Their frustration exploded in the '60s ghetto riots, and in their wake despair over the failure of liberal integration led to the spread of hardened black nationalism. That black militants were not introduced to the

Marxist program of revolutionary integrationism at the critical juncture is in large part due to the capitulation of the Socialist Workers Party to black nationalism and its criminal abstention from the struggle in the South (for a fuller analysis of this period, see Spartacist pamphlet, "On the Civil Rights Movement," *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2, advertised on page 3).

"Chickens Come Home to Roost"

While Spike Lee plays up Malcolm's moral revulsion at the discovery of Elijah Muhammad's sexual exploits with young Muslim women and ostentatious high living, an immediate cause of Malcolm X's split with the Nation of Islam was his bold and unsparing assessment of the Kennedy assassination, that it was a case of "chickens coming home to roost." The film shows the tremendous courage it took for Malcolm X to make such a statement in the midst of a national orgy of patriotic mourning (even ostensibly "socialist" groups like the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers

Party fell over themselves offering condolences to the First Lady). And Elijah Muhammad, despite all the "white devil" rhetoric, was outraged that his disciple let loose with such an affront to the white ruling class, because it would be very, very bad for business.

But since Lee does not show the bloody terror perpetrated by the U.S. government on black marchers throughout the South, on Africans in the Congo, against the Cuban Revolution and against the people of Vietnam, *how* are youth today to understand *what* is coming home to roost? Moreover, the film *never* indicates that Malcolm's attacks on the Kennedy/Johnson White House were *central* to his political stance and his appeal to the radicalizing youth in the black struggle. Searing speeches, like "The Ballot or the Bullet"—where Malcolm exposes the hand-in-glove workings of the Southern Dixiecrats with the Northern liberals, and declares, "A vote for a Democrat is a vote for a Dixiecrat"—have no place in Lee's film. Indeed, when interviewed about the cause of the L.A. riots, Spike Lee said, "The Democratic administration tried to help the poor, but Reagan and Bush are not concerned" (*Libération* [Paris], 5 May).

Refusing to be silenced by Elijah Muhammad for speaking out on the Kennedy assassination, and increasingly aware that the Nation was responsible for the death threats he and his family received, Malcolm split from the Nation of Islam. He formed his own organizations, Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the OAAU (Organization of Afro-American Unity), and made clear that he would engage in secular political struggles. At an OAAU meeting the next year, Malcolm read aloud a telegram he had sent to the American Nazi leader George Lincoln Rockwell:

"This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of nonviolence, and who believe in asserting our right of self-defense—by any means necessary."

—Malcolm X Speaks

Back from Mecca

Shortly after his split from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm made the Muslims' pilgrimage to Mecca. This trip and a subsequent lengthy tour through Africa convinced Malcolm that it was wrong to narrowly define the struggle against oppression in racial terms. In Spike Lee's movie, this fundamental break from black separatism is portrayed simply as a realization that Muslims come in all complexions, therefore not all white people can be "devils," and true "spiritualism" can forge a brotherhood of humanity. You'd think Malcolm was ready to link arms with the Kennedys and sing "We Shall Overcome"! Hardly.

A more realistic picture of the times is provided by SNCC activists John Lewis and Donald Harris, who met up with Malcolm in Ghana in 1964, and wrote home that people would tell them, "'If you are to the right of Malcolm, you might as well start packing right now 'cause no one'll listen to you'.... After a day of this we found that we must, immediately on meeting people, state our own position in regard to where we stood on certain issues—Cuba, Vietnam, the Congo, Red China and the UN, and what SNCC's role, guidelines and involvement in the rights struggle was" (*Malcolm X Speaks*).

Malcolm wrote that "travel broadens." Meeting fighters from successful revolutionary wars against British, French and U.S. imperialism got him thinking about how to redefine the struggle against racist and colonial oppression. After a conversation with a man who helped drive the French out of Algeria, Malcolm said:

"He was an African, but he was Algerian, and to all appearances, he was a white man. And he said if I define my objective as the victory of black nationalism, where does that leave him? Where does that leave revolutionaries in Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania? So he showed me where I was alienating people who were true revolutionaries, dedicated to overthrowing the system of

1965 Spartacist Statement on the Assassination

reprinted from Spartacist No. 4, May-June 1965

MALCOLM X

Of all the national Negro leaders in this country, the one who was known uniquely for his militancy, intransigence, and refusal to be the liberals' frontman has been shot down. This new political assassination is another indicator of the rising current of irrationality and individual terrorism which the decay of our society begets. Liberal reaction is predictable, and predictably disgusting. They are, of course, opposed to assassination, and some may even contribute to the fund for the education of Malcolm's children, but their mourning at the death of the head of world imperialism had a considerably greater ring of sincerity than their regret at the murder of a black militant who wouldn't play their game.

Black Muslims?

The official story is that Black Muslims killed Malcolm. But we should not hasten to accept this to date unproved hypothesis. The New York Police, for example, had good cause to be afraid of Malcolm, and with the vast resources of blackmail and coercion which are at their disposal, they also had ample opportunity, and of course would have little reason to fear exposure were they involved. At the same time, the Muslim theory cannot be discounted out of hand because the Muslims are not a political group, and in substituting religion for science, and color mysticism for rational analysis, they have a world view which could encompass the efficacy and morality of assassination. A man who has a direct pipeline to God can justify anything.

No Program

The main point, however, is not who killed Malcolm, but why could he be killed? In the literal sense, of course, any man can be killed, but why was Malcolm particularly vulnerable? The answer to this question makes of Malcolm's death tragedy of the sharpest kind, and in the literal Greek sense. Liberals and Elijah have tried to make Malcolm a victim of his own (non-existent) doctrines of violence. This is totally wrong and totally hypocritical. Malcolm was the most dynamic national leader to have appeared in America in the last decade. Compared with him the famous Kennedy personality was a flimsy cardboard creation of money, publicity, makeup, and the media. Malcolm had none of these, but a righteous cause and iron character forged by white America in the fire of discrimination, addiction, prison, and incredible calumny. He had a difficult to define but almost tangible attribute called

charisma. When you heard Malcolm speak, even when you heard him say things that were wrong and confusing, you wanted to believe. Malcolm could move men deeply. He was the stuff of which mass leaders are made. Commencing his public life in the context of the apolitical, irrational religiosity and racial mysticism of the Muslim movement, his break toward politicalness and rationality was slow, painful, and terribly incomplete. It is useless to speculate on how far it would have gone had he lived. He had entered prison a burglar, an addict, and a victim. He emerged a Muslim and a free man forever. Elijah Muhammad and the Lost-Found Nation of Islam were thus inextricably bound up with his personal emancipation. In any event, at the time of his death he had not yet developed a clear, explicit, and rational social program. Nor had he led his followers in the kind of transitional struggle necessary to the creation of a successful mass movement. Lacking such a program, he could not develop cadres based on program. What cadre he had was based on Malcolm X instead. Hated and feared by the power structure, and the focus of the paranoid feelings of his former colleagues, his charisma made him dangerous, and his lack of developed program and cadre made him vulnerable. His death by violence had a high order of probability, as he himself clearly felt.

Heroic and Tragic Figure

The murder of Malcolm, and the disastrous consequences flowing from that murder for Malcolm's organization and black militancy in general, does not mean that the militant black movement can always be decapitated with a shotgun. True, there is an agonizing gap in black leadership today. On the one hand there are the respectable servants of the liberal establishment; men like James Farmer whose contemptible effort to blama Malcolm's murder on "Chinese Communists" will only hasten his eclipse as a leader, and on the other hand the ranks of the militants have yet to produce a man with the leadership potential of Malcolm. But such leadership will eventually be forthcoming. This is a statistical as well as a social certainty. This leadership, building on the experience of others such as Malcolm, and emancipated from his religiosity, will build a movement in which the black masses and their allies can lead the third great American revolution. Then Malcolm X will be remembered by black and white alike as a heroic and tragic figure in a dark period of our common history. ■

Bay Area Spartacist Committee, 2 March, 1965

exploitation... I had to do a lot of thinking and re-appraising of my definition of black nationalism.... I haven't been using the expression for several months."
—*"Young Socialist Interview,"*
By Any Means Necessary

But Malcolm's x-ray vision, which had never failed to see through the hypocrisy of American bourgeois politics, went myopic on him in Africa. It's almost embarrassing to read his accolades to the Saudi monarchy—the last state on the planet to practice legal chattel slavery of black Africans and women! And he had big-time illusions in the United Nations (a den of thieves and their victims) as an ostensibly independent and moral entity.

Thus Malcolm had a plan to press charges in the UN against the United States for its heinous crimes against the 20 million descendants of Africans brought to America's shores in bondage. Although the UN's composition was changing with the admittance of a host of former black African colonies, even at the time the UN was complicit in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the radical nationalist Congolese leader. And Malcolm was basically blind to the nature of the African regimes which talked of so-called "nonalignment" and even "socialism" as they exploited and repressed the workers and peasants. Now, after the U.S. slaughter of 100,000 Iraqis and the destruction of the country (carried out under the "neutral" UN flag with the active support of African and Arab states), such a perspective is grotesque.

The Legacy of Malcolm X

Malcolm X opens with a powerful sequence of images—the horrific and familiar clips of the police beating of Rodney King give way to a giant American flag that ignites and smolders into a giant "X." It's a promise that this film will have relevance to the urgent problems plaguing black America today. It's a promise unfulfilled. By omission, this film is a *conscious* cover-up of some very sinister enemies of black rights and a perversion of Malcolm's greatest strength—the ability to see the two-party political system in America for the con game it is.

This film shows that both the FBI and the Nation of Islam wanted Malcolm dead. Yet a cameo role is given to avowed FBI fink Al Sharpton, who wore a wire for the feds to spy on other black activists! That Spike Lee can get away with such a maneuver speaks volumes to the dearth of struggle and the low level of political consciousness today. Twenty years ago, audiences would have walked out or thrown something at the fat fink the moment he appeared on the big screen!

As to the Nation of Islam's involvement, *Malcolm X* clearly shows that Elijah Muhammad and his very disciplined followers wanted Malcolm dead and gone. But the sinister figure who replaced Malcolm as minister in Harlem's Temple Seven, and became the Nation of Islam's hatchet man for the savage hate campaign against Malcolm X, is still around. He now heads the Nation of Islam. His name is Louis Farrakhan. Spike

Lee interviewed Farrakhan before making the movie and confronted him with the damning evidence—the death threats against Malcolm X—issued by Farrakhan himself in *Muhammad Speaks* and reprinted here. But when the cameras rolled, Lee pulled his punches and *Farrakhan is not mentioned in this film*.

As black historian Clayborne Carson wrote, "Some viewers may even see Farrakhan as a modern-day Malcolm" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 22 November). Carson also noted:

"By ignoring the political Malcolm in favor of the personal story, Lee makes it difficult for viewers to understand why FBI and CIA surveillance of Malcolm increased rather than decreased after he abandoned the anti-white teachings of Elijah Muhammad. During his last year, Malcolm was considered a major threat by these agencies because his talents were no longer confined within a small, apolitical religious cult."

Malcolm X was a compelling figure, and everybody wants a piece of him—indeed, the most diverse political tendencies claim this remarkable man as "theirs" and assert that at the time of his death he was inexorably moving toward their own political positions. Clayborne Carson's own angle is to say that Malcolm was coming around to reconciliation with M.L. King and "nonviolence." But this remarkable man's life was tragically cut short; he was robbed of the chance to evolve politically, in what direction we do not know. As we wrote in our 1965 obituary (*Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965):

"He was the stuff of which mass leaders are made. Commencing his public life in the context of the apolitical, irrational religiosity and racial mysticism of the Muslim movement, his break toward politicalness and rationality was slow, painful, and terribly incomplete. It is useless to speculate on how far it would have gone had he lived.... In any event, at the time of his death he had not yet developed a clear, explicit, and rational social program. Nor had he led his followers in the kind of transitional struggle necessary to the creation of a successful mass movement."

Still, Malcolm's intransigent commitment to the truth and his uncompromising opposition to racist America make him a hero for Marxists like us who see the fight for black liberation as strategic to a workers' revolution against the whole hideous and irrational profit system.

As the voice of the angry black ghetto, Malcolm X knew that the Southern-based civil rights struggle for formal equality could not achieve freedom for black people in capitalist America. No new civil rights bill could begin to address the systematic racist discrimination and dehumanizing conditions that the black population was forced to suffer in big Northern ghettos like Detroit, Roxbury and Harlem—where blacks were, of course, "equal" under the law.

The avalanche of blows by police billyclubs on a black man named Rodney King, and the outrageous acquittal of his cop tormenters, taught a lot of people that there is something *fundamentally* wrong with this society that no piecemeal reform can change. It was a clear racist atrocity. And the mass upheaval of anger against it was plebeian and *multiracial*. As young peo-

ple took to the streets around the country, they were busted by black mayors who waved their "nonviolent" civil rights credentials in one hand and waved in vicious police assaults with the other. One last speech by Malcolm X seems particularly prescient:

"In 1963, one of their devices to let off the steam of frustration was the march on Washington.... In '64, what was it? The civil-rights bill... What will they give us in 1965? I just read where they planned to make a black cabinet member. Yes, they have a new gimmick every year. They're going to take one of their boys, black boys, and put him in the cabinet, so he can walk around Washington with a cigar—fire on one end and fool on the other."

—*"Prospects for Freedom in 1965,"*
Malcolm X Speaks

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Conditions for black youth in America today are much worse than in Malcolm's time. Ghettoized youth are considered by the ruling class to be a "surplus" population. There are no jobs for them and thus no need to educate them. Some two million manufacturing jobs have disappeared in this country over the past decade, and the real incomes of black working parents under the age of 30 were driven down by a staggering 48 percent between 1973 and 1990. But while the black poor were being ravaged, a layer of black yuppies emerged, moving out of the ghettos. Currently the top 20 percent of black families account for almost half of all black income—a degree of inequality *greater* than among whites.

These facts alone explode the black nationalist myth of a common interest of all black people. While the overall conditions for black people have gotten much, much worse, there is a growing perception—from white Caterpillar workers in the Midwest, to Latinos in L.A., to black youth in Harlem—that the fundamental division in this country is not between black and white, but between haves and have nots. And despite the looting and deindustrialization of America by the capitalist class, black workers still play a strategic role in the American economy and organized labor movement. All those basic jobs which keep American society functioning—bus drivers, hospital workers, subway motormen, sanitation workers, longshoremen, postal carriers—are disproportionately held by blacks. And therein lies their tremendous potential power, as *black workers*, as part of an integrated working class leading all the oppressed. As we wrote at the time of the Los Angeles riots ("L.A. Upheaval Shakes America," *WV* No. 551, 15 May):

"These black proletarians can serve as a bridge between the ghetto poor and the organized labor movement. Conditions are ripe for a massive social explosion in this country extending from the ghettos and Hispanic barrios to white skilled workers, many of them one paycheck away from bankruptcy and eviction.... Decisive in the outcome will be the construction of a multiracial communist vanguard party such as Lenin and the Bolsheviks built in tsarist Russia's 'prison house of nations,' which led the multinational working class in a successful insurrection against the capitalist order." ■

The Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Era Malcolm X: The Man, the Myth, the Struggle

Spartacist Forums

Speaker: Brian Manning, Spartacist League

Saturday, Dec. 5, 2:30 p.m.
Undergraduate Library Lecture Room
Howard University
For more information: (202) 872-8240

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Saturday, Dec. 12, 4:00 p.m.
Emerson Hall, Room 305
Harvard University
For more information: (617) 492-3928

BOSTON

Speaker: Gene Herson, Organizer of Labor/Black Anti-Klan Mobilizations in Philadelphia and Atlanta

Thursday, Dec. 10, 12:15 p.m.
Baskerville 03
City College of New York
138th St. and Convent Ave.

Friday, Dec. 11, 7:00 p.m.
Hamilton Hall, Room 602
Columbia University
(#1 train to Broadway & 116th St.)

NEW YORK CITY For more information: (212) 267-1025

Guest Speaker: Bernard Branche, Member ATU Local 308

Date and time to be announced
For more information: (312) 663-0715

UIC Circle Center
(see Activities Board for room)

CHICAGO



Washington, D.C.: Labor-black mobilization initiated by the Spartacist League stopped the KKK on 27 November 1982.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Malcolm X What's Missing from Spike Lee's Movie

Young Spartacus Film Review

A biographical film on Malcolm X has been more than 20 years in the making, a project almost as controversial as the man himself. Now Spike Lee has finally brought it to the big screen. Starved for black leadership, and finding in Malcolm X a legend who refused to submit to the racist white ruling class, inner-city youth are hitting the books and fueling a self-motivated literacy drive that school librarians never dreamed of. This year alone, more than a million copies of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* have been sold—ten times the number sold when it was first published in the mid-'60s. It's a damn good thing youth are reading Malcolm X in his own words, because despite great sound and vibrant color, Lee's *Malcolm X* is a celluloid blank space in history—the mass struggles for black rights are missing from the movie.

It is something, in this racist society, to make a film that gives humanity back to a black militant who the entire power structure feared, hated and demonized. But Lee's reverence for Malcolm X becomes 70 millimeter mythology. Removed from the convulsive political struggles of the times which defined him and formed the context in which he emerged as black America's uncompromising truth-teller, Lee's Malcolm is a cardboard messiah. The domestic and international battles which tore this country apart and politicized an entire generation of youth, black as well as white—

the Cuban Revolution, the colonial revolts in Asia and Africa, Vietnam, the civil rights movement—are nowhere in this film.

As the voice for self-defense for black people, Malcolm X didn't play by the rules of bourgeois politics. He named names and denounced Martin Luther King, Jr., Bayard Rustin, et al., as the "Uncle Toms" who counseled the suffering black masses to "turn the other cheek" in the face of murderous racist attacks perpetrated by Dixiecrats. And he saw clearly the hypocrisy of Northern white liberal Democrats like John and Robert Kennedy who "came to the aid" of blacks by sending the FBI and federal marshals...to clamp down on their struggles. In the film, there's no conflict between black radicals and "respectable" black leaders, no names named. Yet it was precisely Malcolm's strident opposition to the entire liberal political firmament that established him as the voice of the angry black ghetto and gave him, eventually, a mass appeal and significance in history.

Stripped out of any social context, Lee's Malcolm X plays like a "Booker T." remodeled for the '90s—magnetic Denzel Washington is a Malcolm whose message is to uplift the race by pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps, living clean and emancipating yourself from the "prison in your mind." Hardly a program for revolutionary social change! Despite his intentions and



Gordon Parks

pretensions to be one "bad" black filmmaker, Spike Lee has managed to turn Malcolm X into a...liberal! Through Lee's lens, Malcolm X emerges from Mecca as a combination of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. A generation after the defining battles of the civil rights movement, black revisionist history casts Malcolm and Martin as partners in a joint struggle for black rights. But Malcolm X's political role was defined against King and all the preachers of liberal accommodation to the racist power structure.

The present generation of black intellectuals is overwhelmingly remote from mass political struggle, so that they cannot think programmatically and strategically. Nonviolent resistance vs. armed self-defense, support for the liberal wing of the Democratic Party vs. independent political action, the relation of national liberation struggles in Africa and Asia to the American black movement—these are the issues which defined Malcolm X and determined his appeal. Since Lee does not present the political climate of the '60s, the evolution of Malcolm X and the specific positions he takes in the film remain inexplicable.

Lee views Malcolm X through the perspective of the self-conscious black intelligentsia of the renovated brownstones of Bed-Stuy and Fort Greene. From his previous films produced through his 40 Acres and a Mule Productions, to Spike's Boutique at Macy's, to *Malcolm X*, Lee focuses on personal development and promotes "black capitalism." If he draws the line at marketing "X Air-Freshener" ("eradicate odors by any means necessary"), it is only because this product is too downscale for Lee's target audience. Ultimately this world view is not hostile to American capitalist rule. Thus it's no accident that Lee's Malcolm emerges as no threat to the bourgeoisie: *Malcolm X* received rave reviews in the *Wall Street Journal*, among other places.

From Street Hustler to Muslim Minister

The film is best, and most faithful to the *Autobiography*, in capturing Malcolm's early years. Malcolm Little's family home is burned to the ground by robed, hooded Klansmen who later murder his father, a follower of Marcus Garvey and a proud man who refused to submit to white supremacy. His mother is then judged unfit to fend for her children, and the state takes Malcolm and all his siblings and splits them up in

continued on page 13



George Holliday Video



WV Photo

Racist cop beating of Rodney King (left). Black youth look to Malcolm X, as depicted in mural at Locke High School in South Central Los Angeles.